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DOMESTICATION OF GLOBAL NEWS IN THE IRANIAN PUBLIC SPHERE

The trial of ‘Alexei Navalny’ in Iranian legacy and social media

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ABSTRACT

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The aim of this thesis is to study how global news is domesticated in countries with different social and political atmospheres than those that are typically studied. This case study examines how news of the poisoning and detention of Alexei Navalny is domesticated in Iranian public sphere with the intent of discerning how a foreign framework is transformed into local or national flavors that are more relatable, understandable, and suitable for consumption by a particular audience.

I consider the case of Navalny from the perspective of domestication theory and make a comparison between the domestication strategies of legacy and social media. My findings address the research gap that exists on the domestication of global news in countries with low levels of freedom of expression. It is also a starting point for future research on the domestication of global news in social media.

For this research, my empirical data consists of all original news and reports published in my chosen sources within three weeks after each event of Navalny's poisoning and detention. The sources of this data include news agencies as samples of legacy media and Persian language tweets on Twitter as the social media. Critical discourse analysis is used as a methodological approach to analyze the news and tweets published about Navalny's story. The data analysis is inductive and makes use of grounded theory as an analytical tool.

The analysis revealed eight discourses that are used in Iranian public sphere to naturalize Navalny's news for Iranian audiences. These discourses are *territorial integrity*, *Iran nuclear negotiations*, *criticizing Iran's political atmosphere*, *domestic and foreign policies*, *human rights*, *Russian responsibility*, *criticizing Iranian opposition performance*, *sanctions*, and *the Nord Stream gas pipeline project*. Each discourse frames the issue in a different way such that Navalny's story became nationally relevant to Iranian audiences. Furthermore, while some discourses are explained exclusively in legacy media or exclusively in social media, other discourses appeared in both legacy and social media.

The results of the study demonstrate that legacy media must consider national interests or editorial policies when naturalizing a global story in the context of Iranian public sphere; legacy media, as a part of that public sphere, is subject to many official controls and reinforces banal nationalism. Social media, on the other hand, is relatively free from these strict constraints and is more critical of state structures. On social media, global news appears to be domesticated to reflect the views and values of the local people, rather than the local government.

Keywords: Alexei Navalny, domestication theory, global news, banal nationalism, public sphere, legacy media, social media, Twitter, Iran, Russia.

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*I dedicate this thesis to 'Rosa' and 'Alireza'.
Angels who accompanied me on this journey patiently and empathically.
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1. Introduction

The notion that globalization leads to a gradual homogenization of cultures, as well as the premise that globalization processes necessarily imperil natives, is no longer considered relevant. As Giulianotti and Robertson (2007, p.134) reported, “local cultures may critically adapt or resist ‘global’ phenomena and reveal how localities’ very creation is a standard component of globalization.” It would seem that in the field of global media, the very definition of translation is challenged and the boundaries of what we might term translation have been recast. The global news that passes between cultures through media is not only ‘translated’ in the interlingual sense, but also reshaped, edited, synthesized, and transformed for the consumption of a new set of readers (Bielsa & Bassnett, 2008). According to domestication theory, foreign news is told in ways that are more well-known, more coherent, and more compatible for consumption by different national audiences (Gurevitch et al., 1991 cited in Alasuutari et al., 2013). Alasuutari (2009) used the term ‘domestication’ when referring to the creation and harmonization of global trends.

Qadir and Alasuutari (2012) suggest a broader conception of domestication. All domestic actors, including the media, adapt stories and concepts transnationally and comply with local politics. Accordingly, national actors consider media a cultural public sphere where global news is domesticated and affects existing discourses. According to Habermas, the public sphere is an area of our social life in which public opinion can be formed. In theory, all citizens have equal access to the public sphere. Regulation of the content of the public sphere is a crucial but understudied aspect of politics, and the content of public spaces is a central focus of political conflict (Habermas, 1997, p.105 cited in Adut, 2012). Thus, the media is a public sphere where all actors, including politicians and citizens, present their views and frame stories or events. They reframe global news from understandable and tangible perspectives for their local audience and by doing so quietly preserve a sense of nationalism and national identity. In order to understand how this occurs, it must be determined what happens at each stage of the domestication process. When a piece of global news

enters the local context, local actors defend their points of view and interests, and over time, the global news is translated and tailored to the local conditions (Alasuutari, 2013). Of course, some voices may be heard more than others. As Billig (1995, p: 11 and 94) points out, “because politicians have become celebrities in the contemporary age, their words, which typically reproduce the clichés of nationhood, are continually reported in the mass media; unmemorable clichés and habits of political discourse are worth attention because of, not despite, their rhetorical dullness.”

In this research, I will investigate news related to Alexei Navalny, an outspoken face of Russian opposition to Putin, to understand how news of his poisoning and detention are transformed for Iranian audiences by Iranian legacy media and social media. It may appear strange that a piece of political news from one country could become so significant in another country with a different social and political atmosphere and no direct ties to the case – in other words, why should Navalny’s case be of interest to people in an unrelated country? Why is Navalny relevant to Iranian audiences? The question becomes even more relevant when we consider the relatively restricted and controlled nature of Iranian news media, which has resulted in a very active and partly independent social media environment. Given the extent of independent social media in Iran, was there any difference in how Navalny’s news was naturalized in Iran via legacy media versus via social media? To answer these questions, I considered them through the lens of domestication theory, which explains how foreign news is transformed to appeal to local audiences. Domestication theory proposes three phases in the domestication process, and my focus here is on the step of naturalization by nationalization: the process that makes global news appear local, as well as the factors that influence this process.

Before beginning the research, it is necessary first to understand who Navalny is and what reactions the news about him has elicited worldwide. Alexei Anatolievich Navalny is the leader of the Russian opposition party Future Russia. His anti-government actions, particularly relative to Putin, have made him internationally famous, as has his presidential candidacy in 2018. Time magazine named him one of the top 25 Internet influencers in 2017. Navalny’s primary source of

income is YouTube, and the Internet has enabled him to connect with his audience. Navalny was hospitalized in August 2020 after being poisoned with the neurotoxin Novichok during a flight in Russia. They then decided to transport him to a Berlin hospital for further treatment. Navalny accused Putin of poisoning him, but Putin denied the accusation. Navalny remained in Germany until January 17, 2021. When he returned to Russia, he was arrested and sentenced to 2.5 years in prison for violating his previous case's parole conditions.

Navalny's poisoning and arrest made international news headlines, prompting numerous reactions from world leaders. Germany, England, and France openly accused Putin, protested against violations of human rights laws, and even sanctioned some Russian leaders, while the leaders of Belarus, who considered Navalny's poisoning to be a fabricated story, provided documentation to support their claim, and Syria condemned the US and Western countries' interference in Russia's internal disputes. The reaction of American leaders was notable, as Navalny's poisoning occurred during Trump's presidency, and Trump's silence implied his implicit support for Putin. When Biden took office at the same time as Navalny's arrest, however, he blamed the Moscow government for Navalny's poisoning, emphasizing that silence was not an option and referring to Trump as an accomplice in crime. Despite this, many countries, including both supporters and opponents of Russia, remained silent on this issue. Iran was one such country.

As can be seen, states' reactions to events in Russia have varied depending on their foreign policies. However, the official attitude of governments is not the primary interest of this study; rather, the focus is on the domestication of news related to these events in local areas. In line with this aim, I will investigate the domestication of news related to Navalny in Iran's public sphere. There have been many studies carried out on the domestication of global news, but they have mostly focused on news media in countries with a high level of press freedom, thus overlooking the nature of this phenomenon in countries with limited press freedom. As a result, there is little extant literature on how Iranian media incorporate foreign news into their local discourses. To address this shortcoming,

this study therefore evaluates the domestication of global news in Iran, “by far the most elaborate form of censorship in media” (Rahimi, 2015, p: 362). Furthermore, most prior research has been conducted on legacy media such as newspapers by comparing the domestication of a piece of global news in different countries’ newspapers. This study, therefore, expands the field of domestication studies not only by considering contexts with limited freedom of press but also by comparing legacy media approaches with social media perspectives. The topic of this study – news of the trial, poisoning, and detention of Alexei Navalny, a critic of the Russian government – allows these research gaps to be addressed in three key ways. First, it identifies the discourses that Iranian media, which are under strict government control and censorship, apply in order to domesticate a piece of global news for their audiences. Second, it analyzes discourses applied by both legacy media and social media. Finally, it considers the close relationship between the governments of Iran and Russia and assesses whether political attitudes affected the way in which various Iranian media domesticated that news.

For this research, my empirical data consists of the official news and reports published on legacy and social media up to three weeks after the events of Navalny’s poisoning and detention. The legacy media outlets comprise three news agencies and the website of a national television news channel, and the social media data was collected from Persian language tweets on Twitter. To analyze these data sets, I applied Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a qualitative research method. The data analysis is inductive and makes use of grounded theory as an analytical tool.

For the sake of academic objectivity, I strove to maintain neutrality at all stages of this research. It is understandable that Russia’s geopolitical history and Putin’s political decisions, particularly after February 2022, have created a bias in people’s opinions of this government. However, I consciously attempt to avoid incorporating my personal understandings and values into this research, particularly concerning Iran’s policies, media laws, and the translation of Persian texts.

The structure of this thesis is as follows: Chapter two provides an overview of the story of Navalny and the history of relations between Iran and Russia, which is essential for understanding how political considerations influence the domestication of Navalny-related news in the Iranian public sphere. The following section in this chapter explains the condition of Iranian mass media, both legacy and social media, which are strongly impacted by censorship and filtering. The chapter concludes with a general description of the research problem. Chapter three explains the domestication theory's theoretical framework, presents the empirical data, introduces critical discourse analysis (CDA) as the methodological methodology in this study, and explains the data analysis in detail. Chapter four defines my precise findings discusses the three main categories of identified discourses in greater detail. Chapter five summarizes the findings, illustrates the research outcomes, and makes recommendations for future research.

2. Background

Understanding the arguments advanced in the debate over the domestication of Navalny news in Iran requires an understanding of the context in which these debates take place. This chapter provides information on the story of Navalny; the history of relations between Iran and Russia; and the state of mass media in Iran, including history, laws, and the differing performances of legacy media and social media.

2.1 The story of Navalny

Introducing Navalny as a blogger who has entered the political arena and explaining how his political and economic activities have had social effects is a complicated task. Alexei Anatolievich Navalny is a Russian opposition leader and the leader of the Future Russia Party. He is a lawyer who founded the Anti-Corruption Foundation (FBK) and has organized anti-government protests. His anti-government actions, particularly with regard to Putin, and his presidential candidacy in 2018, have

combined to make him internationally famous. In 2017, Time magazine named him one of the top 25 Internet influencers. As Gelman (2015) points out, Navalny has been using populist communication and discourse methods since 2010, when he rose to popularity among Russians. In this way, he has been successful in challenging the dominant political elite's strategy (Gelman, 2015 quoted in Glazunova 2020, 121). Navalny's primary activity is on YouTube, and the Internet has allowed him to connect with his audience as well as raise funds for his projects (Sokolov, 2015 cited in Kazun 2019).

Navalny was hospitalized in August 2020 after being poisoned with the Novichok neurotoxin during a flight in Russia. His relatives decided to transfer him to a hospital in Berlin for further treatment. Navalny remained in Germany until January 17, 2021. After recovering, Navalny went back to Russia. There, he was immediately detained on suspicion of disobeying the parole terms from his previous case. He was later arrested and given a 2.5-year prison sentence, but in May 2022, the Russian judicial system handed down a new ruling sentencing him to 9 years of imprisonment under the "strictest security measures." Navalny accused Putin of poisoning him, but Putin denied it, although evidence of FSB's (Russian Federal Security Service) involvement was discovered during the investigation. Russian authorities have not opened a formal investigation into Navalny's poisoning and have refused to take responsibility for it. Following Navalny's arrest, Putin was charged with corruption after the ACF documentary about Putin's Palace was released. These events sparked nationwide protests in January 2021, and the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) demanded Navalny's release in a resolution (Alieva & Carle, 2021).

Kazun (2019) explains that in Russia, Alexei Navalny and his current actions are considered an annoying problem. On television, government representatives attempt to avoid mentioning the opposition leader by substituting synonyms or making indirect allusions to him. Thus, Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev referred to Navalny as "that character," while his press secretary Natalia Timakova referred to him as "the opposition convict." Kazun shows that, by challenging Putin's

regime, Navalny has become important in Russia and the world (ibid.) Navalny is a political innovator and opposition leader who has frequently criticized the government in elections, on the streets, and on social media. Following the removal of his well-known blog post from Russian LiveJournal, Navalny turned to YouTube, founded Navalny TV, and produced several documentaries that exposed high-level corruption in Russia as well as the reliance on Kremlin allies for intervention. Navalny exposed the true nature of Russian elections, along with Russia's authoritarian tendencies (Smyth, 2018).

