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Identifying the Pattern of Successful Professional Operations of Al-Alam Network in Reporting on the Storm of Al-Aqsa War and Maintaining and Enhancing the Resilience of Gaza Residents

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The present study aims to identify the pattern of successful professional operations of the Al-Alam network in reporting on the Storm of Al-Aqsa war and maintaining and enhancing the resilience of Gaza residents. The research method is qualitative, employing the grounded theory approach. The participants in the study were active journalists from the Al-Alam network, selected using theoretical saturation and purposive sampling, with a sample size of eight individuals. Data collection was conducted using in-depth interviews. The results revealed that the pattern of successful professional operations of the Al-Alam network in reporting on the Storm of Al-Aqsa war and maintaining and enhancing the resilience of Gaza residents includes causal factors with components such as competitive factors, the news marketing mix, process-related factors, technical factors, content-related factors, and factors associated with government and politics. The dimensions of the main phenomenon encompass interactive space, competitive space, support capability, and trust-building. Contexts include message management, target market, strategic factors, legal and regulatory factors, information and communication technology, and modernization and transformations in the media space. Interventions consist of relational reporting, core beliefs, and competitive intelligence. Strategies involve activities related to media operations, activities related to media strategy, activities related to strategic management, and activities related to cross-border operations. Outcomes include competitive advantage, media-related outcomes, outcomes associated with cross-border networks, socio-cultural outcomes, and outcomes related to media conflict.

Keywords: *Professional Operations, Media, Resistance, Resilience Maintenance, Storm of Al-Aqsa.*

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1. Introduction

In the modern era, traditional broadcasting entities, particularly major Western press organizations, have adopted new methods to influence cultural perceptions and values of their audiences, thereby shaping their understanding of themselves and the world around them. Within the intricate network of global information warfare, media operations and counter-propaganda strategies play a pivotal role in shaping narratives, influencing public opinion, and exerting geopolitical influence.

Political propaganda is an inseparable component of human civilization's communication mechanisms, often employed to shape public opinion, consolidate power, or support specific ideologies. The essence of propaganda lies in its ability to covertly or overtly influence masses, steering their perceptions, beliefs, and behaviors toward a predetermined goal (Taheri, 2019). In the political propaganda domain of the West Asia region, media institutions intersect along a Western-Arabic-Hebrew axis, each operating based on distinct agendas and motivations. Addressing the strategies adopted by key players in this axis, with a focus on their objectives and tactics used against Iran, is essential (Litvak, 2013).

While the scholarly discourse on media operations and counter-propaganda is evolving, the literature on Al-Alam's strategies to counter political propaganda by foreign networks remains relatively nascent. This presents an opportunity for researchers to explore underrepresented perspectives and outline pathways for future investigations, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics of media operations and their implications within the geopolitical landscape. As a state-supported media outlet, Al-Alam operates within the broader scope of engagement in media and information warfare with hostile states, challenging distorted narratives.

In the 20th century, characterized by technological advancements and geopolitical transformations, media suppression evolved into more sophisticated forms. World War II and the subsequent Cold War epitomized the peak of propaganda, during which misinformation and disinformation were weaponized. State-controlled media in both the Eastern and Western blocs were not merely news providers but strategic assets shaping public perception to align with governmental ideologies. With the digital revolution at the dawn of the 21st century, media suppression underwent yet another transformation. The internet introduced an expansive realm of information, bringing both opportunities and threats. Although it provided an unparalleled platform for free expression, it also posed challenges for authoritarian regimes attempting to control the expanding digital narratives. Digital firewalls, online surveillance mechanisms, and targeted cyberattacks rapidly became modern tools of media suppression.

The amplification of sensational events, whether real or strategically fabricated, is a tactical maneuver aimed at reinforcing perceptions of instability in Palestine. Western, Arabic, and Hebrew media alike employ this tactic to construct a narrative of unpredictability surrounding key issues. Isolated incidents, such as public demonstrations, acts of violence, or regional conflicts, are disproportionately magnified to portray Iran as an unstable entity. This portrayal justifies a posture of caution and vigilance and aligns with broader agendas (Afrasiaban & Abbasi, 2023; Roberts, 2019).

Prominent Western media institutions, such as the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Cable News Network (CNN), and *The New York Times*, are key players within the Western-Arabic-Hebrew media axis. Their coverage of Iran reflects a delicate interplay between cultural appreciation and geopolitical considerations. While these entities occasionally celebrate Iran's rich historical legacy and cultural contributions, their narratives often pivot toward Iran's nuclear ambitions and regional activities. This dual narrative aligns with Western foreign policy objectives aimed at maintaining influence in the Middle East, strengthening alliances, and addressing perceived security threats (Litvak, 2013; Marandi & Motahhari, 2011).

The establishment, mission, and outreach of Al-Alam embody its strategic role within the global information landscape. Founded under the umbrella of IRIB, its media align with foreign policy objectives while resonating with Iran's aspirations to challenge mainstream biases through the provision of alternative narratives. The network's broad reach, facilitated by satellite broadcasts and digital platforms, represents a deliberate effort to transcend the constraints of traditional media and engage directly with global audiences. In this intricate interplay of media and diplomacy, Al-Alam emerges as a powerful tool for presenting Iran's narratives to the international community (Torbat & Torbat, 2020).

The continuous political support of Western powers, particularly the United States and the United Kingdom, has always been a contributing factor. However, it was during the October 7 operations and the Storm of Al-Aqsa war that Hamas-affiliated minor media outlets, along with the media of the resistance axis and freedom-seeking media worldwide, managed to overcome the 76-year-old hegemony of Zionist media, presenting the realities as they are to global public opinion. Cultural studies approaches elucidate how media messages are imbued with cultural and ideological meanings,

perpetuating dominant social norms and values. Within this framework, propaganda functions as a tool to reinforce or challenge cultural hegemony. This body of work focuses on the socio-cultural contexts in which propaganda operates, highlighting the dialectical relationship between media producers, messages, and audiences.

