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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

The Representation of India as an Emerging Power on the Telegram Channels of Al-Alam and BBC

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Interdiction:

This study examines the representation of India's emerging power in two major Persian-language Telegram news channels: BBC Persian and Al-Alam. In the contemporary media environment, where digital platforms increasingly shape political communication, agenda-setting, and international perceptions, Telegram has emerged as a central space for the production, circulation, and reinterpretation of news narratives. As a rapidly growing regional and global actor, India's rise as an emerging power has attracted sustained media attention, making it a relevant case for examining how power is discursively constructed within transnational news flows. The primary objective of this research is to identify the dominant semantic axes,

linguistic strategies, and underlying power relations involved in the representation of India in these two outlets. More specifically, the study seeks to explain how India is semantically and discursively constructed as an emerging power and to assess similarities and differences in representation patterns between BBC Persian and Al-Alam. By comparing these two channels, the research aims to demonstrate how differing media logics, editorial priorities, and representational strategies contribute to shaping audience perceptions of India's position in the regional and international order, including its relationship with Iran and major global actors.

Methods:

This study adopts a quantitative research design grounded in quantitative content analysis to systematically examine and compare media representations of India's emerging power. All news items related to India published on the Telegram channels of BBC Persian and Al-Alam between 21 March 2024 and 19 March 2026 were identified and collected. This time frame was deliberately selected to capture a sustained period of media attention during which India's political, economic, and strategic role as an emerging power was frequently highlighted in regional and international news discourse. The unit of analysis consisted of individual news items explicitly referring to India, including reports on its domestic affairs, foreign policy orientations, economic developments, and international relations.

A coding scheme was developed in accordance with the research objectives and designed to enable systematic comparison between the two channels. The coding categories included type of relations (internal, regional, and international), news genre, language style, domestic and foreign policy issues, sanctions coverage, relations with great powers, economic topics, business-related issues, treatment of culture and art, and issues related to society and security. Each category was defined through clear operational definitions to ensure consistency and analytical clarity during the coding process. In total, 119 relevant content units were identified, coded, and entered into a statistical software package. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to identify dominant patterns of representation, as well as inferential statistical tests to assess significant differences between BBC Persian and Al-Alam in their thematic emphasis and representational strategies.

Findings:

The findings show that internal relations and journalistic language are dominant in representing India in both BBC Persian and Al-Alam. Both channels focus heavily on India's domestic political, economic, and social developments, treating internal dynamics as key indicators of its emerging power status. This reflects an emphasis on India's governance and social cohesion as fundamental to its rise.

Despite these similarities, the distribution of themes and framing strategies varies significantly. Al-Alam dedicates more coverage to specific economic issues such as business developments, trade partnerships, and reforms. It also highlights security topics, including defense cooperation, regional stability, and insurgency challenges. Social and cultural issues receive notable attention, constructing India as a multidimensional, opportunity-generating power with strategic depth. This framing situates India as a regional stabilizer and a partner within a multipolar order aligned with non-Western powers.

Conversely, BBC Persian focuses more on general economic issues such as inflation, poverty, and structural challenges. Its coverage often emphasizes economic pressures, governance problems, and social conflicts, presenting India as an emerging power facing persistent internal difficulties. The tone is more formal and analytical, offering a cautious and critical perspective on India's rise.

Statistical analysis reveals further differences in coverage of India's relations with great powers, foreign policy, and references to Iran and the region. Al-Alam emphasizes cooperation and shared strategic interests, framing India as a pragmatic actor challenging Western dominance. BBC Persian, however, highlights geopolitical competition and tensions, framing these relationships in terms of rivalry and uncertainty.

These differences illustrate how the two media outlets employ distinct agenda-setting and framing logics, shaping divergent narratives about India's emerging power. Al-Alam presents a more positive, opportunity-focused image, while BBC Persian adopts a critical and problem-oriented approach.

Conclusions:

The analysis reveals that both BBC Persian and Al-Alam predominantly emphasize internal relations and utilize journalistic language in their representation of India's emerging power. Coverage in both channels largely centers on India's domestic political, economic, and social developments, highlighting internal dynamics as critical indicators of India's ascent as a global actor. This focus underscores the perceived importance of governance, economic reform, and social stability in India's consolidation of power.

However, the thematic distribution and framing approaches diverge notably between the two outlets. Al-Alam allocates greater attention to specific economic matters, including trade partnerships, business initiatives, and policy reforms. It also foregrounds security issues such as defense cooperation, regional stability, and counterterrorism efforts. Additionally, cultural and social dimensions receive substantive coverage, collectively constructing a portrayal of India as a multifaceted and opportunity-rich power with strategic significance within a non-Western, multipolar international order.

Conversely, BBC Persian's coverage predominantly addresses broader economic challenges, including inflation, poverty, and structural impediments to growth. The channel frames India's emergence through a critical lens, emphasizing persistent internal vulnerabilities, governance challenges, and socio-political tensions. The language employed is generally formal and analytical, reflecting a cautious evaluative stance on India's developmental trajectory.

Statistical comparisons further highlight differences in the treatment of India's foreign relations, especially with great powers, as well as references to Iran and the broader region. Al-Alam emphasizes cooperation and alignment with shared strategic interests, framing India as a pragmatic actor challenging Western hegemony. In contrast, BBC Persian frames these relations within the context of geopolitical competition and rivalry.

These findings illustrate distinct agenda-setting and framing logics shaping divergent media narratives, with Al-Alam offering a more optimistic and opportunity-oriented portrayal and BBC Persian adopting a more critical and problem-focused representation of India's emerging power.

Data Availability Statement

Data available on request from the authors.

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Ethical considerations

Not applicable.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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