Russia has a very long and well-documented geopolitical history, one which overlaps with the history of Iran and states like Iran, but which has also antagonized America and European countries. Lassila (2021) asserts that Navalny's emergence as an actor in international politics at the height of Russian-Western relations has provided more capital for his ability to delegitimize the Kremlin. In the West, therefore, the events of Navalny's poisoning represent not just the exposure of a state-level assassination attempt, but the exposure of Russia's broader security services, which are highly regarded in the West as instruments of widespread corruption. The disclosure of confidential information to the dark net and its trafficking there, even by the security services themselves, is a sign of a deep decline in institutional trust. Amidst these realities, the KGB heirs may be unable to finish their duties.

2.2 The history of relations between Iran and Russia

Although Western countries decried the poisoning and subsequent imprisonment of Navalny, a number of countries – including Iran – remained silent for various reasons. Examining Iran–Russia relations is essential to determining whether their shared history has an impact on the way in which Navalny's news is domesticated by Iranian legacy and social media. Iran and Russia are two neighboring countries that collaborate in various fields, including political, economic, energy, and others, and these collaborations have grown in recent years. In the economic field, for example, in May 2022 trade rose 81% to a record \$3.3 billion in comparison to the previous year (Bloomberg,

2022). The following timeline summarizes the evolution of Iran–Russia relations during the last few decades:

The 1990s: Because of a shared desire to –appear as independent powers in a world dominated by the US, Russian-Iranian relations warmed significantly in the mid-1990s (Tarock, 1997).

The 2000s: Iran and Russia were in a close relationship during the Iran nuclear deal (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. JCPOA, 2013-2015) and cooperated in Syria.

The 2010s: The US sanctioned both countries’ energy industries in response to Vladimir Putin’s invasion of Ukraine and America’s withdrawal from the 2015 Iran nuclear deal (Bloomberg, 2022). In the Syrian civil war, Tehran and Moscow each insisted on retaining Bashar al-Assad for various reasons, which paved the way for further cooperation between Iran and Russia. Finally, with the financial and military assistance of the two countries, the Syrian government was able to defeat the armed opposition movements after seven years (Therme, 2018).

Iran’s relations with Russia have become closer throughout this series of political events. Therme has emphasized Iran’s anti-Americanism strategy as a reason for more necessary compromise and cooperation with Russia following United Nations Security Council resolutions, trade with the West on sensitive issues such as arms purchases, and Western sanctions. The nuclear program and technology development have been unilaterally restricted, leading to closer relations between Iran and Russia (ibid.).

2.3 Mass media in Iran

In Iran, with a population of more than 85 million people, the majority of whom are young, mass media have played a significant role. In January 2022, there were 71.94 million internet users (84.1%), 47.70 million social media users (55.8%), and 119 million mobile connections, which

demonstrates that many people have multiple mobile connections, meaning that the number of mobile connections may be greater than the number of citizens (Datareportal, 2022).

According to Potter (2013), “mass” media is a subset of media. Mass media is a set of communication tools that generally follow one-way communication. Television, radio, advertising, movies, the Internet, newspapers, and magazines are all examples of mass media. In addition, mass media follow the four main functions of culture, politics, information and entertainment (Kuper, 2004). The first newspaper of Iran was published in May 1837, and although it was later called ‘kaghaze akhbar,’ it was originally nameless. The first censorship institutions were established more than 150 years ago, and the first recognized civil laws included some press laws that were openly indicative of the royal court’s concerns about the responsibility and accountability of the press (Parstimes, 2000). Iran currently publishes approximately 50 national newspapers and several provincial and municipal newspapers. In Iran, there are approximately 20 large-scale information and news agencies. Overall, there is a contradictory attitude toward the media in Iran: while the media is considered free according to article 4 of the Iran Press Law (1985), their performance is governed by strict rules and censorship.

The first television transmitter was built in 1958, and the National Television Organization of Iran was formed in 1967. This organization currently operates under the name of the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) and is the sole legal custodian of radio and television programs. In this way, Iran’s television and radio channels are state-owned and overseen by a Supervisory Council, and the head of the IRIB is appointed directly by the leader of Iran. It is noteworthy that there are no private or commercial radio or television stations. In Iran, watching television is much cheaper than reading the newspaper. There is no fee for viewers to receive national television channels. The only costs involved are energy costs (Baghestan & Hassan, 2010). Although the government outlawed satellite reception equipment in 1994, the ban was implemented irregularly, and many Iranians

continued to receive satellite programs (Afary, 2020). Iran's television currently has a variety of national, transnational, provincial, and local channels.

According to the latest population census of the country in 2017, more than 50% of Iran's population was under 30 years old (Statistical Center of Iran). Lee (2006) explains that young people learn to work with technology earlier than adults. Therefore, it is not surprising that Internet research shows that most Internet users in Iran are young. The Internet helps young people form communities with other like-minded people (Woo-Young, 2005). The anonymity of the Internet allows the youth of Iran to raise their issues and opinions without fear of social and political consequences.

Due to various factors, including Iran's geopolitical development, the increasing range of media, increasing press coverage, increasing literacy, and growing geographic and social mobility, the use of mass communication tools in Iran has significantly increased in recent decades. Bastan et al. (2017) conducted research on young people in Tehran in 2017 and found that 43% of the respondents chose the Internet and social networks as their first source of news and information about events. Another important use of the Internet, especially in Iran, is bypassing censorship restrictions. Montazerqaem and Shagasemi (2008) explain that one of the Internet's functions in societies with authoritarian governments is to move against the dominant flow of communication. According to a study by Reporters Without Borders (2006), many Iranian Internet journalists have turned to the Internet to escape censorship. Other social groups that have lost the ability to express their identity and exercise power have also found the Internet an excellent place to advance their goals.

2.3.1 Legacy media in Iran

Since online news effectively made its debut in the early 1990s (Deuze, 2001), online news market penetration in Iran, like in other countries around the world, has been steadily increasing. In comparison to earlier generations who turned to radio and television, most contemporary news

consumers began turning to the internet for breaking news while they awaited the release of their neighborhood newspaper (Diel, 2017). As Motamednejad (2003) explains, only a few nations in the world, including Iran, have given the new media forms of online journalism and online-only news organizations serious consideration and development in recent years.

Journalism that is only published online and has no print counterpart is referred to as online-only journalism. Due to the government monopoly on TV and radio channels, challenging license restrictions for print media, the issue of censorship, the high costs of print media production and distribution, and the significant number of people with technical and journalistic education, this type of journalism appeared and developed quickly in Iran. In addition to legacy media presences, political parties and some citizens also have their own online news websites, particularly those interested in politics and social activities, as well as lectures, students, and journalists. Because of this, Iran has the largest number of blogs in the world after China (IPS, 2007 cited in Baghestan & Hassan, 2010).

The investigation of Iranian media policy provides a comprehensive view of media regulation in Islamic and revolutionary countries. Press laws, IRIB (broadcasting) laws, satellite laws, and cyberspace laws are the four main categories of media laws in Iran (Pourrashidi et al., 2021). Rahimi (2015) explains that there are two types of censorship in Iran: preventive and reactive. In broad historical terms, media censorship has been primarily identified as reactive regulation, which is the most complicated form of censorship in Iran. Censorship has been crucial in the suppression of domestic opposition, and control of ideas and information in the public sphere, beginning with the censorship of the nation's second-oldest newspaper, *Vaqaye-e-Ettefaqiye* in 1851 and continuing with the jamming of satellite television and the blocking of websites. As challenges from dissidents have become more intense, state censorship has become more sophisticated at every significant political crisis in modern Iranian history. Particularly during times of crisis, censorship restrictions have become so severe that all media have been shut down or subjected to increased scrutiny.

Controlling what can be displayed has been the main tactic used to support state power and ideology (Rahimi, 2015).

Baghestan et al. (2010) discuss the special Press law of the Islamic Republic of Iran: “In 1985 the Iranian parliament passed a special press law which detailed the legal procedures for dealing with offenses by the press, defined to include all periodicals, including procedures to be followed in Press Courts” (ibid. p. 247). According to this law, the press’s primary function is to educate the public and advance knowledge and understanding. Its other responsibilities include furthering the goals outlined in the Islamic Republic of Iran’s Constitution; avoiding categorization of people based on their ethnicity, language, mores, or regional customs, as this can lead to the creation of erroneous and divisive social boundaries; combating the effects of colonial culture (immorality, love of luxury, rejection of religiosity, propagation of prostitution); and upholding and strengthening the “Neither East Nor West” policy (Iran Press law, articles 2 and 6, 1985).

Article 4 of the Press Law forbids all types of censorship: “No official or unofficial authority has the right to exert pressure on the press for the publication of any material or article, or to attempt to censor or control the press” (Iran Press Law, 1985). However, Article 6 forbids, among other things, publishing material that “creates divisions among the different strata of society” or “harms the bases of the Islamic Republic” (Press Law, 1985). Such sweeping language is open to abuse. Motamednejad (2002) identified several issues with this article. The main one is that while press freedom is mentioned, it is not assured. Article 4 of the Iran Press Law (1985), which prohibits censorship but also broadly establishes a basis for the harsh punishment of content deemed inappropriate, was passed in Iran after the Islamic Revolution. As a result, if some aspects of media freedom are not provided or guaranteed, the former liberty may be limited, resulting in all forms of media censorship and prior restraint. Although Article 4 prohibits censorship after the Islamic Revolution, it also broadly establishes a basis for the harsh punishment of content deemed inappropriate (Motamednejad, 2002).

2.3.2 Social media in Iran

News websites, which first appeared in the 1990s, shifted people's news acquisition from newspapers and radio to online media, and social media, with its unique features, consolidated this shift. Over the past twenty years, as Svensson (2011) explains, online social networking is increasingly used to manage identities and communicate those identities to others. In addition, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010, cited in Effing et al., 2011, p. 30) define social media as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content." Therefore, it has found a notable place as an important reference for audiences.

Moreover, more people are using the Internet. Iran had fewer than one million Internet users in 2000, but by 2010 and 2022, more than 43% and over 84.1% of the population, respectively, were Internet users (Internet World Stats - Usage and Population Statistics, 2022). The use of new media by activists in Iran, where the median age is 26 and roughly half the population is under the age of 35, was facilitated by a number of factors. Nearly all people in the world now own a cellphone, and the government's pervasive media censorship has given people even more reasons to turn to the Internet for news and information (Iran Telecommunications Report, 2012, cited in Wojcieszak and Smith, 2014). According to the definition of Kaplan & Haenlein (2010), social media is a platform to facilitate information exchange between users. Different types of social media try to replicate all dimensions of face-to-face interactions in a virtual environment. The development of new media and the rise in cybercrime compelled government regulation of cyberspace and its adoption. The government intended to monitor Internet users, control the Internet, and deal with those who abused it. The Supreme Council of cyberspace was established in 2012 by order of the Islamic Revolution's Leader, who also selected its main and legitimate members. This decree states that creating a strategy to achieve this objective is significant and that the government must work to achieve it. Additionally, the government is dedicated to providing people with a wide range of beneficial services, together

with the necessity for ongoing planning and coordination to be protected from the harms of the internet (DESCC, 2012, cited in Pourrashidi et al., 2021).

Because protecting Iran’s national identity and religious convictions while further preventing the unlicensed use of Western cultural products via broadband internet connections are the main objectives of filtering such websites, the majority of filtered websites contain pornographic or “immoral” content. However, occasionally internet censorship also applies to websites with content related to politics, society, and other humanities. Baghestan et al. (2010) contend that media will be at risk as long as Iran’s media law does not protect the right to free expression (252). A review of Iran’s social media user landscape reveals that Instagram is the most popular platform among Iranian users (statcounter.com, April 2022). Since 2009, during the Iranian presidential election, the government has censored Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube out of concern about coordinated protests. In September 2013, Twitter and Facebook were temporarily unfiltered due to a technological fault; however, they were filtered again the next day. In April 2022, traffic to social media sites in Iran was divided as shown in Table 1:

Table 1: Social Media Stats in Iran – April 2022

Social Media Stats in Iran – April 2022	
Instagram	72.9% (banned from Sep. 2022)
Pinterest	17.94 %
Facebook	2.88% (banned from 2009)
YouTube	2.19% (banned from 2009)
Twitter	1.46% (banned from 2009)
LinkedIn	1.13%
Other media	1.5 %

In general, internet freedom in Iran is not stable and has been changed in different conditions. For example, following waves of protests across the nation in November of 2019, the government imposed a near-total internet shutdown and continued to obstruct access to several social media and communication platforms along with independent news websites. Additionally, authorities continued

to control internet infrastructure, which helped them obstruct internet access during politically sensitive events. In recent years, bloggers, online journalists, activists, and citizens have been arrested and prosecuted for their online content. The government has continued to block websites and prohibit content deemed critical of the government (Rahimi, 2015).

Since 2009, the government has tightened its grip on the media. Dozens of publications have been forced to close, and hundreds of journalists, thinkers, and political dissidents have been forced into exile or detained. Filtering and monitoring content deemed politically or culturally sensitive on the Internet has become a significant government initiative, as has slowing Internet speeds to obstruct access (Saminejad, 2011). During the recent Iranian protests, which began in September 2022, the government filtered Instagram under the guise of preventing societal upheaval and claimed that the country's enemies controlled the platform. Because the Iranian government has no access to Instagram's user's information and cannot pursue offenders and those who use this platform to attack the regime, this site has been filtered (ISNA, 2022). It is worth noting that despite the fact that radio and television are the regime's mouthpieces, Iranian audiences use bypass tools to access various social media platforms. Because of the sensitive nature of the issue (bypass tools are illegal in Iran), evidence on how youth respond to online censorship is limited. The frequency with which young Iranians use bypassing tools to access blocked websites is unknown, as is whether or not those who use social media for political reasons are more likely to come across filtered content (which could indicate their attempts to access sensitive material) (Wojcieszak & Smith, 2014).