The diversity of expectations and approaches in this field has generated a wide range of analyses and proposals. This section introduces several of these studies to provide an overview of the subject matter. The aim is to demonstrate the breadth of these analyses (spanning economic, communicative, security, and hybrid warfare issues) and to emphasize the relevance of utilizing these precedents in the current research.

This article, focused on reporting the Storm of Al-Aqsa war, delves into the complex domain of media operations, counter-propaganda, and the strategies employed by Al-Alam to elucidate the intricate landscape of global information warfare. This section also examines the challenges faced by Al-Alam and actions taken against it, analyzing the Western-Arabic-Hebrew media axis as a key factor in shaping narratives about the resistance axis on the international stage. By exploring historical contexts and theoretical frameworks, the foundation of Al-Alam's strategies to challenge false narratives about the resistance axis—specifically the Storm of Al-Aqsa—offer alternative perspectives and consolidate its position in the global media sphere.

Accordingly, this study seeks to comprehensively examine the complex dynamics of Al-Alam's counter-propaganda strategies within the framework of media operations and their impact on shaping alternative narratives and public opinion. It aims to identify the interconnected components that collectively contribute to Al-Alam's ability to challenge political propaganda and present diverse perspectives. The main objective of this research is to identify the pattern of successful professional operations of Al-Alam in reporting on the Storm of Al-Aqsa war and maintaining and enhancing the resilience of Gaza residents.

2. Theoretical Framework

Al-Alam Network leverages internet broadcasting and social media platforms to expand its global footprint. Disseminating content through platforms such as YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook ensures unmediated

interaction with international audiences. This approach not only amplifies the network's outreach but also enables direct engagement with individuals who may lack access to conventional news sources (Torbat & Torbat, 2020, pp. 225-252).

A private research center in Washington (Report Iran Analytical) writes in an analytical report on Al-Alam's performance in Iraq: "Al-Alam, by emphasizing the cohesion of Shiites and the Islamic unity of the Iraqi people, and by showing the despair and hopelessness that had taken hold of the population due to the American occupation, posed a significant challenge to American media. By continuously covering news about the withdrawal of American forces, this network further highlighted the weakening of those forces." Consequently, it was able, through rapid and transparent reporting from Gaza under siege and bombardment, as well as by depicting Zionist aggression and the ensuing dire conditions of Gaza's residents, to draw global public attention to the suffering of the people of Gaza and the brutal killings perpetrated by the aggressors.

Al-Alam Network also criticized the silence and inattention of Arab governments in the region, especially the Egyptian government, which refused to open the Rafah crossing during this critical situation. In this regard, the (NEW America Media) website states: "Egypt is angered by Al-Alam's program 'Gaza under Fire,' in which viewers around the world were invited to accuse the Egyptian government of colluding with Israel against Hamas." The performance of Al-Alam during the 22-day war worried the Zionist regime and some conservative regimes in the region, yet it drew praise from other fair-minded media outlets. For instance, the website aljazeeratalk.net, in a report on the performance of Arabic news media during the Gaza war, referred to Al-Alam's efforts and wrote: "Al-Alam is one of the most important Arabic networks that, alongside other prominent Arabic networks, was able to fully cover the events in Gaza." (www.aljazeeratalk.net)

Within Al-Alam Network, selective framing in shaping narratives that reinforce preexisting stereotypes and biases is of particular importance. On the Western-Arabic-Hebrew media axis, the deployment of this tactic occurs subtly, tailored to specific agendas. For instance, Western media may emphasize Iran's conservative clerical leadership, human rights concerns, and alleged support for terrorism. This portrayal resonates with

existing biases and reinforces the narrative of Iran as an ideologically driven and potentially destabilizing force. Meanwhile, Arab media underscore Iran's sectarian affiliations, heighten regional tensions, and label Iran as a divisive element in the region. The Hebrew media axis may amplify Iran's rhetoric questioning Israel's legitimacy, thereby reinforcing skepticism and vigilance. Collectively, these selected narratives construct a multifaceted image of Iran aligned with diverse agendas (Kadivar, 2022; Torbat & Torbat, 2020).

One integral aspect of Al-Alam's counter-propaganda strategy involves active engagement with counter-narratives. By facilitating interaction with individuals whose views diverge from mainstream narratives, the network fosters a conducive environment for constructive dialogue and critical discourse. This dynamic approach enriches the information ecosystem, allowing multiple perspectives to coexist and encouraging audiences to critically evaluate information. Additionally, Al-Alam's counter-propaganda strategies include contextualizing global events within Iran's geopolitical framework. The network seeks to uncover subtle dimensions often overlooked by mainstream oversimplifications. By providing contextual insights, Al-Alam contributes to a more holistic and comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics embedded in global events, frequently challenging superficial portrayals.

In the political propaganda surrounding the Western-Arabic-Hebrew media axis, a combination of tactics is orchestrated to shape global perceptions of Iran. A detailed examination of these tactics offers crucial insights into the strategies deployed against Iran, shedding light on the nuances of media influence in this geopolitical discourse (Abrahamian, 2023).

A dominant tactic within the Western-Arabic-Hebrew media axis is the calculated discrediting of alternative narratives that challenge prevailing views. Counter-narratives originating from Iran, which differ from those constructed by these media entities, are systematically marginalized or delegitimized as propaganda. This tactic seeks to maintain the hegemony of established narratives, neutralize the emergence of opposing views, and perpetuate a unified informational landscape (Torbat & Torbat, 2020).

The strategic deployment of demonization and dehumanization tactics aims to erode the credibility and moral standing of Iran's leadership and population. This deliberate approach is often adopted by various entities in the Western-Arabic-Hebrew media axis to undermine Iran's diplomatic legitimacy. By portraying Iran's leadership as ideologically dictatorial and its population as submissive, these narratives endeavor to delegitimize Iran's regional and international aspirations, cultivating a perception of distrust (Roberts, 2019).

