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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

A Framing Analysis of Russia-Ukraine War News on Iran International Television

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Introduction:

Narrative, in the context of media, refers to the structured representation of stories and the methods employed to assign them meaning. One of the most significant applications of narrative analysis in media is the concept of news frames. These function as mental frameworks that journalists use to organize information, which in turn influences which issues are highlighted and how they are interpreted by audiences. The war between Russia and Ukraine, which commenced in February 2022, constitutes a prime example of a conflict with enormous global implications, rendering it a vital topic for media analysis. The complexity of the war, coupled with widespread human suffering, economic devastation, and geopolitical instability, has made it the focus of international news media attention. Many Western media outlets have engaged in a "media war" aimed at shifting global public opinion in favor of Ukraine. As communication technologies have

blurred borders, coverage of the war has become a priority for media outlets around the world, each tailoring its reporting to suit its national interests. News media do not simply report events; they actively construct and shape public perception. They act as social constructs that produce narratives reflecting the values, beliefs, and interests of dominant groups. While they can promote democratic values and hold power accountable, they can also perpetuate existing power imbalances and dominant ideologies. Iran International, which perceives itself as a credible source of news for Iranian audiences and a platform for diverse voices, provides a fascinating case study of how a non-Western news network frames a major international conflict. By analyzing its coverage of the Russia-Ukraine war, one can uncover the underlying biases, perspectives, and techniques it employs to influence its audience. News media play a central role in shaping public opinion and constructing a shared reality, and this power becomes especially significant during major global conflicts such as the Russia-Ukraine war. This study examines the specific narrative strategies employed by Iran International, a prominent Persian-language news channel, to portray the conflict. Using qualitative content analysis and narrative analysis, this study investigates key themes, framing techniques, and shifts in coverage to understand how Iran International shaped public discourse around the war.

Method:

This study aims to analyze the narratives presented by Iran International on the Russia-Ukraine war. To achieve this, qualitative content analysis and the narrative analysis technique were employed. Narrative analysis is a research method that involves examining the methods of constructing and narrating stories. In this study, narrative analysis includes examining the narratives that Iran International presents within the framework of its news coverage of the Russia-Ukraine war. To conduct this analysis, reports and other content related to the Russia-Ukraine war were collected using the Iran International news package. These narratives are analyzed for patterns, themes, and framings, and the analysis depicts how this news network narrates the Russia-Ukraine war.

Findings:

A narrative analysis of Iran International's coverage of the Russia-Ukraine war reveals a complex and strategic framework within the complexities of global geopolitics. Through its selective framing, Iran International has shaped a narrative that emphasizes Iran's role as an independent actor defending peace, diplomacy, and national sovereignty, while simultaneously highlighting the economic and strategic benefits of its alliance with Russia. This dual narrative underscores the network's ability to balance domestic priorities with international dynamics and offers a unique perspective on the Russia-Ukraine conflict. The war coverage can be divided into distinct phases, each reflecting a shift in the network's focus. The first phase, from the outbreak of the war in Esfand 1400 (February–March 2022) to Mordad 1401 (July–August 2022), saw extensive and detailed reporting of the conflict. During this period, the network highlighted key developments such as missile strikes, Western military and economic support for Ukraine, and Iran's strategic support for Russia. This phase reflects Iran International's efforts to position Iran as a major player on the global stage capable of influencing the course of the war through diplomatic and economic relations with Russia.

In the second phase, following the escalation of domestic crises in Iran by September 1401 (August–September 2022), the network's focus shifted, leading to a reduction in coverage of the

Russia-Ukraine war. This shift emphasizes the interplay between domestic priorities and international reporting, as Iran International redirected its focus to domestic issues.

The resumption of coverage in January 1401 (March–April 2022) marked another critical phase, during which the network emphasized the geopolitical implications of the war, including Western sanctions on Iran and Russia, and the broader implications for regional stability. This phase reinforced Iran International's narrative of Iran as a resilient country overcoming the challenges of international isolation while maintaining its strategic alliances.

This analysis demonstrates that Iran International's coverage places the war within a broader context of global power dynamics, framing it as a conflict between Western countries and a coalition of countries, including Russia and Iran, that are resisting Western hegemony. By emphasizing this perspective, the network not only shapes public perceptions of the war but also reinforces a narrative of Iranian resilience and resistance. The coverage also situates human interests within this broader geopolitical framework, examining the international impact of the war on Iranian relations and regional stability.

Conclusions:

This research highlights the critical importance of narrative analysis in understanding how the media shape public perceptions of global events. A study of Iran International's coverage of the Russia-Ukraine war provides valuable insights into the network's role as a mediator of public discourse and a reflection of Iran's foreign policy priorities. Through its selective framing, Iran International has constructed a narrative that strategically balances national interests with global dynamics. By emphasizing themes of peace, national sovereignty, and economic cooperation, the network has created a story that resonates with its audience while reinforcing Iran's geopolitical priorities. This research demonstrates how news media are not merely passive observers but active participants in constructing shared realities and influencing public opinion. It serves as a reminder to critically examine media narratives in order to uncover the underlying ideologies and power dynamics that shape our understanding of the world.

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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