2.4 Research problem and research questions

Various studies in the field of domestication have been conducted on domestication of global models, global ideas, global terms, and international comparisons. For instance, Alasuutari et al. (2011) conducted a study on the domestication of foreign news related to the Arab Spring, comparing coverage of the event in leading British, Finnish, and Pakistani newspapers. Another study examined the role of culture and history in the domestication of global higher education trends in Pakistan

(Qadir, 2013), and yet another considered the domestication of international comparisons to assess the role of the OECD program for international student assessment (PISA) in Finnish education policy (Rautalin, 2013). Most earlier research in the field of news domestication shares two characteristics: first, the studies examined countries with a high level of free flow of information, and second, they analyzed legacy media, particularly newspapers. To date, no research on domestication has been conducted in Iran or other countries with low levels of press freedom. This study therefore aims to address the domestication of global news in Iran, not only in legacy media but in social media as well.

I suggest that this perspective is beneficial to understanding the significance of a nation's regular discourses on the domestication of global news and the importance of the concept of various media's different performances in domestication theory. In other words, it displays to us how global news is naturalized and brought close to local audiences. This study is therefore significant because the position of press freedom in Iran is contradictory to what has previously been studied. Although the Iranian media is free under the law, there are restrictions on information that governments can use to pressure or censor the media by exercising power. This study applies domestication theory to examine how different actors domesticate global news in the Iranian public sphere by analyzing news stories published in various media. Accordingly, the following research questions are posed:

- How was news related to Navalny domesticated in the Iranian public sphere?
- Which discourses did legacy and social media employ to bring such global news closer to local audiences?

3. Theory, Data, and Methods

3.1 Domestication theory

In a broad sense, media brings people from all over the world together and informs them about specific issues such as wars, natural disasters, and political events, leading to a shared perspective.

On the other hand, foreign news can be fit into different local frames because the way such global news is presented to local audiences is shaped by regional policies, specifically by national governments. Therefore, due to cultural and political differences, international products or events take on a local flavor and may lose some of their original significance. The media's main responsibility is to domesticate news stories and give them significance to the audience members they serve. In addition, according to Billig (1995), despite growing opinions that nation-states are declining and globalization is the order of the day, it is essential to remember that nationhood is still being reproduced, and its symbols and assumptions are marked on a daily basis.

Domestication entails introducing a global model or news into a local context and transitioning to a mechanism that adapts it to the local context. Domestication theory divides the process of domestication into three stages: the cultural framework of the competition, the local field battle, and naturalization by nationalization. Following domestication theory, this study focuses on how different actors domesticate global news in the Iranian public sphere by analyzing news stories published in the media and comparing different approaches of legacy and social media. Domestication theory has been used as a theoretical framework in this study because it is best suited to understanding how foreign news is brought into the local setting. As Gurevitch et al. (1991, cited in Alasuutari et al., 2013) explain, 'foreign' news stories are presented in a way that makes them more relatable, understandable, and suitable for consumption by audiences of various nationalities. The main focus of domestication theory is on actors who participate in the process of transformation. However, other theories study the differentiation patterns of change between original and updated versions. For instance, localization theory (Acharya, 2004, 259) focuses on bringing in foreign frameworks which provide the best solution to local problems. On the other hand, domestication theory focuses on the transformation of a framework into local or national flavors (Alasuutari et al. 2013). Domestication theory provides a more bottom-up viewpoint that builds on global polity accounts while emphasizing national policy-making processes (Qadir, 2013).

My focus here is on the stage of naturalization by nationalization: the processes that make global news appear local, as well as the factors that influence this process. To see national policy-making as the domestication of global policy models, this framework emphasizes nationalization by naturalization as a crucial step (Billing, 1995). According to Billig's definition of banal nationalism, the entire set of familiar assumptions about nationality, the world, and our place in it must be discursively marked and exposed to the audience's sight and hearing such that everyday linguistic habits serve as constant reminders of nationality. Citizens of a society do not lose their national identity in this way because they are constantly reminded that they live in nations (ibid.). Most classic works on nations and nationalisms were written when the media landscape was primarily limited to legacy media such as press, radio, television, and cinema; with the major media developments that have occurred in recent decades, particularly the rapid expansion of the Internet, it is necessary to review the relationship between nations, nationalisms, and media. When it comes to the Internet, online audiences are frequently both receivers and producers of content (Szulc, 2017).

In this way, global issues tie to popular nationalization discourses, which facilitates the acceptance of global issues throughout the domestication process. As Qadir (2013) explains the domestication of global trends of higher education in Pakistan, he reminds us that local politics and interests remain important in the process of domesticating a global model of higher education policy, but the emphasis here has been on how that was done in order for the reform to appear naturally national.

Qadir and Alasuutari (2013) explain that nationalization occurs during the domestication process when a new idea becomes naturalized through the processes by which it enters the local political arena, frequently through an interest-driven contest. This phase of domestication is crucial because it establishes the direction of policies in a nation-state. According to this research, new concepts, terms, and models are affected by internal concerns, domestic interests align with them, and banal nationalism is strengthened as a result. This entire process is referred to by the authors as

the domestication of global trends. Domestication is thus the process by which universal concepts or models are adopted on a global scale while assuming a national significance that is adapted to regional concerns and perceived as undeniably “ours.” According to this definition, in this study, I aim to analyze how news on #Navalny is domesticated in Iran’s public sphere. I intend to examine how this news became integrated into internal issues and was naturalized for Iranian audiences. I then evaluate whether there is a meaningful difference in the domestication of Navalny’s news in legacy media and social media, given the different natures and levels of monitoring of information platforms in these two types of media.

To explain exactly how media domesticates global events, according to Alasuutari et al. (2013), there are four different modes that can be identified. These consist of “bringing the events closer through appealing to emotions; linking the events with compatriots; reporting on statements, moves, and acts by domestic actors; and implicating domestic politics” (699). In other words, the process of domestication is not always natural and neutral; there are always hints of social and political criteria and factors involved in bringing out the change in local conditions controlled by local politicians (Khamsi, 2003).

3.2 The data

3.2.1 Data sources

My legacy media resources in this study include three news agencies – ISNA (Iranian Students News Agency), IRNA (Islamic Republic News Agency), and Fars News Agency, as well as a national television channel’s news website (IRIN). My social media source was Twitter, and I worked with tweets which were written in Persian. Tweets were posted by individuals or official writers in both incidents. I reviewed news and tweets for three weeks after each event. I planned to start in the legacy media section by choosing four newspapers (Kayhan, Vatan Emrooz, Shargh, and Etemad) and two news agencies (IRNA and ISNA). I gathered their reports based on my criteria; however, the number

of reports in each newspaper was kept to a minimum, and most news papers' reports were quoted from news agencies. Therefore, I decided to abandon newspapers as data sources in favor of news agencies, which are currently much more popular among Iranian audiences. To conduct a comprehensive analysis, I chose both media sources that appeared to sympathize with government activities and policies in their reporting and media sources that appeared to be critical of government activities and policies. Because access to news agencies and television channels' news in Iran is free, and users do not require accounts, there was no definitive solution to assess the accurate number of users of each news agency and TV news channel. In the social media section, I reviewed all tweets posted within this time frame and relating to this topic. When tweets were analyzed, they were classified according to who wrote them, such as ordinary citizens, journalists, politicians, or organizations.

In selecting sources for the data, two points were considered. First, the media's popularity among Iranian audiences indicated the level of user use. The second was the diversity of the media approach – it was necessary to find both media that sympathized with government activities and policies and media which did not sympathize with the government. One way to estimate readers of online news sites is to look at the Alexa list. Thakur et al. (2011) discuss Alexa Traffic Rank as the most popular website traffic measurement unit. Because Alexa's ranking is based on website traffic rather than incoming links, it is very relevant for sites that receive a lot of targeted traffic. The lower the numerical order, the more popular the website, as a lower Alexa rank indicates that the website gets a larger proportion of traffic. Alexa ranks each news website on a global and national scale. In this study, the focus was on organizing the data sources by national ranking in Iran.

As Ruigrok et al. (2007, p.73) point out, “an important aspect when considering news domestication is the focus on official sources. The importance of official sources is significant, especially with regard to foreign policy and security issues.” As a result, while the selected media are not the most popular among Iranians, they are the top priorities among the official news media.

Following a search of the most popular Iranian websites, it was discovered that the top rankings were related to other types of websites such as online shopping sites, specialized sports and art news, and video-sharing websites. Although private sector news websites were also seen, they do not produce original news and only share news from news agencies on their websites. As a result, they cannot be considered a primary source which demonstrates the domestication of world news in Iran. Iran's main news agencies, considered official sources and the first source of news for other websites, were ranked as shown in Table 2. By this metric, ISNA was the most visited news website, ranking 53rd, followed by Fars News and IRNA.

Regarding the news website of a television network, it is essential to note that the Radio and Television News Network (IRIN News Channel) is the most popular specialized network of the national media (IRIB, December 2020), which uploads the text of televised news to its website. Therefore, even though this website's Alexa rank is relatively low compared to news agencies, it is significant since it represents Iran's national source of radio and television news surrounding Navalny.

Table 2: Data Sources and Their Rank in Alexa

News website	Description	Alexa national rank
ISNA News Agency	The Iranian Students News Agency is a news organization run by Iranian university students. www.isna.ir	58
FARS NEWS News Agency	The Fars News Agency is a news agency in Iran managed by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, an armed wing of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei. www.farsnews.ir	63
IRNA News Agency	The Islamic Republic News Agency is the official news agency of the Islamic Republic of Iran. It is government-funded and controlled by the Iranian Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance. www.irna.ir	98
IRINN National Television	News website of the news network of the Islamic Republic of Iran. www.irinn.ir	2220

Twitter was chosen as the social media source for a number of reasons. Although Twitter usage of Iranian has been the fifth rank between social media (see Table 1 in page 19), the more political nature of the Twitter platform in Iran and the advanced search facilities that made it possible to search in a specific period in the past led to the decision to collect data from Twitter in this study. According to a survey by Beta Research Center (Finizadeh, 2202), there are over 7,000 Iranian accounts on Instagram with over 500,000 followers, which is unique among other social networks such as Twitter or Telegram in terms of influencers.

However, the main topic of these pages was not politics. According to that study, the first ranks are celebrities (31%), education and entertainment (20%), commercial and advertising (11%), sports (7%), and so on. Meanwhile, less than 3% of these pages dealt with media and political issues, which caused the Instagram review to be removed from this study. Pinterest is a social networking site where you can collect and share images and so is primarily an entertainment platform, not a news one.

Facebook likewise proved irrelevant, despite its earlier popularity in Iran. When Facebook first appeared in 2004, many Iranians joined and were active. According to the World Internet Stats database (MashreghNews, 2012), approximately 46% of Facebook users in the Middle East were Iranians in 2012. However, it appears that the filtering of this platform since 2009 and the emergence of newer social media platforms such as Instagram, which has more visual appeal and interactive features, has caused Iranian Facebook members to reduce their activities (Abolhasani, 2015).

In addition, another study in Iran discovered that YouTube is primarily used to earn foreign currency. The most important and popular topics on YouTube among Iranian users include humor and entertainment, sidelines, gossip, education, knowledge, technology, games, and lifestyle (Alemian, 2019). As a result, political and media issues do not have an important place on this platform for Iranian users. Despite previous social media use, the majority of Iranian Twitter users are associated with news accounts (Ashuri, 2020). Iran's Foreign Minister, Javad Zarif, for example,

was the most followed Iranian Twitter user in 2018, and the BBC Persian Twitter account was ranked second. In other words, the top ten Twitter accounts did not include any artists or other celebrities; instead, they were all news or political in nature.

During and immediately after Iran's contested election in 2009, international media rebranded the popular uprising as a "Twitter Revolution" (Segan, 2009). Some political analysts have used Twitter as a "protagonist technology that enabled the powerless to survive a brutal crackdown and information blackout by the ruling authorities," following in the footsteps of National Journal White House Correspondent Marc Ambinder (Ambinder, 2009, cited in Wojcieszak and Smith, 2014).

According to Shirazi (2018), in terms of hashtags and easy searches across users' recent posts, Twitter appears to have a significant advantage over Facebook and other social media platforms. Furthermore, during Iran's nuclear talks from 2013 to 2015, Zarif and other negotiators used Twitter constantly. The focus of this research will be on Twitter as a social media platform that allows any user to have a personal opinion on global news regardless of imposed pressures and policies. This study will look specifically at Iranian tweets on Navalny to see how global news is domesticated on Twitter.