Al-Alam Network's role in the realm of political propaganda gains prominence as a channel tasked with broadcasting Iran's and the Resistance Axis's narratives within the global information landscape. This section offers a comprehensive examination of Al-Alam, covering its formation, mission, and scope, as well as the array of challenges it faces in disseminating Iran's narratives (Behravesh, 2013). The establishment of Al-Alam under the institutional framework of IRIB underscores the alignment between media objectives and foreign policy goals. Its inception was a response to the marginalization of Iran's viewpoints in Western-centric media discourse. The decision to create an Arabic-language platform reflects a conscious effort to engage international audiences directly, surpass linguistic barriers, and amplify Iran's voice within the global information arena (Behravesh, 2013).

A significant challenge faced by Al-Alam is striking a delicate balance between financial sustainability and editorial independence. As a state-supported entity, the network grapples with preserving its autonomy while avoiding the perception of being influenced by its funding source. Maintaining this equilibrium is vital to safeguarding Al-Alam's credibility and content integrity. This challenge encompasses upholding an editorial line consistent with the network's mission, ensuring financial stability, and minimizing perceptions of state-driven narratives (Eskandarian, 2020; Turetsky, 2015).

The digital era introduces a series of challenges, including technological disruptions and the specter of digital censorship. Al-Alam's reliance on online broadcasting and social media platforms exposes it to content suppression or censorship. Such platforms may curtail visibility or suspend accounts due to geopolitical considerations. Navigating these obstacles requires developing a resilient online presence capable of resisting censorship attempts, ensuring that alternative narratives reach global audiences without restrictions (Eskandarian, 2020; Turetsky, 2015).

Within the broader media landscape, Al-Alam confronts counter-narrative tactics employed by various stakeholders. Hostile media entities may seek to undermine Al-Alam's narratives by labeling them propaganda, thereby eroding the network's credibility. Moreover, efforts to amplify dissenting voices within Iran or among its diaspora present challenges to Al-Alam's position as a unique platform for alternative narratives. The network must effectively counter these counter-narrative strategies while safeguarding its credibility and editorial integrity. Despite these substantial challenges, Al-Alam's role in reinforcing Iran's narratives in a rapidly evolving media environment and global information sphere remains pivotal (Eskandarian, 2020; Turetsky, 2015).

Al-Alam's coverage of this event specifically underscored its commitment to offering an alternative perspective distinct from the dominant narratives disseminated by mainstream Western media. While conventional media sources typically described General Soleimani using divisive language and highlighted the U.S. government's justifications for the strike, Press TV chose to frame the incident from an Iranian vantage point. Its coverage emphasized Soleimani's contributions to the fight against terrorist groups, particularly ISIS, and portrayed him as a nationally revered figure in Iran (Diaconu, 2017; Sharikov, 2021). The complexities stem from navigating the geopolitical biases that inherently shape international narratives. Repeatedly, the Western-Arabic-Hebrew media axis contextualized this event within U.S. national security concerns, sidelining Iran's perspective and depicting General Soleimani as a regional terrorist. For Al-Alam, the challenge lay in effectively representing Iran's viewpoint concerning this event while acknowledging broader regional dynamics (Farrokhi & Ariaei, 2022).

Al-Alam's coverage strategy extended to promoting counter-narratives that challenged the status quo. The network highlighted the widespread public mourning within Iran following the assassination of Martyr Soleimani, reinforcing a narrative of national unity and collective reverence for his contributions. Furthermore, it facilitated dialogues with experts who critically examined the legality and ramifications of the U.S. strike. This served as a platform for voices that condemned the act, thereby effectively countering the prevailing narratives propagated by Western media (Farrokhi & Ariaei, 2022; Xu & Wang, 2022).

This example also underscored Al-Alam's endeavor to address audiences beyond Iran's borders. By providing an alternative viewpoint on the assassination, the network aimed to reach international audiences who might otherwise rely solely on conventional Western media for Iran's perspective. This underscores Al-Alam's role as a platform for diverse narratives and viewpoints, thereby challenging entrenched narratives and encouraging a broader understanding (Farrokhi & Ariaei, 2022). Amid its coverage, Al-Alam grappled with the delicate balance between sensitivity and objectivity. While presenting Iran's viewpoint and acknowledging national sentiments, the network upheld journalistic principles of accuracy and impartiality. This necessitated meticulous editorial decisions aimed at showcasing multiple viewpoints while preserving the complex nature of the event (Xu & Wang, 2022; Zimmt, 2015).

Central to the challenges confronting Al-Alam is the intricate network of geopolitical hostilities shaping Iran's global image. The antagonistic stance of the Western-Arabic-Hebrew media axis toward Iran results in narratives that are often deeply embedded and negative. Al-Alam's role as a Western counter-narrative platform requires the delicate task of probing these deeply ingrained perceptions. Overcoming existing biases, offering alternative perspectives, and recalibrating global views of Iran's role in international affairs pose substantial challenges (Cain, 2022).

Al-Alam operates within a hostile media environment marked by narratives aligned with specific geopolitical agendas. Western-based media conglomerates, Arabic networks, and Hebrew platforms converge on narratives frequently at odds with Iran's perspectives. In this context, Al-Alam faces the daunting task of positioning itself as a legitimate alternative source. This requires not only presenting Iran's narratives but also establishing their credibility and relevance within a media ecosystem dominated by influential, established actors (Eskandarian, 2020).

The advent of digital media has transformed propaganda tools. Social media platforms including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube function as virtual hubs for disseminating propaganda. Their algorithmic precision empowers propagandists to target specific demographics, ensuring that tailored narratives

penetrate receptive segments of society. The viral potential of digital content accelerates its reach, magnifying the scope and impact of its dissemination. The ubiquity of smartphones guarantees constant, personal contact with audiences, transcending temporal and spatial boundaries (Hakan, 2016).

Dedicated propaganda websites and online portals serve as centralized hubs for distributing curated content. These platforms feature multifaceted materials, including text-based articles, images, videos, infographics, and interactive components. By controlling the narrative on these platforms, propagandists can maintain consistency and coherence across their messaging. They also facilitate public engagement, encouraging user interaction through comments, shares, and discussions, thereby fostering a sense of participation and community (Hakan, 2016).

Fundamentally, the multifaceted tools of political propaganda dissemination reflect the adaptability of those seeking to manipulate public perceptions. The seamless integration of traditional and digital platforms, coupled with mastery over psychological triggers and narrative design, underscores propagandists' capacity to traverse temporal, cultural, and technological boundaries, ensuring the dissemination of their intended narratives throughout the spectrum of human communication (El-Khalili, 2013).

In the contemporary era, Al-Alam's establishment in 2007 emerges as a modern embodiment of Iran's historical counter-propaganda endeavors. Operating under the auspices of the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting, Al-Alam functions as an English-language network epitomizing Iran's steadfast commitment to challenging prevailing biases and offering alternative perspectives on the global stage. Its role in presenting diverse narratives—often divergent from those presented by mainstream Western outlets—symbolizes Iran's ongoing resolve to amplify its voice, dispute entrenched narratives, and contribute to reshaping global perceptions (Abbasi, 2021).

Al-Alam's operational history is marked by instances in which the network faced significant challenges, ranging from supervisory measures to geopolitical pressures, impeding its capacity to serve as an alternative platform for diverse narratives. Historical examples shed light on the complexity of media operations within the intricacies of global politics. Hostile actions—such as major media campaigns against the network, legal complaints about its content, revocation of broadcasting licenses in certain countries, removal of the network from European satellites, pressure on and assassination of its journalists, destruction of network offices and expulsion from coverage zones (particularly during the Storm of Al-Aqsa war), blocking of social media accounts, blocking of the network's website domain, hacking attempts, visa restrictions, and challenges related to accessibility—are instances of this hostility (Stanley, 2015).

3.　Empirical Background

Zolfaghari and Eftekhari (2014), in an article titled *The Modern Model of U.S. Psychological Operations Against the Islamic Republic of Iran*, wrote: "Psychological operations are a means of exerting pressure to achieve desired goals, which have garnered significant attention in the contemporary era." This article aims to understand how Western psychological media operations are formed and their place in hybrid warfare against Iran (focusing on Radio Farda and Voice of America). The authors analyze the operational methods of aggressive media, such as fabricating lies, conditioning, deceptive generalizations, reverse labeling, extreme generalization, stereotyping, mockery, and ultimately demoralizing and instilling despair. The findings reveal that exaggerated portrayals of Iran's security vulnerabilities are the cornerstone of the new U.S. psychological operations model. Iran's international media is considered a key factor in countering this model (Zolfaghari & Eftekhari, 2014).

Akraminia and Fahim Danesh (2018), in a study titled *The Role of International Media Diplomacy in Strengthening Iran's Regional Position*, discussed the impact of scientific and technological advancements on media communications and international relations, which gave rise to media diplomacy. Accordingly, the extraordinary role of media diplomacy and soft power in altering the positions and relationships of national governments in different regions of the world is now evident. Iran is no exception, as its status can be evaluated based on the type and degree of its media diplomacy. This study examined the impact of Iran's international media on its regional position. The findings showed that Iran's international media, by reflecting reality about key events in Southwest Asia—such as peaceful nuclear activities, Zionist regime atrocities in Palestine, and developments in Syria, Iraq, and

Bahrain—have effectively countered the hypocrisy of Western media and directed global public opinion toward these issues. The increasing influence and penetration of these media in target communities and their role in strengthening Iran's regional position have been acknowledged by credible Western think tanks such as RAND (Akraminia & Fahim Danesh, 2018).

Naserpour (2022), in an article titled *Transformation in U.S. Sanctions Policy: From Deterrence to War (Focusing on Media Approaches)*, argued that Iran's international media play a significant role in uniting U.S.-sanctioned countries into a "club of sanctioned nations" and aligning global public opinion and international institutions with their perspectives (Naserpour, 2022).

Taheri (2019), in a study titled *The Role of International Media in Advancing Iran's Tourism Diplomacy*, examined Iran's tourism diplomacy. Taheri argued that the primary objective of tourism diplomacy, considered part of cultural diplomacy, is to enhance soft power. Given the financial and oil sanctions imposed by the U.S. against Iran, focusing on tourism can bring substantial benefits. Accordingly, the study identified challenges and barriers to Iran's tourism diplomacy and proposed media strategies for international networks to overcome them. The findings revealed that adopting proactive approaches and optimally utilizing international media in tourism diplomacy can reduce tensions with certain countries, increase foreign exchange revenues from tourism, and strengthen Iran's soft power. The study underscored the indispensable role of international media in showcasing Iran's tourism attractions and attracting foreign tourists. It also provided recommendations for IRIB's international media to overcome hybrid warfare tactics (Taheri, 2019).

Hoseini Dana and Jaheshi (2021), in an article titled *Media Offensive Strategies: Objectives, Tools, and Methods*, discussed the transformation of influence methods and modern warfare, particularly media wars. They noted: "Media warfare is the only form of war that continues unofficially between countries even during peacetime, with nations utilizing maximum media capabilities to advance national interests. The influence of media in creating psychological operations on the external front is a well-established and evolving phenomenon." The study concluded that formulating strategies and media plans for Iran's international media is crucial for achieving the

country's media diplomacy goals (Hosseini Dana & Jaheshi, 2021).