3.2.2 Data collection

To collect data on legacy media's resources, I used an advanced reference search of their websites and searched "Navalny" as a keyword for a period of up to three weeks after each event. On Twitter, the "Advanced Twitter Search" allowed me to select keywords (#Navalny), language (Persian), and time period for searching tweets for three weeks. Only original tweets with content related to #navalny were analyzed in this study, and retweets were not taken into account.

The number of reports collected from each source is presented in Table 3:

Table 3: The Number of Reports From Each Data Source

Media	Type	Title	Number of reports		
			Poisoning	Detention	Total
			Up to three weeks from 20.8-2020	Up to three weeks from 17.1.2021	
Legacy Media	National Television News Channel	IRINN	4	14	18
	News Agency	IRNA	9	60	69
		ISNA	49	61	110
		Fars news	5	2	7
Social Media	Twitter	-	73	86	159

In this study, I examined how news on Navalny’s poisoning and detention was domesticated in Iranian media in two periods: August 2020 and January 2021. For this purpose, all news and reports published up to three weeks after each event were studied on selected media, both legacy and social. The timing and coverage of Navalny’s news are both meaningful; following Navalny’s poisoning, Iranian legacy media published relevant reports with significant delay. This situation was heightened in the government-friendly media (a television news channel and Fars News). During the three weeks, only 67 news items were published in the selected media, and information about Navalny is rarely seen in the chosen media after those three weeks.

Another noteworthy point was that, during this period, the legacy media focused more on translating international media news and less on producing original reports based on editorial policies. Things changed after Navalny was arrested, however. The chosen media outlets quickly began publishing a wide range of news. Although the majority were translated, some original reports were included. 137 pieces of news were published in the investigated media during this time period, which was likewise set at three-weeks to capture the variety of news that was produced and later repeated.

On the other hand, All related tweets were collected and analyzed to compare Twitter activity with legacy media activity. There were 73 tweets for the poisoning event and 86 tweets for the detention event.

3.3 Critical discourse analysis (CDA)

A phrase used frequently in qualitative research, “discourse analysis” has almost as many definitions as it does applications. Words are naturally understood in the context in which they are used, their nonliteral meaning or power is considered, and the social implications of the words used are revealed (Antaki, 2008). In other words, discourse analysis focuses on a text’s impact and the contextual factors that influence discourse formation. Typically, critical research aims to look into and analyze societal power relations and develop normative viewpoints. This will allow for the evaluation of such social ties while keeping an eye on the potential for social change.

Discourse is a specific way of talking about and understanding the world, and it is thus an essential component of the social construction of reality. Fairclough (1992, cited in Philips & Jorgensen, 2002) defines discourse as the practice of constructing the world’s meaning. In addition, according to Smith (2007), discourse analysis seeks to discover discourse’s meaning, structure, and function. We deal with factors outside the text in discourse analysis, not just linguistic words (situational, cultural, and social context).

Furthermore, Hajer’s (1995) research claims that in everyday speech, discourse is seen as synonymous with discussion or, at best, as a mode of talking. However, in the social sciences, discourse’s meaning is more precise and diverse. Ideas, concepts, and classifications are created, reproduced, and transformed into a set of functions that give physical and social realities meaning in the social sciences. Because it focuses on the function of power in discourse, critical discourse analysis is an appropriate choice for addressing the domestication of global news and examining the various legacy and social media approaches. When something newsworthy occurs, politicians or other

actors frequently exploit the situation by linking the foreign news item to domestic politics to achieve their goals (Qadir & Alasuutari, 2013). Wittgenstein referred to discourses as “forms of life,” or universal ways of knowing, valuing, and experiencing the world. They can be used to assert power and knowledge, as well as to resist and criticize. Furthermore, they benefit everyday local texts in terms of developing productive capacity and understanding, regulating and normalizing, developing new knowledge and power relations, and establishing hegemony (Luke, 1997).

Moreover, journalists, particularly in the process of domestication, should not be considered the only actors in this process. According to Qadir and Alasuutari (2013), societal actors at large are involved in this process, frequently utilizing the critical role of mass media in the public sphere. As can be seen, the role of other actors, such as politicians or social activists, in the domestication process, which sometimes influences legacy media and social media behavior, should be considered. In the media sector, in addition to the role of national interests in determining discourse, Archetti (2008) identifies editorial policy as the set of norms at the level of each media organization that define the newspaper agenda. In what Bruns and Highfield (2012) call citizen journalism, every citizen can freely engage in journalistic activities. As a result, this study compares discourse analysis in these two types of media, which are legacy and social media, and the results will be significant in reaching the study’s goal.

This study will examine how news about Navalny’s poisoning and detention is domesticated in Iran’s public sphere and compare it to social media discourse. To accomplish this goal, it is necessary to determine how the Iranian public perceives and interprets news about Navalny. Examining relevant reports in popular news media targeted towards Iranian audiences is one of the most reliable and accessible ways to accomplish this goal. In this study, the data analysis is inductive, and as an analytical tool, I make use of grounded theory.

Urquhart et al. (2010) explain that the qualitative research method known as “grounded theory,” which seeks to do so, can be used to develop a theory. Using the inductive grounded theory

method of theory discovery, a researcher can construct a theoretical account of the essential features of a topic while also grounding it in empirical observations or data. It differs significantly from other qualitative research techniques because of the particular approach grounded theory takes to theory development, which maintains that data collection and analysis must constantly interact.

Researchers in the social sciences who are looking to understand the underlying social processes influencing interaction regularly use the interpretive research methodology known as grounded theory. The methodology can be used to learn more about a group's behavioral patterns. An interpretive research methodology known as grounded theory can be used to produce research-based knowledge about behavioral patterns (Glaser, 1978 cited in McCallin, 2003). Some characteristics of grounded theory are: theory building, no pre-formulated hypotheses which means it uses for theory building, not theory verification, requires joint interaction between data collection and comparison (Urquhart et al., 2010)

4. Analysis and Findings

In this chapter I present my findings, explain the process of analyzing data and finally discuss my empirical analysis of discourses, which is divided into three political, social, and economic groups. This study demonstrates that Navalny's news has domesticated by eight discourses in Iranian legacy and social media which have well-known meanings for Iranian audience: territorial integrity, Iran nuclear negotiation (JCPOA), criticizing Iran's domestic and foreign policies, human rights, Russian responsibility, criticizing Iranian opposition performance, sanction and Nord Stream project.

To analyze my data, I began by reading through my sample of legacy media news (240 news articles and reports) and Twitter posts (159 tweets) to get a general sense of their contents. I then performed a closer read of each item in the sample and highlighted the relevant phrases and sentences directly related to Navalny's story (317 phrases and sentences out of 400 articles and tweets). I extracted 186 topics after removing duplicates (see appendix for more details) and later merged

similar keywords to categorize the 186 topics into 54 themes. Finally, I combined and classified these themes into eight domestication discourses based on frequency and relationship. These eight discourses were then further sorted into political, social, and economic groups, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Detail of Topics, Themes, Domestication Discourses, and Categories

Topics (186)*	Themes (54)	Domestication Discourses (8)	Categories (3)
Condemning Poisoning	Political interference, Recalling ambassadors, Leaking information, Western’s poisoning approaches are fuss and noise, the EU-Russia relationship, the Global internet is restricted in Russia, and Censorship media.	Territorial integrity	Political
	Iran Nuclear negotiations (JCPOA)	Nuclear negotiations	
	Criticism of eliminating critics and opposition, Comparing Putin’s behavior with that of Iranian leaders, Referring to the similarity of some behaviors in Iran, Politics of dictatorship, Same way of terrorists, Criticism of the country’s political atmosphere consists of domestic and foreign policies.	Criticizing Iran’s political atmosphere, domestic and foreign policies	
Condemning Russia Condemning Russian violence against protesters (etc.)	Support for Russian protesters, Trump’s reaction, Biden’s reaction, Condemning violent behavior of Russian government, Request for releasing of Navalny, Condemning poisoning, Poisoning with a chemical weapon, Navalny’s asylum, Rights of protesters, Embezzlement, Permission for treatment in Germany, Navalny deserves the Nobel peace prize, Navalny’s family relationship, Comparing Europe’s response to the victims of the October 2019 protests in Iran and the Navalny assassination, Comparing the world’s attention to Navalny treatment with Ibrahim Zakzaky, Contradictory attitude of hospital doctors in Russia towards the presence of poison.	Human rights	Social
	Condemning Russia, Transparent investigation necessity, Assassination attempt, Putin’s palace story, Conspiracy theory, Exclusive elections, Spy meetings, Sudden death of Navalny’s doctor in Russia, Arrest protesters, any evidence for poisoning, Putin’s initial opposition to transferring Navalny to Germany, Criticism of the method of Putin for eliminating critics and opposition, Putin is like a madman holding a gun, Navalny must control him.	Russian responsibility	

	Comparing Navalny’s performance with Iranian critics abroad, the Role of the critical fighter in dealing with dictators in dictatorial societies, Dual behavior of Iranian intellectuals in dealing with international issues.	Criticizing Iranian Opposition performance	
	Restrictions on Russian exports, Limitations for trades based on the Ruble, Europe should impose sanctions on Russia.	Sanction	Economic
	European countries’ reaction to Nord Stream, American reaction to Nord Stream, Germany’s withdrawal from the Nord Stream gas pipeline, Stop the gas project.	Nord Stream gas pipeline project	

* Complete list of 186 topics presented in appendix

In summary, Iranian media made news related to Navalny more understandable and comprehensible to Iranian audiences by domesticating it into eight discourses across political, social, and economic groups. A comparison of the discourses used in legacy media and social media news reveals that four discourses – human rights, Russian responsibility, sanctions, and the Nord Stream project – are commonly seen in legacy media and social media news, but certain discourses appear more in one media form than the other. There are two discourses presented exclusively by legacy media (territorial integrity and Iran’s nuclear negotiation) and a further two exclusively presented by social media (criticizing Iran’s domestic and foreign policies and criticizing Iranian opposition performance). Table 5 displays the distribution of discourses.

Table 5: Comparison of Discourses in Legacy Media and Social Media

Categories	Political			Social			Economic	
	territorial integrity	Iran nuclear negotiation	criticizing Iran’s domestic and foreign policies	human rights	Russian responsibility	criticizing Iranian opposition performance	sanctions	Nord Stream Project
Legacy Media	✓	✓	----	✓	✓	----	✓	✓
Social Media	----	----	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

In the following sections, detailed examples will be provided for each of the three categories of articles and tweets for illustration purposes. I present my empirical analysis which shows that the discourses of Navalny's news on legacy and social media that are domesticated into the Iranian public sphere. In this analysis section, based on the above table, the explanations of each discourse is presented in two parts related to legacy media and social media. To ensure transparency and the ability to locate the original versions of the presented data extracts, I marked the translated data extracts in this analysis chapter with footnote references to this list. To illustrate my analysis, I translated several data extracts into English.

4.1 Political category

The political category includes the discourses on territorial integrity, Iran's nuclear negotiation (JCPOA), and criticizing Iran's domestic and foreign policies.

4.1.1 Territorial integrity discourse

According to Marxsen (2015), it is acknowledged that territory serves as both a physical boundary and a precondition for the realization of political independence; the law as it stands is inextricably linked to territorial integrity and political independence. A territory is the exclusive zone in which a state's political independence can be expressed and where foreign governments may not, in principle, interfere. As a result, territorial integrity necessitates more than just protection against permanent changes in borders; it necessitates protection against all types of external interventions into a state's territory (ibid.).

In this research, I found that 20 topics out of 186 were related to territorial integrity discourses. It is worth noting that only the legacy media discussed issues concerning foreign interference in Russia's internal affairs in this section. Despite news such as Russia's summoning its ambassadors posted in other countries, Twitter users did not post any tweets about territorial integrity discourse. To clarify, a review of the news shows that whenever European leaders condemned the poisoning

and arrest of Navalny or demanded sanctions against Russia, Russia summoned their locally posted ambassadors to respond to such claims and expelled the diplomats of other countries under the pretext of interference in Russia's internal affairs.

In some specific cases, Russia took foreign interference more seriously: during the popular protests in Russia following Navalny's arrest, some German, Polish, and Swedish diplomats participated in the popular protests in Russia, resulting in ambassadors from those countries being expelled from Russia. More details are in the following extract:

Data extract 1: Twenty western diplomats participate in Navalny's court

The presence of more than 20 European and American diplomats in Navalny's court session angered the Russian authorities. The spokesman of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia said: This incident exposes the evil plan of America and the West. They seek to implement such a brazen plan as to launch color revolutions in Russia. (IRINNEWS, February 1, 2021) ¹

Data extract 2: The American ambassador was summoned

Russia's firm protest regarding the publication of information about illegal gatherings in Russian cities by the American authorities was announced on the social networks and internet resources of this diplomatic center. The Russian side considered America's actions as a clear interference in Russia's internal affairs. (IRINNEWS, January 27, 2021) ²

In the first extract, during Navalny's trial, 20 European diplomats appeared in court, which Russia interpreted as a Western plot to launch a revolution. Concerning the American embassy, it published information about internal Russian protests on its website, causing Russia to protest. Russia also recalled its ambassador from Washington after the US imposed sanctions on the export of sensitive technologies to Russia.

¹ Staging the West to create chaos in Russia (1/2/2021)

² The American ambassador was summoned to the Russian Foreign Ministry (27/1/2021)

4.1.2 Iran nuclear negotiation discourse - Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)

Germany, France, the United Kingdom, Russia, China, and the United States, six world powers that are involved with Iran nuclear negotiation, reached an agreement on a Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in July 2015 to end the nuclear standoff with Iran after nearly 20 months of arduous negotiations. There were verifiable guarantees in the agreement. The highest nuclear transparency and inspection standards ever negotiated, the cessation of US and UN nuclear-related sanctions against Iran, and the non-diversion of fissile material in Iran for weaponization purposes were all promised in that document. The agreement, which was supported by a UN Security Council resolution, received praise from the international community (Mousavian & Mousavian, 2016). Despite that decision, On May 8, 2018, Trump stopped waiving sanctions as required by the JCPOA and announced his intention to withdraw from the agreement entirely (Fitzpatrick et al., 2019). This decision clearly hampered the implementation of large projects begun after the JCPOA, and it had an impact on various levels of the micro and macro economy.

As Navalny's story unfolded, Russian officials brought up the issue of Iran's nuclear negotiations on several occasions, attracting the attention of Iranian legacy media. The findings indicate that three topics out of 186 were related to the Iran nuclear negotiations discourse. The variety of news related to JCPOA discourse in legacy media was low, but it was repeated many times with different headlines. Similar to the previous discourse, only legacy media engaged with discourses concerning Iran's nuclear negotiation in this section. The issue of nuclear energy, in particular, is one of the most important political issues for Iran's leaders, and some degree of news related to the importance and progress of Iran's nuclear negotiations was published daily in more traditional media. However, this issue did not appear very important for social media users, as they did not post any tweets on this topic.

Data extract 3: The United States should act on the JCPOA soon

In a joint press conference with European Union foreign policy chief Josep Borrell, which was held focusing on resolving the tensions that have arisen due to the Navalny

issue, Lavrov talked about the situation in the region. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov emphasizing the importance of peace in the region announced: JCPOA has reached a critical point and time, we hope that America will reach a definite conclusion soon for its future actions regarding this international agreement...We continue to cooperate within the framework of the JCPOA to resolve the situation surrounding Iran's nuclear program. Now is a critical time. Once again, we hope that in this field, the US government, as a country that negotiated Iran's nuclear program and signed the JCPOA, will clarify to what extent it can support this important international document, which is the achievement of multilateral diplomacy and an example of The necessary efforts to reduce tensions in critical areas and strengthen the system of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons are known.

(IRNA, February 5, 2021)³

In Extract 3, it is reported that in the negotiations related to the poisoning and arrest of Navalny, Russia pointed out the issue of finalizing Iran's nuclear energy negotiations. In other words, when Western countries held the Russian government responsible for the unrest in Russia, Russian officials attributed the unrest to Iran's nuclear energy, and the attention diverts from the events of Russia to Iran's nuclear negotiations.

4.1.3 Criticizing Iran's domestic and foreign policies discourse

Since the 1990s, Russia and Iran have become more closely allied for a variety of reasons, the main one being a desire to project an image of being independent powers in a world dominated by the United States. Tehran and Moscow have not formed a strategic alliance, but rather a "community of geopolitical interests." In other words, despite some ideological similarities, this is more of a contextual entente than a collaboration on a shared political initiative or strategic plan (Therme, 2018).

Thus, these similarities appear to have resulted in some of the same political behaviors. For instance, the common view of the two countries regarding the Middle East is due to the alignment of the opposing views of both countries against the Western human rights and democracy program, or

³The relations between Russia and the European Union are in a difficult situation (5.2.2021)

fear of regime changes supported by the West. On the one hand, Putin is always worried about “color revolutions” in former Soviet countries, including Russia itself. On the other hand, in Iran since the Green Movement in 2009 and even more so after the protests of December 2017 and January 2018, the fear of any cultural “infiltration” of the West can be seen in cultural, security, and political fields (ibid).

23 out of 186 topics were related to criticizing Iran’s domestic and foreign policies discourse. Unlike the previous two discourses that were only discussed by legacy media, this discourse only appeared in social media. Iranians on Twitter compared the situation in Russia to similar conditions in Iran by reviewing Navalny’s news and Russia’s domestic policy and identifying similarities or differences. As a result of this comparison, they criticized the conditions of democracy, free speech, and the domestic political environment, such as how Iranian officials deal with opposition and public protesters, which has resulted in their beating, arrest, and imprisonment.

Data extract 4: A tweet from a citizen

The terrorists are all in a manger, and when they come across it, they immediately start removing it. Ayatollah Putin poisons and kills his critics!
(A tweet from a citizen, August 29, 2020)⁴

Data extract 5: A tweet from a citizen

Navalny was sentenced to 2.5 years in prison. In front of the rulings of Iran, it’s a joke! For us, it is only 2.5 years of detention and torture until the duty of the prisoner is known. If they are not tortured, they will be imprisoned for 10-15 years.
(A tweet from a citizen, February 2, 2021)⁵

Following what was written above, the tweet presented in Extract 4 discusses the same process used by authoritarian regimes, which in this case study is the removal of critics after they have expressed criticism against them. In addition, Putin is given the title of “Ayatollah” which refers to a person of high rank among clerics, which emphasizes the similarity between Iranian and Russian

⁴ <https://twitter.com/Matt13488972/status/1299545175279063040>
⁵ <https://twitter.com/NEOWarrior/status/1356722479893471242> (2.2.2021)

regimes. In Extract 5, the author of the post mentioned that the situation in Iran is even worse because the trial process is much longer, and people have to spend longer periods of time in prison.

4.2 Social category

The social category includes human rights, Russian responsibility for the poisoning, and criticizing the Iranian opposition's performance in comparison to Navalny's performance as a Russian opposition leader.

4.2.1 Human rights discourse

Human rights are a set of principles concerned with equality and fairness. A key document in the development of human rights is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). On December 10, 1948, the United Nations General Assembly declared the Declaration to be a universal benchmark for success for all peoples and all countries.

Human rights are generally understood to be a collection of fundamental freedoms that people from all over the world have agreed to be necessary. These include the freedom from torture and other cruel or inhumane treatment, the right to life, the right to a fair trial, the freedom of speech, the freedom of religion, and the right to health, education, and a living standard that is adequate. Tolerance, equality, and respect are values that can lessen conflict in society. The kind of society we want to live in can be created by promoting human rights (United Nations Website).

Most topics in the social category are covered in human rights discourse. As a result, 67 topics out of 186 were related to human rights discourse, of which 45 topics were derived from legacy media and 25 were taken from social media. The frequency of many discourses was directly or indirectly related to the violation of human rights laws in these events. It includes statements by heads of other countries or various Russian protestors that questioned the way Navalny was treated as a critic. Criticism of violent behavior against Navalny and his supporters who were beaten or detained by police officers in Russia, the behavior of the Russian government since Navalny has been poisoned

until he went to Germany for treatment, the contradictory behavior of Russian hospital doctors who first confirmed and then denied the existence of poison, and some other relevant issues are discussed in this discourse.

Data extract 6: Russia is ready to disconnect from the global Internet

The former Russian president stated that Russia is legally and technologically prepared to disconnect from the global Internet if necessary. According to Dmitry Medvedev, Russian authorities have long discussed the concept of strict Internet restrictions and control in their country...The Independent Internet Act grants the Russian government extensive powers to filter and control Internet bandwidth and traffic, including the ability to disconnect the Russian Internet from the global network in an emergency. The independent Russian Internet began operations on November 1, 2019, in response to the United States abrupt shutdown of the Internet in Russia. (IRNA, February 1, 2021)⁶

Data extract 7: A tweet from the news media

Russia's inhumane treatment of mass prisoners; thousands of people have been arrested in Russia during mass demonstrations calling for Alexei Navalny's release. Detainees abound in Russian prisons. Some protesters have complained about the detention centers' inhumane conditions.

(A tweet from DW-Persian/Deutsche Welle, February 6, 2021)⁷

Data extract 8: A tweet from the news media

Russia again, Putin again; elimination of critics and opposition through poisoning: this time, Alexei Navalny.

(A tweet from Manoto TV, August 20, 2020)⁸

Internet access has become an essential part of modern life, necessary to ensure freedom of expression, political participation, health, and other fundamental rights. In Extract 6, Russian officials emphasize that a national internet has been prepared in Russia. Nevertheless, the national internet, which allows the government to monitor information and data in networks, is an Iranian government program that has been promoted for use in recent years; it is thus one of the concerns of Iranian users.

⁶ Russia is ready to disconnect from the global Internet (1.2.2021)

⁷ <https://twitter.com/Matt13488972/status/1299545175279063040> (6.2.2021)

⁸ <https://twitter.com/manototv/status/1296495383825256448> (20.8.2020)

In Extracts 7 and 8, some tweets about the inhumane treatment of protesters and arrestees are presented as examples.

4.2.2 Russian responsibility discourse

Examining the data based on Navalny's news reveals that Navalny and his supporters blamed Putin for the poisoning from the start; after German doctors announced that Novichok poison was the cause of the poisoning, most European leaders, as well as Biden, explicitly blamed Russia for the incident and condemned this action. However, Putin denied this accusation and stated that Russia was not the source of Navalny's poisoning, so he did not see the need for an investigation in Russia. The question of publishing a video of Navalny's associate's meeting with the British spy was raised, and it was stated that this is not the first time that the West has accused Russia of using the Novichok nerve agent. Finally, Belarus' President called the case of Navalny's poisoning a hoax, claiming that Merkel's statements about Navalny's poisoning were false and that there was no definite conclusion as to who is to blame for Navalny's poisoning.

The historical significance of the topic can be understood through Mölder and Sazonov (2019)'s framework of the Russian Anti-Western conspiracy theory. According to this theory, Russian officials tend to shift responsibility for negative domestic situations by intensifying anti-Western sentiment among its citizens and pointing the finger of blame at the West. After the Crimean War in the mid-19th century, Russia began to promote the idea of Russia as a unique civilization under constant attack from the West and its secret agenda of world dominance.

Conspiracy theories about the West peaked in official propaganda during the Soviet era, but these misconceptions did not disappear with the dissolution of the Soviet Union and persist to this day. This research found that both legacy and social media engaged with Russian responsibility discourse, such that 37 of the 186 identified topics were related to this idea, as demonstrated in the following examples:

Data extract 9: Navalny’s poisoning was staged

Lavrov: According to the investigation’s findings, there is no evidence to support the accusations leveled against the Russian leadership in the poisoning of Alexei Navalny, a Kremlin critic. Navalny’s poisoning was staged, according to Russia and in a scenario that has occurred before, the West took a position against Russia. They accused Moscow from the beginning of this incident before investigations were carried out... The West is using Navalny to destabilize Russia... (ISNA, February 2, 2021)⁹

Data extract 10: The establishment of an anti-Russian campaign

While criticizing the establishment of an anti-Russian campaign in connection with the alleged poisoning of “Alexei Navalny,” the Russian Foreign Ministry stated that the main goal of this campaign is to increase sanctions against Russia rather than to prioritize his health. (FARSNEW, September, 6, 2020)¹ 0

Data extract 11: A tweet from a citizen

Today, the German government, after investigating the medical team and confirming them, finally announced that Alexei Navalny had been poisoned with a nerve agent called “Novichok”, a nerve agent made in the former Soviet Union and present-day Russia and only in the possession of the Russian government. They denied involvement in the Navalny assassination!! (A tweet from a citizen, September, 2,2020)¹ 1

Data extract 12: A tweet from a citizen

It is said that Putin has poisoned Navalny, one of the critics of his government, I do not know if he has been poisoned or not, but I know so much that the remnant of the corrupt government Totalitarian should not be expected to talk to a critic of his government, try to convince the people that he knows the same thing as imprisonment and poisoning and assassination. (A tweet from a citizen, August, 22,2020)¹ 2

Lavrov refers to Navalny’s story as a ‘scenario’ in Extract 9 and describes that it was staged to accuse Russia; thus, Russia plays no role in this story. In Extracts 10, 11, and 12, Iranian citizens discussed Russian responsibility discourse from other aspects, pointing to Russia’s belief that an anti-

⁹ Navalny's poisoning was staged, according to Russia (2.2.2021)
¹ Russia's criticism of the West's anti-Russian actions regarding the "Navalny" incident. (6.9.2020)
¹ <https://twitter.com/ShelerHaghahi/status/1301160133607686144> (2.9.2020)
¹ <https://twitter.com/vahidhdi/status/1297244822202449920> (22.8.2020)

Russian campaign is underway, Russia's refusal to accept responsibility for Navalny's poisoning, and subsequent interactions with Navalny and supporters.

4.2.3 Criticizing Iranian opposition performance discourse

The opposition is the largest non-government party or coalition of parties elected as people's representatives who play a critical role in questioning government decisions and actions, raising issues of public importance in a functioning political democracy. In other words, in democratic societies, it refers to a party that opposes or moderates the ruling government party with the majority in parliament. In non-democratic countries, however, the opposition refers to a coalition of opposition organizations seeking to destabilize the authoritarian regime, force delegation of power, or overthrow the standing regime. The second meaning is correct in the case of Iran. They may disagree or use different methods to change the type of system, but they all agree that system change is necessary.