4. Methodology

This study was conducted with the aim of identifying the pattern of successful professional operations of Al-Alam Network in reporting on the Storm of Al-Aqsa war and maintaining and enhancing the resilience of Gaza residents. The present research method is grounded theory based on the Strauss and Corbin model. Grounded theory is a systematic, qualitative method that, on a conceptual level, explains an action, process, or reaction in relation to an actual topic. In this study, grounded theory serves as the main qualitative research approach, employing semi-structured and in-depth interview techniques.

Grounded Theory

Grounded theory is an inductive and exploratory research method that allows researchers in various subject areas to formulate their own theories rather than relying on existing theories. Such a theory is developed systematically based on real data. This method is particularly useful in fields where knowledge is limited. Grounded theorizing reflects the process many researchers historically engage in while reviewing past information, where they form new hypotheses to align with the data. However, in grounded theory, researchers do not claim to have formulated hypotheses in advance; they are discouraged from using predetermined hypotheses. A grounded theorist aims to present an integrated set of conceptual hypotheses that emerge from the data. In grounded theory, the study population is selected based on two criteria: being well-informed and knowledgeable about the research topic (i.e., qualified to answer the research questions regarding the subject under study), and having a lengthy, continuous, and credible lived experience with the issue under investigation. The size of the study population and any expansion of it are determined through theoretical sampling during the research process.

Interview

The most common interview approach in grounded theory is an unstructured or semi-structured in-depth interview. In this method, the interviewer introduces the subject of discussion and uses three types of questions (what, why, and how) to encourage participants to talk about that subject. Subsequent questions under these

three themes are then formed based on the interviewee's statements. In-depth interviews are interactive and require conversational interviewing skills. They offer significant flexibility and allow both the interviewer and interviewee to grasp the meaning of the questions or answers fully. In in-depth interviews, there is also a form of implicit partnership and mutual understanding often absent in other data collection methods. Moreover, any misunderstanding between the interviewer and interviewee can be quickly identified and resolved. In-depth interviews also enable respondents (subjects) to express their opinions informally or semi-formally, freely addressing topics they find significant. Consequently, qualitative studies often define in-depth and open interviews as an active process of meaning-making, in which both the interviewer and interviewee play an active role in producing data and jointly achieving shared meanings. The fundamental principle of in-depth interviews is that meaning is not merely obtained by asking and answering questions, but rather through the process of mutual comprehension and the active interaction between interviewer and interviewee. Hence, in in-depth interviews, respondents or participants are not solely sources of knowledge or data; instead, their collaboration with the interviewer shapes the insights and information. A schematic depiction of how data is obtained in structured versus unstructured interviews has been presented in related methodological texts.

Statistical Population and Sampling

A statistical population consists of a set of individuals or units that share at least one common characteristic. This shared characteristic must be present in all elements of the statistical population, distinguishing it from other populations. In the present study, interviews were conducted with active journalists from the International Division of IRIB working at Al-Alam Network and Press TV. Given the research's purposeful design, all journalists were considered as the sample (a census approach). Consequently, only seven journalists were interviewed, even with a census approach. In coordination with the International Division of IRIB, the statistical population was selected with awareness and prior coordination. Interviews were ultimately conducted with seven journalists from Al-Alam and Press TV, all of whom had experience covering countries within the resistance axis.

Two respondents worked at Press TV, and five worked at Al-Alam.

In this study, the research population also included experts and university professors specializing in media and news, as well as senior managers at the national media outlet, all holding at least a master's degree and having a minimum of ten years of work experience. The theoretical sampling method was used for selection. Based on the researcher's theoretical sensitivity, in-depth interviews with experts continued until theoretical saturation was reached. The researcher accessed these individuals in person, following the snowball method. In selecting them, purposeful sampling was employed, and with their help (informational gatekeepers), further specialists were contacted. The research questions were gradually refined during the interviews, meaning that new questions arose in the course of the interviews. These new questions were posed in subsequent interviews, and earlier participants were also consulted by phone or in person. The credibility of the findings was enhanced through selective plausibility checks. After conducting the interviews and transcribing them, repetitive or irrelevant statements were removed, and the remaining data was analyzed.

Data Analysis

One of the most crucial stages in qualitative data analysis under this approach is coding and developing a categorical system. During coding, data is first broken down based on the question axes (what, why, and how), then conceptualized, and finally reconnected. Thus, coding is the primary process of creating and refining theory from data by combining concepts and categories in grounded theory.

Open Coding

Open coding refers to the process of comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data based on the question axes. In open coding, data is separated into distinct parts for evaluation according to the axes of inquiry. Through this approach, researchers can identify and explore concepts and determine the dimensions of each. Open coding also helps detect and explore similar and different concepts, identifying and determining the dimensions of each.

Axial Coding

In axial coding, concepts and categories identified during open coding are recombined in a new way. At this stage,

it becomes evident which subcategories emerged during open coding, and how these categories can be defined and combined within a paradigmatic model according to the Strauss and Corbin approach to provide a clearer, more logical image of the causal conditions, contextual conditions, intervening conditions, strategies of action and interaction, and outcomes.

Selective Coding

Based on open and axial coding, the core category, subcategories, and concepts chosen to construct the initial theoretical framework are related in a paradigmatic model, so the research question or topic is explicitly described according to the shared understanding reached by the researcher and participants.