Iran's opposition can be divided into two groups: internal and external. After four decades of effort, the Iranian opposition known as reformists were unable to perform their duties properly, and as a result, they have lost legitimacy among the people of Iran. In the interim, there were obstinate critics whose voices were heard for a time, but they were repeatedly imprisoned and eventually fled Iran. Oppositions formed outside the borders of a non-democratic government may find it problematic to find a place in political decisions. Regarding Iranian opposition abroad, despite a diaspora of several million Iranian immigrants, they have yet to gain sufficient legitimacy, but they continue to engage in disclosure and information activities (Azizi, 2017).

In this study, 13 topics out of 186 were related to criticizing Iranian opposition performance discourse. It is worth noting that Navalny's news was domesticated by this discourse by Iranian citizens via social media. According to Iranian public opinion, the opposition has aided in the maintenance of power over the past decades. Below are some data extracts:

Data extract 13: A tweet from a citizen

I don't take this Navalny seriously at all (and neither do the Russians), but his bravery is admirable! He could sit abroad, take money, make love, and send four tweets against Putin and call it a struggle, just like our "opposition"!

(A tweet from a citizen, January, 17,2021)¹ 3

Data extract 14: A tweet from a citizen

If Navalny, who despite the assassination of Putin's government and repeated threats, returns to his country and goes straight to prison, is the leader of the opposition. Then those who have shaped themselves in the name of the opposition for all these years and are waiting for the people to overthrow the government and send them their plane tickets, who are the real cowards?

(A tweet from a citizen, January 24, 2021)¹ 4

Data extract 15: A tweet from a citizen

Navalny can be mentioned as the hero of the times, although Putin officially wanted to assassinate him, and it was clear that he would be arrested 100% upon his return to Russia, he still refused to leave his homeland. Of course, we do not lack Iranian examples as his honor and courage in prisons and tombs in Iran.

(A tweet from a citizen, January 18, 2021)¹ 5

People have regularly used sarcasm and humor to criticize Iran's opponents, as seen in these excerpts. These tweets applaud Navalny's bravery in returning to Russia and remaining in his homeland. They have also criticized the Iranian opposition's performance, claiming that the majority of them would rather leave the country and live peacefully in other countries than perform their duties.

4.3 Economic category

The economic category consists of sanction discourse and Nord Stream project discourse.

4.3.1 Sanction discourse

Iran's public sphere has been involved with the concept of sanctions for some time, as Iran's economy has been struggling with sanctions for more than four decades. Economic and political

¹ <https://twitter.com/vahidhdi/status/1297244822202449920> (22.8.2020)
¹ <https://twitter.com/vahidhdi/status/1297244822202449920> (22.8.2020)
¹ <https://twitter.com/Camel6561/status/1351102032699138052> (18.1.2021)

sanctions have had tangible consequences on people's ordinary life, although Iranian officials in different governments have emphasized that the sanctions are nothing more than a piece of paper (Alefnews, 2007). According to Salehi's (2017) explanations, US sanctions have been a significant feature of US–Iran policy since Iran's Islamic revolution in 1979. Still, the imposition of UN and global bilateral sanctions on Iran, which began in 2006 and increased dramatically by 2010, is relatively new. The goals of US sanctions have shifted over time. Iran's economy has suffered due to broad international sanctions, which has contributed to Iran's acceptance of agreements that exchange restrictions on its nuclear program for sanctions relief. On 14 July 2015, a Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) was decided upon (US State Department 2016), and the lifting of sanctions had several positive effects on the EU–Iran economic and political relations (Mogherini 2016b, cited in Bocse, 2019). However, with the inauguration of President Trump in the United States and his withdrawal from these decisions, the sanctions were again intensified, and the negotiations between Europe and Iran remained incomplete. Therefore, in the Iranian public sphere, sanctions against individuals and economic sanctions are common topics.

In the Navalny case, on the other hand, various authorities, including the heads of Western countries and the Navalny Foundation, demanded sanctions against individual Russian officials and economic sanctions against the country for numerous reasons, including violations of human rights laws. It must be noted that, at the same time as these requests, Russian officials pointed out the insignificance of Iran's sanctions, which was widely reflected upon in Iranian legacy media. On Twitter, there were tweets with the theme of sanctioning Russia, but most of them were quotes, and they were neutral.

Data extract 16: Imposing sanctions against Russia instead of military conflict

The European Union warned Russia about the consequences of arresting Navalny and dealing with protesters. Polish President Andrzej Duda asked the European Union to intensify sanctions against Russia for its treatment of Navalny and said: "The only way to avoid conflicts is to monitor the implementation of international laws without using guns, bombs, and cannons, and imposing sanctions." ...Manfred Weber, a senior German conservative, said: Russia should face financial sanctions. The European

Union should strike the Russian monetary system. In addition, the threat of halting construction of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, which would mean twice the delivery of natural gas from Russia to Germany, should remain on the agenda.
(ISNA, January 24, 2021)¹ 6

Data extract 17: US sanctions against Iran are useless

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov announced: US sanctions against Iran are useless and have never been effective, and they are not effective now either. In recent years, the American government has started blackmailing Iran. America is trying to base all discussions about Middle East and North African issues based on anti-Iranianism. Russia will try to continue condemning unilateral sanctions, including on Syria. Even now, the issue of Alexei Navalny is used by Western countries to put pressure on Russia. If Navalny's issue were not, they wouldn't have found another excuse to act against Russia.
(IRINNEWS, September 18, 2020)¹ 7

Data extract 18: A tweet from a citizen

Navalny's supporters have called on the European Union to impose sanctions on two prominent economic figures, Alisher Usmanov and Roman Abramovich.
(A tweet from a citizen, February 6, 2021)¹ 8

In Extract 16, basic details are given about the request of various European Union leaders to sanction Russia. As a result, sanctions against individuals and economic sanctions, particularly the suspension of the Nord Stream pipeline project, are regarded as the most effective means of preventing further conflict in Russia. As shown in Extract 17, Russian leaders brought up the issue of sanctions against Iran and anti-Iranian policies; then, by calling Iran's sanctions ineffective, claim that sanctions are not important; and finally, according to Russia's anti-Western theory, conclude that Navalny's story is just an excuse for America to apply more pressure to Russia. This news catches the attention of Iran's traditional media because it confirms Iranian leaders' claim that the sanctions are nothing more than a piece of paper. Extract 18 has also highlighted the sanctions discourse from the perspective of Navalny's supporters. The Navalny Foundation has asked to impose economic sanctions on two Russian people.

¹ The European Union warned Russia for arresting Navalny and dealing with protesters (24.1.2021)

¹ Lavrov: Sanctioning Iran is useless (18.9.2020)

¹ <https://twitter.com/bvvafakhah/status/1357996893616435200> (6.2.2021)

4.3.2 Nord Stream project discourse

Nord Stream AG is an international consortium of five major companies formed in 2005 to plan, build, and operate two 1,224-kilometer natural gas pipelines through the Baltic Sea. One of the Nord Stream Pipeline system's most distinguishing features is its transboundary nature. The pipelines cross Russia's territorial waters and/or exclusive economic zones and those of Finland, Sweden, Denmark, and Germany (Nord-stream.com). Most calls for economic sanctioning of Russia pertained to the Nord Stream Project. The Nord Stream gas pipeline issue is familiar to Iranian and critical in Iran's public sphere because of Iran's shifting role in the trade of natural gas. Since the mid-2000s, energy has become increasingly important on the EU policy agenda in the context of regional crises between Russia and Ukraine. Later, bilateral negotiations for the export of Iranian gas to Europe began. Iran, with the world's second-largest natural gas reserve, was a potential gas supply alternative for the EU. But as Byrczek et al. (2010) explain, although Iran seems to be a relatively attractive option considering this issue, Iran is politically regarded as a country that should be approached with caution. Therefore, the main obstacle to significant investments related to energy in Iran was rooted in the trade sanctions of the United States and the influence of American energy companies, respectively, and these issues caused the negotiations of the 2000s to fail (Byrczek et al., 2010). In the end, Iran's plans to export gas to Europe were thwarted. Therefore, the Nord Stream pipeline is also significant for Iranians because any discussions about sanctions against Russia and the suspension of talks on this gas export pipeline can draw attention to Iran as an alternative supplier. Due to the significance of this issue for Iranians, the news related to the sanctioning of the Nord Stream gas project, which was primarily raised by the United States and a few European countries, drew the attention of both traditional and social media. However, calls to cancel the pipeline contract were met with German resistance. As a result, the news about Nord Stream was circulating throughout Iranian media at the same time as Navalny's news. 12 topics out of 186 were related to the Nord Stream project discourse. Six topics were raised and discussed by legacy media, and a further six

topics were brought up on Twitter, where most tweets pertain to analysis of the reasons for America's opposition to this project.

Data extract 19: European Union representatives demanded to stop the Nord Stream

Members of the European Parliament voted unanimously - with 581 votes in favor against 50 votes against and 44 abstentions - to block the construction of this pipeline and asked the European Union to reconsider its relations with Russia...German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who has not backed down from her position on the Nord Stream 2 pipeline despite the criticism of other European countries, said: Despite Navalny's case, her opinion about this project has not changed. European Union representatives demanded to stop Nord Stream.

(ISNA, January 22, 2021)¹ 9

Data extract 20: A tweet from a citizen

Grenell, the former US ambassador to Germany, reacted to Navalny's case and Merkel's statement against Russia: "But Nord Stream 2 is moving forward with full force ..." Germany's critical stance on Russia only seems meaningful to Americans only when there is no Nord Stream project.

(A tweet from a citizen, September 3, 2020)² 0

According to Extract 19, the majority of European Parliament members wanted to prevent the construction of this pipeline. Even though Germany was the first European country to identify Russia as the source of Navalny's poisoning after proving the existence of Novichok poison, it has stated from the start that the Nord Stream project will not be hampered. In this excerpt, it is clear that Merkel's viewpoint differs from that of European Union representatives. Twitter users also addressed the issue of Nord Stream; in Extract 20 specifically, they noted America's repeated insistence on canceling this project, and it was implied that America would cancel the project to replace its energy sources.

The data on how Navalny's news was domesticated in the Iranian public sphere show, my findings are in line with earlier research that "foreign news items are often constructed as part of, and give rise to, domestic politics" (Alasuutari et al., 2013, p: 696). Additionally, in the process of localization of

¹ European Union representatives demanded to stop the Nord Stream (22.1.2021)

² <https://twitter.com/bvvafakhah/status/1357996893616435200> (6.2.2021)

international norms, domestic actors always strive to achieve alignment between exogenous models and local beliefs and practices (Acharya 2004, p. 241 cited in Alasuutari, 2013).

5. Discussion and Conclusion

This study has investigated the domestication of the news of Navalny's poisoning and detention in Iran's public sphere. I intended to discover how the news about the leader of the Russian opposition has been noticed by the Iranian audience, and how the story was naturalized in Iranian media. In this thesis, I have attempted to extract discourses that have made Navalny's news understandable to Iranian audiences in the social and political environment of Iran. In addition, I also investigated how Iranian media has reinforced banal nationalism in the process of domesticating that news. For this purpose, I first introduced Navalny and explained the reasons that he and his actions are significant for the world. I then explained other factors affecting the context, such as the relations between Iran and Russia and the laws governing legacy media and social media in Iran. Based on my findings, I argued that Iranian media brought Navalny's news into the arena of Iranian public opinion and transformed it into an Iranian national story through eight discourses in three main groups: political, social, and economic. In this final chapter, the findings of the research are discussed and the study is concluded.

5.1 Summary of the findings

To summarize my findings and answer my research questions, I return to the eight domestication discourses. In this regard, Figure 1 shows that "territorial integrity" and "Iran nuclear negotiation" were two discourses exclusive to legacy media when naturalizing Navalny's news for Iranian audiences, while "criticizing Iran's domestic and foreign policies" and "criticizing Iranian opposition performance" were two discourses that appeared exclusively on social media, making

Navalny’s story an Iranian one via Twitter. In addition, four other discourses were found to be shared by both media.

Figure 1: Comparing different discourses in legacy media and social media

<p>Legacy Media's Exclusive Discourses</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Territorial Integrity • Iran Nuclear Negotiation
<p>Social Media's Exclusive Discourses</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Criticizing Iran’s Domestic and Foreign Policies • Criticizing Iranian Opposition Performance
<p>Common Discourses in legacy and social media</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human Rights • Russian Responsibility • Sanctions • Nord Stream Gas Pipeline Project

The territorial integrity discourse is an example of following banal nationalism. This notion is frequently mentioned in the speeches of Iranian officials, especially on issues that are considered a challenge for the Iranian regime posed by Western countries – for instance, nuclear negotiations. In the case of Navalny, when other countries condemned Russia’s actions, Russia framed the reaction of other countries as interference in Russia’s internal affairs by insisting on its own territorial integrity. As a result, Navalny’s story has been highlighted and naturalized in Iranian legacy media in line with the Iranian regime’s approach. On the other hand, it is significant that territorial integrity has received no attention from social media. The complete disregard of Twitter users for territorial integrity issues may indicate that the importance of this topic to Iranians has waned following the repetition of this issue, particularly in challenging matters where people may disagree with the regime’s attitude.

The next discourse exclusive to Iranian legacy media was Iran’s nuclear negotiations, which is strikingly similar to the territorial integrity discourse. Legacy media has naturalized Navalny’s

news through this discourse repeatedly. Nuclear negotiations are one of the most important banal nationalisms in Iran's public sphere, and this issue has been at the forefront of the Iranian regime's policies for years. It is fascinating that Russia, rather than responding to the USA's reactions, brought up Iran's nuclear negotiations as a form of deflection. Nevertheless, after the Russian side raised the issue of Iran's nuclear energy during Navalny's news cycles, Iran's legacy media paid close attention to it. The fact that there have been no tweets about this issue on Twitter is also noteworthy. It appears that most citizens' opinions do not align with the Iranian regime in this regard, which is why this discourse is ignored by them.

On the contrary, Iranian Twitter users made Navalny's news into national stories for Iranians by engaging in the discourse of criticizing Iran's domestic and foreign policies. Social media in Iran follows less formal guidelines than does legacy media, and does not rely on banal nationalisms to nationalize world news for local audiences. Users of social media are both content recipients and content producers, and unlike journalists employed by legacy media, they need not consider national interests or editorial policies. Of course, as previously stated, most social media platforms, including Twitter, have been filtered in Iran for years, but people have used bypass tools to overcome these restrictions. It is clear from this discourse that, in response to Navalny's news, Iranians who were active on Twitter produced content which compared Iran's political environment to Russia's and complained about the suffocating conditions of the domestic political environment. They even criticized Iran's foreign policy, which has frequently paid the ransom in international disputes. The tweets of this discourse connected Navalny's story to national Iranian themes by highlighting the similarity of authoritarian regimes. Iranian activists on Twitter compared the Iranian regime's response to previous unrests with what was happening in Russia, then asserted their regret about the severity of the inhumane treatment of the protesters in Iran.

The other discourse brought up solely on social media was that of criticizing Iranian opposition performance. According to the tweets related to this debate, users praised Navalny's

bravery while criticizing the Iranian opposition's activities. They explain that Navalny was aware that if he returned to Russia from Germany, he would be arrested, but as the opposition leader, he chose to return. Meanwhile, Iranian opposition leaders have largely preferred to live abroad peacefully, and so did not perform their duties properly and were unsuccessful. In those tweets, users also deplored the lack of a leader in Iran's protests, which they blamed on the Iranian opposition's ineffectiveness. As a result of these two discourses, Navalny's news was naturalized on Twitter in a very different way, with the result that it was linked to Iranians' national stories and domesticated in response to user criticism and needs.

In addition, a large portion of Navalny's news was domesticated by human rights discourse. The comparison of legacy media and social media revealed that these two types of media approached the issue from different perspectives. The majority of the news in legacy media was about how other countries reacted to Russia's behavior and condemned it. Further, the discussion of the national Internet in Russia was a significant topic in alignment with Iran's official approaches. Future plans for the national Internet in Iran is a current national story that has engaged many defenders and opponents. When the issue of the Russian national Internet was raised in conjunction with Navalny's news, it was often brought up by Iranian legacy media that this topic was aligned with the Iranian regime's approaches and viewed as a pattern of following banal nationalism. Especially while the majority of people have concerns about such national Internets and are opposed to this decision, publishing the news of Russian national Internet plan may lead to normalize the topic of the national Internet in Iran's public opinion.

During the coverage of Navalny's story, Russian leaders refused to accept responsibility for the poisoning and blamed the unrest on Western countries. In Iran, enemies of the state are usually held responsible for internal disturbances, and so this discourse of outside agitation has made this reaction more relatable to Iranians. Additionally, sanctions have become commonplace in Iranian society as a result of repeated occurrences. For years, the legacy media in Iran have been attempting

to declare this international behavior unfair by presenting sanctions against Iran. After proposing sanctions against Russia during the Navalny story, legacy media tried to sympathize with Russia in this regard. Considering the close relations between the leaders of Iran and Russia, this supportive view is highlighted.

Regarding the Nord Stream project discourse, given that Iran's gas export to Europe can have a significant impact on Iran's economic improvement and political relations, as well as the growth of small and large domestic industries, news related to this issue has high news value. For this reason, following the news related to Navalny's story and the sensitivities created on this project, the relevant news in the form of this discourse was tied and nationalized with related national stories. While Twitter users also nationalized Navalny's news in the form of these discourses, their approach was noticeably different and more neutral than that of the legacy media.

Finally, while Iranian legacy media as a part of the public sphere is subject to many official controls and heavily involved in maintaining banal nationalism, the official controls for social media are not the same level as legacy media and has a far more independent critical space. Ultimately, the legacy media domesticates and nationalizes world news by aligning with national interests, editorial policies, and restrictions imposed on them. Social media content is created free of these strict constraints and is more critical, and as this study has shown, global news is domesticated to reflect the views and requests of the local people rather than the regional government; discourses from the community that legacy media is unable to publish.

5.2 Limitations and suggestions for further research

In addition to the answers to my research questions, this study provided general information about Iran's political, social, and economic atmosphere, as well as the attitudes and challenges of Iranian citizens, which can be used in future research.

My findings begin to close a research gap on the domestication of global news in countries with low levels of freedom of expression. It is also a starting point for future research on the

domestication of global news in social media. However, due to the unique, significant, and distinct role of social media in countries where legacy media is subject to censorship and official controls, there is a need for more research on other types of social media. Comparing the domestication of global news in legacy and social media in countries with a free flow of information can also help to make the findings of this study more concrete.

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Appendix: The list of 186 topics

Consists of 99 topics from Iranian legacy media and 87 topics from Iranian social media.

Territorial Integrity Discourse - 20 topics from legacy media

- Expulsion of three German, Polish, and Swedish European diplomats for participating in Russian protests
- The presence of 20 European and American diplomats in Navalny's court
- Dissemination of news related to the protest gatherings of the Russian people in the Internet resources and virtual networks of the American Embassy in Russia
- Summoning the German ambassador in order to reveal the documents sent to Russia and expose Berlin's deception
- Summoning the Russian ambassador from Washington after the US embargoed the export of sensitive technologies to Russia-
- Russia: The Kremlin is reluctant to take into account other countries' views on Navalny.
- A police officer was arrested in Russia for leaking information about Navalny's poisoning
- Russia: all protests are illegal.
- Russia: The statements of Western officials about poisoning are fuss and noise
- Lavrov: Navalny's detention is legal / Shame on Germany, France and Sweden
- Russia warns German doctors, do not politicize the issue!
Moscow's response to US intervention; Do not interfere in the affairs of an independent country
- Russia: London has found an excuse to revenge previous problems
- Russia: Germany abuses Navalny's case as leverage over Russia
- Western behind-the-scenes goals to put pressure on Russia under the pretext of Navalny
- Lavrov: The West is seeking to divert attention from the crisis of liberalism
- Russian Ambassador to Germany: Claiming Moscow's support in Navalny's situation is "inappropriate".
- Russia's Foreign Minister: The West should ensure fair play and try to resolve internal problems through acceptable international cooperation instead of addressing external reasons to justify such actions.
- The spokesperson of the Russian Foreign Ministry advised foreign officials to respect international laws and focus on their domestic affairs and issues.
- Syria strongly condemned US and Western interference in Russia's internal affairs
- Navalny sparked a bitter feud between Europe and Moscow.

Iran Nuclear Negotiation – Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) – 3 topics from legacy media

- Russia: We are interested in the full implementation of JCPOA
- Russian official: Europe is optimistic about US return to JCPOA
- Russian Foreign Minister: The United States should take action on JCPOA sooner
-

Criticizing Iran's Domestic and Foreign Policies Discourse – 23 topics from social media

- Eliminate critics and opposition through poisoning in Russia
- Litvinenko poisoning by radioactivity, Yushchenko poisoning, Scripal poisoning and throwing his daughter out of the window, Politkovskaya, Now Navalny poisoning; Only Iranian official can compete with him.
- What a similarity! Quite characteristic of where the criminal cult was trained: A few hours ago, the Omsk Clinic announced that they would find poisonous blood in Navalny's blood, which could be

dangerous for those around him. Coming in front of the camera half an hour ago, they say there is no poison!

- The terrorists are all in a manger, and when they come across it, they immediately start removing it. Ayatullah Putin poisons and kills his critics!
- The story of eliminating opponents and not committing crimes! One day Khashoggi one day Navalny! However, this story is not so strange in post-revolutionary Iran.
- As we see the story of Navalny, the protests of his supporters, and Putin's treatment of opponents of his government, we see that the repressive governments of the world also follow the rules in suppressing the opposition!
- A brief discussion on several differences and similarities between the Russian and Iranian governments that affect the way they deal with the protests.
- Protests by Navalny supporters in Russia have led to speculation that 2,662 people have been detained, and even not a single bullet has been fired at protesters.
- In October 2019 According to official government statistics, there were 8,000 detainees and 231 killed. There is nothing to compare between the two.
- Confession in the manner of the Russian regime! How familiar it is to us! One of Navalny's colleagues, Tergobov, released a video after his arrest and asked people to stay home! He has been acquitted of his activities!
- Navalny was sentenced to 2.5 years in prison. A joke against the verdicts of US. For us, only 2.5 years of detention and torture are warrants to determine the prisoner's duties. If not tortured, they face up to 10-15 years in prison.
- The similarity between the Iranian and the Russian government is all to blame unless proven otherwise
- How much stronger is Russian democracy than Iran? Or rather how much less a dictatorship we are! For Navalny, 2.5 years in prison and 1 year in prison. If it were Iran....
- Alexei Navalny was sentenced to 2 years and 8 months in prison; during the demonstrations of thousands of his supporters, not a single person bled. In Iran, 1,500 people were killed in three days and Saba was sentenced to 24 years in prison for peacefully protesting the hijab. We are on the side of the most brutal government in history, which does not adhere to any principles.
- Russia expels diplomats from three European countries for allegedly participating in protests and supporting Alexei Navalny
- It is said that everyone should know his friend. Mr. Putin is Iran's master!
- The Russian Foreign Ministry expelled three diplomats from Germany, Sweden and Poland two weeks ago for participating in an "illegal demonstration" in support of Alexi_Navalny. I remember the negligence and procrastination in recent years of our ministry of foreign, in the face of the shameless pairing of European embassies
- "We know why this is happening ... because the lowly man in the shelter (Putin) is going crazy," Alexei Navalny gave a fiery 16-minute speech in court. PS: Instead of Putin, his ally could be named on the other side of the Caspian Sea, and again the sentence is completely correct and meaningful.
- In today's Russia demonstrations, we condemn the arrest of 4,027 people, the unbridled violence of dictator Putin, and the declaration of support for the Russian people and expressions of sympathy, and immediate release.
- This year for the Nobel Peace Prize, Traffic Wonder: Biden, Harris, Tonberg, Navalny, The Second Wave of Mito, The Fourth Wave of Feminism, The Important Black Soul Movement, Any Media That Cursed Trump, The City of Wuhan, The Enthusiastic Nation of Iran, books
- Spokeswoman Alexei Navalny: "The first doctorate allowed him to be transferred to a hospital in Germany. We arranged this transfer very quickly by a special airline. At the last minute, the doctorate revoked the transfer license. "The order was from above."!
- The Russians are even more ugly than us! A karate man, a political dwarf who wears high heels to compete with the world's tallest bosses, has dominated them for decades.
- Qalibaf (Iranian official) had planned to deal with Alexei Navalny?!

Human rights - 67 topics from both legacy and social media

Legacy media

- Navalny's poisoning base on to his doctor; However, Omsk Hospital said no poison was found.
- The sudden death of the doctor responsible for Navalny's treatment in the Russia
- German doctors: Navalny is poisoned / Russia: Germany's statements about Navalny are baseless.
- Merkel: Navalny was poisoned by Novichok
- Russia: Novichok was made by NATO, and the West, not Russia
- Russia: Novichok was rejected because it is quite lethal, and Navalny had no chance to survive if it was the reason.
- Germany condemned Russia's behavior and the poisoning of Navalny
- Biden: There is no doubt that the Moscow government poisoned Navalny / Trump's silence is complicity in crime
- Trump's escape from Russia to North Korea! Trump avoided answering a question about Russia's possible involvement in Navalny's poisoning by referring to another matter about North Korea.
- Trump: There is no evidence of Navalny's poisoning. We await the findings of Germany.
- Emphasizing Germany, France, England on Navalny's poisoning with Novichok gas
- Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW): Navalny's poisoning with Novichok is very worrying.
- US Congress: the need to review the use of chemical weapons
- A police officer was arrested for disclosing information about Navalny's poisoning
- Western countries and media are again repeating the "Skripal" scenario, which this time called "Navalny" and accusing Moscow of poisoning the Russian opposition with a nerve agent without providing evidence.
- Human Rights Commissioner: expressing concern about Navalny's situation in Russia
- Russia: The United States insists that the Russian people have the right to protest, while cracking down on American protesters.
- Navalny is under food strike, and American and European concern for his health
- Navalny is supported by the West because he is a pro-Western critic
- The removal of the candidate supported by Navalny from the local elections by Russia
- German Foreign Minister: Germany is ready to treat Navalny
- Announcing France's readiness to accept Navalny's asylum
- US condemns Russia for arresting protesters,
- Biden: America has demanded the release of protesters in Russia
- Biden has asked for Navalny's release from prison
- Human rights are the reason why Westerners support Navalny
- US Secretary of State Pompeo: Evidence that Navalny was poisoned with Russian authorities.
- The United States has condemned the continued use of force against peaceful protesters.
- The request of the leaders of Western countries to release Navalny from prison
- Former President of Russia: Russia is ready to disconnect from the global internet.
- Condemnation of Russia due to abuse of force, internet and telephone cut off by some countries
- The possibility of removing Russia from the global Internet
- The President of the European Council demanded the release of Navalny
- The head of the Russian Duma referred to Navalny's issue as a conspiracy theory.
- Navalny was nominated for the 2021 Nobel Peace Prize
- Ukrainian authorities have demanded to sever ties with Moscow until Navalny's release.