Validity and Reliability in Qualitative Research

Theoretical sensitivity is a vital aspect of creativity in grounded theory. It implies that a researcher can creatively draw on not only personal and professional experiences but also written texts. This skill allows the analyst to view the research conditions and relevant data from a novel perspective and explore the potential of the data to develop a new theory. Theoretical sensitivity helps identify what is significant in the data and grants it meaning. This sensitivity facilitates the development of a theory that is consistent with the reality of the phenomenon under study. Theoretical sensitivity depends on the personal qualities of the researcher, reflecting awareness of the subtleties and meaning within the data. It may stem from a researcher's previous experiences and studies and can also develop during the investigation itself. It involves insightfulness, the skill to make data meaningful, the capacity for understanding, and the ability to separate pertinent elements from irrelevant ones. All these occur at the conceptual rather than the tangible level. Theoretical sensitivity originates from several sources:

- Written texts and materials.
- Professional experiences: Over years of practice in the field, one gains an understanding of how and why events occur and what happens under specific circumstances.
- The researcher's personal experiences: These can be a valuable resource for achieving theoretical sensitivity.
- The analysis process: By working closely with the data—collecting information, questioning it,

conducting comparisons, reflecting upon observations, formulating hypotheses, and developing small theoretical frameworks—the researcher gains additional insight and comprehension of the phenomenon. The researcher then revisits the data using these perspectives.

- Accordingly, merging the data collection and data analysis steps is crucial. Each phase reinforces the other, and this interplay enhances the order of insights and clarifies the theoretical parameters of the emerging theory.

Controlling Bias in Qualitative Research

Given qualitative research's interpretive foundations and the absence of standardized tests, the potential for bias in instruments, observations, and findings is always a concern. One of the primary threats to the results of qualitative research is researchers selectively choosing data aligned with their preexisting theories and assumptions. To minimize this issue and increase the credibility and consistency of results, the study undergoes external scrutiny by expert judges. In other words, external evaluators compel the researcher to maintain honesty. This technique is a pivotal means of ensuring credibility. To accomplish this, the findings, interpretations, and conclusions are presented—often in a questionnaire format—to an external group of judges and qualitative content auditors. These individuals, who are scholars and experts in the field, communicate their level of agreement or disagreement—ranging from complete agreement to total dissent—regarding the final findings and propositions. Consequently, external experts evaluate the external construct of the research from beyond the study environment, determining whether the findings, interpretations, and results are supported by the data or if the outcomes of the project lack adequate credibility.

Validity and Reliability of the Semi-Structured Questionnaire

Validity: To evaluate the validity of the open-ended, semi-structured questionnaire, the researchers relied on the opinions of professors and experts (face validity). The initial questions were provided to the experts, who were asked to judge each question and evaluate its relevance to the intended objective. Necessary corrections were then made, and the final list of questions was validated by these reviewers.

Reliability: Given that the interviews featured open-ended questions, there was no requirement for measuring reliability.

Practical Steps of the Research Method and Data Analysis

The primary data emerged from interviews, including the responses, views, and opinions of experts. First, the recorded interviews were transcribed into text so all content could be easily compared. Analysis involves organizing, labeling, and dissecting raw data, then rearranging it into patterns, themes, concepts, and analogies. Using analytical tools and methods, researchers refine the data until it is suitable for interpretation. Interpretation is the process of making meaning.

"Data analysis is the process of structuring, categorizing, summarizing, and extracting the meaning from the large volume of collected data by reducing it to manageable segments and providing interpretation." In qualitative research, the first step is a primary reading of the field notes to identify themes, content areas, or presumptions under consideration.

The second step involved coding any systematic patterns in the notes and performing in-depth analysis. The integration of categories commenced with axial coding, using codes that establish connections among categories. This resulted in new categories and gave rise to themes encompassing multiple categories.

Since the goal of presenting the interview results is to relate the data to the research problem and objectives, the analysis was based on the interview questions and their main headings.

Because in-depth interviews are a qualitative method, the study's validity was ensured by formulating suitable questions and conducting in-depth interviews with experts in national media (network journalists). During the in-depth interviews, the research team took care that the interviewees, as experts, provided responses relevant to the research problem and the predetermined questions, thereby enhancing validity. Regarding reliability, qualitative exploratory studies do not aim for generalizability and instead investigate an issue in depth to answer the research questions. This study is no exception.

In the present research, after the finalization of questions approved by academic supervisors, advisors, and several communication professors, the questionnaire was administered to eight broadcast journalists (a census approach) from Al-Alam Network at IRIB. Upon completing these interviews and reaching theoretical saturation, interviewing ceased.

In the next phase, the data obtained from the interviews was first thematically categorized. After categorizing the questions and analyzing the data, the outputs needed to develop the theoretical model were extracted based on the intended concepts.

5.   Findings

This section analyzes the data collected through in-depth interviews with participants. Using the grounded theory method, the data were systematically coded and categorized. The primary goal of this chapter is to extract patterns and concepts that provide a deeper understanding of the experiences of journalists from the networks regarding the *"identification of the pattern of successful professional operations of Al-Alam Network in reporting on the Storm of Al-Aqsa war and maintaining and enhancing the resilience of Gaza residents."*

The key findings of this research, based on the grounded theory approach, are as follows:

The components of the axial coding paradigm in the Strauss and Corbin model include six main elements that contribute to the formation of the central phenomenon, which are elaborated below.

In the first stage, all codes related to the subject and their frequency are identified in a table.

Table 1

Open Coding

Open Codes	Interviewee Codes	Frequency (Repetition)
Attracting more audiences, altering traditional current strategies for news dissemination, identifying real needs, understanding reporting methods, training suitable staff for news, recognizing the difference between international satellite broadcasting and domestic broadcasting, utilizing SWOT matrices and strategies (defensive, offensive, analytical, and reactive)	R6, R7, R8, R11, R12	5