- England, Austria, the United States, Germany, Canada, France and the European Union have condemned Navalny's imprisonment.
- Arresting of more than 5300 protesters were arrested by Navalny events
- Navalny was banned from appearing on national television
- Repressing protesters, arresting them and imprisoning them for a week
- Rarely does Navalny name come up on TV, when the news is negative
- Russia: Russia recognizes the rights of protesters

Social media

- It seems that Putin has poisoned one of his opponents again
- Navalny, Putin's opponent was taken to the hospital due to poisoning Navalny's wife has asked Putin to allow him to be transferred to Germany for treatment
- The German newspaper "Zeddeutsche": Kremlin does not allow Putin critic and Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny to be transferred to Germany for treatment. Navalny is currently in a clinic in Omsk, Siberia.
- Berlin doctors sent the plane.
- He was allowed to leave Russia when they knew it was too late and he couldn't do anything!
- The European Parliament has called for an international investigation into the poisoning of Alexei Navalny.
- The Russian presidency issued a statement on Tuesday announcing that there is no need for further investigation into the poisoning of Alexei Navalny, a prominent anti-Putin figure.
- Angela Merkel: Alexei Navalny was poisoned by Novichok
- The Russian ambassador in Berlin was summoned to the German Foreign Ministry
- Navalny is not the first victim of Putin's lifelong ambition. He has committed many murders to maintain his power.
- Alexander Navalny, the leader of the Russian opposition, who was hospitalized in Germany, has come out of a coma.
- Putin's fragile authority was revealed in police brutality. More than 2500 people were arrested in the protests.
- Sergei Maximishin, the chief physician of Alexei Navalny, a prominent opponent of Putin, died "suddenly" of poisoning last summer at the age of 55.
- Inhumane conditions of mass prisoners in Russia/Thousands of people were arrested during mass demonstrations for the release of Alexei Navalny in Russia.
- About 11,000 people have been arrested during the Russian protests. Most of them have not been arrested yet.
- If it were up to me, I would give the Nobel Peace Prize to Alexei Navalny, the pro-Russian democracy activist. The courage of this man and his phoenix-like return to the Russian political scene after being poisoned was one of the most inspiring political actions of the last few years.
- Europe went against Russia after the recent protests in Russia, Russia expelled the European diplomats who participated in the demonstration supporting Navalny/ They are so rude, even in a situation where they are dependent on Russian energy!
- In the first 19-minute speech, Biden did not say anything about American foreign policy, Iran, the European Union, NATO, China, Taiwan, Africa, Venezuela, Turkey, global terrorism, and many other important issues! Biden talked about the crisis in Burma, the imprisonment of Alexei Navalny in Russia, and the cessation of conflicts in Yemen.
- Alexei Navalny, a staunch critic of the Russian government in court, sends a "heart" symbol to his wife.
- Amnesty International Paris protested. They made five proposals for Navalny's release, which you can see below, but for the November protests with 1,500 deaths and 7,000 arrests, they only presented a simple statement. I wrote while the internet was cut off in Iran and the media were banned in Iran
- Unrest in Russia started when Navalny was sent to Russia by the CIA. But the interesting thing is that America has condemned Russia for "suppressing" the protesters! The months-long crackdown on protesters in the United States has been forgotten.
- This year for the Nobel Peace Prize, the wonder of traffic: Biden, Harris, Totenberg, Navalny, the second wave of Mito, the fourth wave of feminism, the important movement of the Black Spirit, every media that cursed Trump, the city of Wuhan, the eager nation of Iran and so on.

- Finally, we didn't understand whether Trump fans are also Putin fans or not? After all, do Trump supporters think Navalny is good or bad? Is he a globalist? So what is Putin?
- Trump has refused to condemn Russia for poisoning of Alexei Navalny
- Navalny, one of Putin's anti-Putin leaders, was poisoned during a flight to Russia and fell into a coma. PS: The most dangerous job in the world? Opponents of China and Russia

Russian Responsibility Discourse – 37 topics from both legacy and social media

Legacy media

- Navalny in court: Putin is responsible for my poisoning/the embezzlement case is fake.
- Russia denied the poisoning of Navalny
- German spokesman: It can be said that this attack was poisoned.
- Merkel calls for transparency on Navalny in Russia/Russia is a global strategic actor
- England demanded a more transparent investigation
- Merkel: This poisoning was to kill.
- President of Belarus: Merkel's statement about Navalny's poisoning is a lie
- NATO asked for an investigation
- NATO: calls for an international response to Navalny's poisoning / No doubt Navalny was poisoned with Novichok nerve gas.
- NATO: Russia brings the danger of a new cold war
- The Group of Seven condemned Navalny's confirmed poisoning.
- Russia recognizes the rights of protesters
- England: The same thing happened to Sergei Skripal.
- Publishing a video of the meeting between Navalny's allies and the British spy
- Russia: This is not the first time that the West has accused Russia of using the Novichok nerve agent. Earlier, during the controversy over the poisoning of former Russian spy Sergei Skripal and his 33-year-old daughter Yulia in Britain, London held Moscow responsible for the incident without providing evidence.
- Belarus: The story of the poisoning of anti-Moscow blogger Alexei Navalny is a hoax.
- Belarus announced the delivery of "Navalny" audio tape to Russia
- The Russian medical team announced in the preliminary investigation that Navalny's low blood sugar was probably the cause of his severe discomfort and no traces of poison were found in his body.
- Rejection of Navalny's claim to build Putin's palace
- A Moscow court ruled that Putin's pro-Western rival will remain in prison

Social media

- When a government and its rulers are corrupt and dictators who do not show mercy to their people. Superpower them is like giving a lunatic a gun.
- Putin's method of eliminating the opposition / the fatal poisoning of Navalny, a staunch critic of Vladimir Putin in a coma, and the doctors' cover-up.
- Director of the Russian Anti-Corruption Foundation: Only Putin can order the poisoning of Alexei Navalny.
- Germany: Alexei Navalny was poisoned with nerve gas. The gas used to poison opponents of Putin Navalny is Novichok developed by the Soviets/Russians in the 1960s and 1990s.
- Previously, former Russian spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter were infected in Britain.
- "Novichok", is a nerve agent made in the former Soviet Union and current Russia and is only in the possession of the Russian government. Although they denied involvement in Navalny's assassination.

- Trump: America has not yet seen evidence of Navalny's poisoning (against Putin/Russian opposition)!
- Vaccines and drugs made in Russia are always tested and reliable. For example, Novichok was recently successfully tested on Navalny.
- We do not doubt that they brought something similar to Navalny for Manuk_Khodabakhshian! Damn dirty Russia!
- Pompeo: Navalny was poisoned by order of senior Russian officials
- Vladimir Putin's one-billion-dollar magnificent palace/Vladimir Putin's opponent, Alexei Navalny, in his last disclosure before his arrest, unveiled Putin's magnificent and expensive palace by the Black Sea.
- Any human behavior such as protesting, expressing opposition, or even criticizing a corrupt government like Putin is prohibited.
- Hundreds of people were arrested during Navalny's protests across Russia. The police and the army have taken control of the cities.
- Russia was severely criticized by the international community after confirming that Alexei Navalny was poisoned by a chemical agent.
- Merkel stated that one of the staunch critics of the Russian president was poisoned with the Novichok nerve agent, and said: "Some have tried to silence him in this way." According to the Chancellor of Germany, Navalny has become a "victim of a crime".
- I know so much that the survivors of the corrupt totalitarian government should not be expected to talk to the critic of their government, and try to convince people that he knows the same prison, poisoning and assassination.
- Putin seems to have poisoned one of his opponents again

Criticizing Iranian Opposition Performance Discourse – 13 topics from social media

- Navalny can be called a hero of the times, although Putin officially intended to assassinate him and it was clear that he would be arrested on his return to Russia, he still refused to leave his homeland. Of course, we do not lack examples of his honor and courage in the prisons and tombs of Iran.
- Like our "opposition", Navalny could sit outside, take money, make love and send four tweets against Putin and call it a struggle!
- I think Iranian people need an Alexei Navalny
- The leadership of the opposition is such that after the failed assassination, Navalny, who took a long time to come to his senses, went to the killer on his own and demanded a protest in his own land. Not to build my homeland from afar.
- Only Navalny is the leader of the opposition; Navalny and the street subversive, this Russian boy who is about to beat Putin's police!
- When Navalny opposes Putin to return to Russia; By doing this, Navalny will disturb the foreign opposition of Iran!
- Iranian people do whatever they can. The problem is the lack of centralized leadership!
- In these strange and profitable times, we should not wait for the emergence of Takhti (Iranian wrestler athlete) or Navalny! We are waiting for our death.
- I saw scenes of Alexei Navalny's fights. We all have jobs, incomes, spouses, children, and families, but we have to pay for Russia's freedom like Iranian critics and opposition!
- At the same time as Russia's protests against Putin, some opportunists say that Iranian people are staying at home and complain about a society that is waiting for unseen help. Don't make the wrong address. People did their best, what about the critics?
- The people of Russia and Navalny are very brave and active, not like us, for example, in November 1998, when the eternal minority came to fight, the majority went, filmed, and said to leave. Accept our weaknesses!
- The role of leadership in the Russian protest movement and Putin's surprise in this political chess should also be considered. #Navalny's confrontation with Putin is really an example of gorilla chess!
- As someone interested in Russian developments, I must say that Alexei Navalny is one of the bravest and most eloquent men in this country (you won't understand until you see his speech). Anyone familiar with the complex security structure of Russia (left over from the Soviet Union and the KGB) and how important and brave Navalny was. Our opponents should learn.

Sanction Discourse – 11 topics from both legacy and social media

Legacy media

- Germany, USA emphasized for threats of sanctions against Russia
- The United States has imposed new restrictions on exports of sensitive technologies to Russia
- Lavrov: sanctions against Iran are useless/ The US blackmails against Iran
- Europe imposed sanctions on four Russian officials
- Lithuania calls for new sanctions against Russia; In response to Navalny's arrest
- The Czech foreign minister called for an investigation into possible Russian sanctions
- European countries threaten to impose sanctions on Russia if the crackdown on dissent continues
- The devaluation of the Russian ruble
- The Navalny Foundation calls on the United States to sanction senior Russian officials

Social media

- "We urge other countries not to judge too soon." Kremlin spokesman: Putin has no role in Navalny poisoning. We deny the allegations of poisoning him and see no reason for Russia to be sanctioned for this. German officials announced yesterday that Navalny had been poisoned with Novichok nerve.
- Human rights activists said Europe should impose sanctions on Russia.
- Navalny's supporters have called on the European Union to impose sanctions on two prominent economic figures, Alisher Osmanov and Roman Abramovich.
-

Nord Stream Project Discourse – 12 topics from both legacy and social media

Legacy media

- Berlin: The completion of the Nord Stream gas project has nothing to do with the Navalny affair
- France demands Germany withdrawal from the Stream gas pipeline
- The United States demands Germany withdrawal from the Stream gas pipeline
- Trump: Nord Stream pipeline makes Germany more energy dependent on Russia, so Germany should be excluded from the project
- The German government is using the story of the Russian opposition leader as leverage to push the Kremlin to advance its goals in the Nord Stream-2 gas pipeline project, an American media outlet reported (Bloomberg).
- US hostility to the Nord Stream gas pipeline and pressure on Germany to suspend the project

Social media

- Referring to Germany's call for European and NATO solidarity against Moscow over Navalny poisoning, Rasmussen said Germany should suspend the Stream pipeline project before it is too late.
- Germany's critical stance on Russia only seems meaningful to Americans only when there is no Nord Stream project
- The gas pipeline project under the North and East Seas to transport gas from Russia, which could soon be completed, is in jeopardy.
- It is possible that the project will be silenced if Russia does not cooperate and shed light on Navalny's poisoning.
- Stopping this project will be in the # US geopolitical interest
- Only 150 kilometers remain of the Russian gas pipeline. Is it possible to leave this project?