Increasing media penetration, selecting appropriate slogans and adhering to them, employing diverse audience attraction methods, gaining sufficient knowledge of the media environment, its audiences, and competitors, identifying various and new news media	R6, R7, R8, R9	6
Collective learning, aiming for effective and lasting presence in the news arena, focusing on service-orientation instead of profit-orientation, creating suitable platforms for active audience participation, understanding competitive space in satellite networks, distinguishing between modern media and traditional media spaces	R6, R7, R10, R11, R12	7
Increasing share in the media sphere, understanding competitive space in satellite networks, creating suitable platforms for active audience participation, accurately recognizing the media environment and its governing components, understanding audience desires and needs in new spaces	R6, R7, R11, R12	5
Active participation of national media in international activities, precise message design based on audience needs and desires, professional and precise audience analysis in the news domain, revisiting production processes at all levels, providing suitable technological infrastructure, formulating an operational news plan, reviewing news policies and goals, continuously evaluating media activities	R6, R7, R11, R12	7
Utilizing and strengthening knowledge-based media, understanding media environments and existing laws, establishing robust foundational structures for news dissemination, agile transformation in administrative news systems, the quality of news content, providing accurate and suitable information, adopting appropriate strategies, establishing a powerful legal structure; copyright laws	R10, R11, R12	6
Competing with the news broadcasting market of other satellite networks, understanding public needs, creating visual and content appeal, quality and quantity of news production, the graphic quality of programs and reports, creating security and assurance for audiences, internal infrastructure, preparing the national media for the virtual space, political trends	R6, R7, R12	6
Transparently and accurately introducing media and news activities, promotional methods, approaches for introduction, identifying competitive advantages, applying the 4P concept of news marketing, network accessibility, type and intensity of support, easy access through specific platforms, ensuring the durability of messages and news, establishing two-way interaction with audiences, analyzing competitors' power, addressing red lines in the media environment, understanding managers' and experts' perspectives on the media environment	R6, R7, R8, R9, R10, R11, R12	7
Ignoring other satellite networks and the information they provide, collective learning, aiming for effective and lasting presence in the news domain, focusing on service-orientation instead of profit-orientation, creating suitable platforms for active audience participation, understanding competitive space in satellite networks, distinguishing between modern media and traditional media spaces	R6, R7, R8, R10, R11	6
Lack of topical and content-based updates, utilizing and strengthening knowledge-based media, understanding media environments and existing laws	R7, R8, R9, R10, R11	5
Providing opinions on content, attracting more audiences, altering traditional strategies for news dissemination, identifying real needs, understanding reporting methods, training suitable staff for news, recognizing the difference between international satellite broadcasting and domestic broadcasting, utilizing SWOT matrices and strategies (defensive, offensive, analytical, and reactive)	R6, R8, R9, R10, R11, R12	4

In the next step, the primary codes are categorized to identify key themes and subcategories.

Table 2

Axial Coding

Main Category	Subcategories
Competitive Advantage	Attracting more audiences; competing with marketing strategies of other satellite networks.
Socio-Cultural Outcomes	Increasing media penetration; collective learning.
Media Outcomes	Increasing share in the media sphere; utilizing and strengthening knowledge-based media.
News-Related Outcomes	Active participation of national media in news broadcasting; transparent reporting and news dissemination.
Media Engagement	Disregarding other satellite networks; addressing outdated content; evaluating content quality.
National Media Reporting Mechanisms	Identifying real needs; understanding reporting methods; training qualified staff; creating effective and enduring media presence; understanding differences between actual and media environments; selecting and adhering to appropriate slogans.
Strategic Management Actions	Utilizing SWOT matrix and strategies (defensive, offensive, analytical, reactive); altering traditional current strategies.
Media Activity Actions	Emphasizing service orientation instead of profit orientation; adopting effective reporting methods.
Social Media Actions	Gaining adequate knowledge of satellite network environments and audiences; identifying various and new satellite networks.
Interactive Space	Attracting and convincing audiences; understanding competitors' satellite networks; active participation in satellite networks; providing updated and necessary information.
Competitive Space	Identifying audience needs; adopting a scientific approach to competition; understanding audiences in detail.
Legal Framework	Avoiding unnecessary and self-imposed limitations; establishing an independent legal team.
Support Capabilities	Utilizing broadcast support capacities.

Trust-Building	Possessing strong reassurance features.
Relational Marketing in News	Strong public relations; identifying audience needs and expectations.
Core Beliefs	Media executives' strong belief in the need for media marketing; formulating effective policies for media development; implementing updated approved plans; conducting professional reviews of production processes; creating platforms for active audience engagement; providing opportunities for youth and recruiting creative and active talent.
Competitive Intelligence	Viewing virtual platforms as opportunities; delivering content quickly and efficiently; continuous evaluation and error correction; distinguishing between modern and traditional media spaces; understanding competitive dynamics in satellite networks.
Message Management	Ensuring quality messages; disseminating accurate and appropriate information.
Target Market	Designing precise messages based on audience needs and preferences; understanding audience desires in new media environments; thoroughly analyzing audience characteristics.
Strategic Factors	Adopting appropriate strategies; leveraging existing strategies in satellite networks.
Legal and Regulatory Factors	Establishing a strong legal framework; ensuring copyright compliance and news authenticity; understanding media laws and regulations.
Information and Communication Technology	Developing serious foundational structures; providing appropriate technological infrastructure; understanding media environments and related services; conducting professional audience analysis.
Modernization and Transformations in Media Space	Introducing changes in administrative structures; continuously evaluating activities in the virtual space; revisiting policies and goals; creating operational plans; revising message production processes across all elements; fostering new perspectives among content creators.
Competitive Factors	Analyzing competitors' strengths; identifying competitive advantages.
Marketing Mix	Applying the 4P marketing concept; ensuring accessibility of media spaces; determining type and intensity of support; creating platforms for easy access; ensuring message and news durability; adopting effective promotional and introduction methods.
Process Factors	Establishing two-way interactions with audiences; understanding public needs; fostering managers' comprehension of the media space.
Content Factors	Creating visual and content appeal; preparing the national media for competitive media environments; ensuring quality and quantity of content production.
Technical Factors	Ensuring security and reassurance for audiences; enhancing the graphic quality of news and reports; improving internal infrastructure.
Government and Policy-Related Factors	Addressing regulatory red lines in the media environment; considering political dynamics.

At the final stage, the main and subcategories are separated, and duplicate codes are removed. Primary codes extracted from sentence analysis and those emphasized by all interviewees, along with significant codes identified by the researcher, were finalized and presented in the following:

Table 3

Final Codes

Concepts	Final Codes
Causal Conditions	Analyzing competitors' strengths; addressing regulatory red lines in media; managers' and experts' understanding of the media environment; the 4P concept of news marketing; network accessibility; type and level of support; easy access through specific platforms; durability of messages and news; establishing two-way interaction with audiences; promotional methods; introduction techniques; identifying competitive advantages; understanding public needs; creating visual and content appeal; quantity and quality of news production; quality of programs and reports in terms of graphics; ensuring security and audience confidence; internal infrastructure; preparing the national media for the digital space; political dynamics.
Contextual Conditions	Quality of news messages; dissemination of appropriate and accurate information; adopting suitable strategies; establishing a strong legal framework; copyright compliance; understanding the media environment and its regulations; developing a robust infrastructure for news dissemination; agile transformations in administrative structures for news and reporting; leveraging existing strategies in satellite networks; continuous evaluation of media activities; revising news policies and goals; formulating operational plans for news; providing appropriate technological infrastructure; revising message production processes; fostering a new perspective among program creators; professional and precise audience analysis; familiarity with audiences and related services; designing messages tailored to audience needs and preferences; identifying audience desires in new media environments.
Intervening Conditions	Strong public relations; identifying audience needs and expectations and facilitating two-way interaction; strong belief of Al-Alam executives in the necessity of developing media platforms; formulating effective policies for media space development; proper implementation of approved media plans; continuous evaluation and correction of errors; professional review of news production, organization, and broadcasting; delivering content quickly and efficiently to the audience; creating opportunities for youth and recruiting creative and active talent; viewing media platforms as opportunities; distinguishing between modern and traditional media spaces; understanding the competitive space in satellite networks; creating appropriate platforms for active audience participation.

Strategies	Changing current traditional strategies for news dissemination; identifying real needs; understanding reporting methods; training qualified staff for news; understanding the differences between international satellite media and domestic media; using the SWOT matrix and strategies (defensive, offensive, analytical, and reactive); selecting and adhering to suitable slogans; emphasizing effective and lasting presence in the news domain; focusing on service-orientation instead of profit-orientation; employing diverse audience attraction methods; gaining sufficient knowledge about the media environment, audiences, and competitors; identifying various and new news media.
Outcomes	Attracting more audiences; increasing media penetration; collective learning; increasing share in the media sphere; active participation of national media in international activities; utilizing and strengthening knowledge-based media; competing with other satellite networks' news markets; transparent and accurate introduction of media and news activities; disregarding other satellite networks and their provided information; addressing outdated topics and content; providing opinions on content.

The findings indicate that the pattern of successful professional operations of Al-Alam Network in reporting on the Storm of Al-Aqsa war and maintaining and enhancing the resilience of Gaza residents includes the following:

1. **Causal Factors**: These include competitive factors, the news marketing mix, process factors, technical factors, content factors, and factors related to government and policy.

2. **Core Dimensions of the Main Phenomenon**: These include interactive space, competitive space, support capabilities, and trust-building.

3. **Contextual Conditions**: These encompass message management, target market factors, strategic factors, legal and regulatory factors, information and communication technology, and modernization and transformations in the media space.

4. **Interventions**: These involve relational news dissemination, core beliefs, and competitive intelligence.

5. **Strategies**: These cover actions related to media activities, media operations, strategic management, and international activities.

6. **Outcomes**: These include competitive advantages, media outcomes, outcomes related to international media networks, socio-cultural outcomes, and outcomes linked to media engagement.

6.   Conclusion

According to the research findings, in the complex landscape of global information warfare, media operations and strategies to counter propaganda play a pivotal role in shaping narratives, influencing public opinion, and exerting geopolitical influence. Al-Alam News Network, as a state-supported media outlet, operates within the extensive scope of Iran's engagement in media and information warfare with hostile countries, countering distorted narratives. Propaganda, in contrast to impartial information dissemination, involves delivering information with the aim of influencing an audience. In this process, facts are often selectively presented and represented to elicit an emotional rather than a rational response from the audience, despite the communicator's awareness of the distortion. Zionist media outlets habitually frame events in ways that serve their own agenda, portraying themselves as justified and powerful. However, due to the efforts of resistance-aligned media outlets and activists in virtual spaces, this strategy has been neutralized, revealing the crimes of the Zionists to the global audience. This new approach not only increased audience awareness but also mobilized global public opinion against complicit or indifferent rulers, pressuring national leaders to take action to end the Gaza conflict.

Cultural beliefs and values within Palestinian society may influence how media messages are received and interpreted, potentially affecting the research outcomes negatively. Infrastructure issues in the field of information and communication technology, including unstable internet connections, can hinder the effective collection and analysis of data. Moreover, strict laws and regulations governing media activities may adversely impact media operations and data collection processes. Focusing on a specific model could reduce theoretical diversity in data analysis and influence the results, while insufficient financial resources for broader research and advanced methodologies could also affect the study's overall quality.

To address these challenges and enhance the impact of resistance-aligned media, several strategies can be adopted. Conducting target market research to identify audience needs and expectations ensures that the content produced aligns with real needs. Developing crisis management strategies to counter fake news and rival media attacks, including establishing rapid

response teams to address negative news, is essential. Strengthening the social and cultural dimensions of media messages can foster national solidarity and bolster social resilience among Palestinian citizens. These suggestions offer practical approaches to improving the performance of resistance media and maintaining the resilience of Palestinian citizens during crises.

Authors' Contributions

Authors contributed equally to this article.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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Ethical Considerations

In this research, ethical standards including obtaining informed consent, ensuring privacy and confidentiality were observed.

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