

Framing Financial Collapse: Van Dijk’s Critical Discourse Analysis Of Iranian Rial Foreign News Coverage

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ABSTRACT

This study examined how The New York Times and Al Jazeera frame the Iranian rial collapse through Teun A. van Dijk’s Critical Discourse Analysis. The problem addressed is how news discourse constructs social cognition and ideology in reporting a financial crisis. The research aims to analyze the realization of macrostructure, superstructure, and microstructure in the selected news texts and to identify how these textual elements shape representations of responsibility, victimhood, and policy responses. Using a qualitative-descriptive method, the study analyzes headlines, leads, lexical choices, syntax, and rhetorical strategies from articles published between December 2025 and January 2026. The analysis is guided by van Dijk’s socio-cognitive model and ideological square framework. The expected result is that both outlets will show different framing patterns: Al Jazeera is likely to emphasize institutional and economic pressures, while The New York Times is expected to foreground public suffering and protest. These differences indicate that media discourse does not merely report economic events but also produces ideological meanings and power relations.

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1. Introduction

Economic and financial reporting shapes how publics, markets, and policymakers understand crises. In late December 2025 the Iranian rial collapsed on informal markets, several international outlets reported that in early January 2026 the rial fell to roughly 1.4–1.5 million per US dollar, its weakest level on record. Some online currency converters began to display the rial as “\$0.00”, a result of rounding limits in digital systems when confronted with extreme depreciation, not an official declaration that the currency is worthless. Economists say this apparent “zero” is a sign of collapsed confidence, not a legal or technical removal of the currency (Investing.com, 2026).

This dramatic decline reflects the severity of Iran’s economic instability at the turn of 2026, marked by inflationary pressure, currency hoarding, and declining public trust in monetary institutions. The unprecedented exchange rate and its digital misrepresentation illustrate how economic collapse becomes visible not only in markets but also through technological platforms that struggle to represent extreme devaluation. Together, these indicators underscore the symbolic and material dimensions of the rial’s crisis, highlighting how loss of confidence amplifies economic breakdown.

Although CDA has extensively examined conflict and protest narratives in the Middle East, the application of van Dijk’s socio-cognitive CDA to financial collapse reporting in Iran remains underexplored and drawing by Teun A. van Dijk’s ideological square framework. This research addresses that gap by using van Dijk’s three-level model (macrostructure, superstructure, microstructure) to compare Al Jazeera and The New York Times coverage of the rial crash (Dec 2025–Jan 2026), aiming to show how textual strategies produce different mental models of causation, responsibility, and legitimate remedies.

Mass media outlets responded promptly to the rial’s dramatic fall, producing extensive coverage of the economic turmoil and the street-level consequences that followed. In today’s digital environment, where online platforms rapidly disseminate headlines and updates, each outlet frames the same developments through its own linguistic choices, source selection, and narrative priorities (Rahman et al., 2026; Anggawirya et al., 2021; Pratiwi et al., 2026). Those choices are rarely neutral: lexical preferences, which voices are foregrounded, and which causal explanations are emphasized all reflect underlying political, social, and economic orientations. Consequently, media texts do not simply relay facts about

the rial collapse; they steer public understanding of who is to blame, who is victimized, and what policy responses appear legitimate.

Building on that observation, this study conducts a comparative analysis of Al Jazeera and The New York Times coverage of the Iranian rial crash to uncover the power relations and ideological assumptions embedded in their reporting. Using Teun A. Van Dijk's socio-cognitive Critical Discourse Analysis (Van Dijk, 2015), the research will inspect how macrostructural, superstructural, and microstructural operate to produce particular readings of the crisis.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a methodological approach that studies language not merely as a system of signs but as a form of social practice closely tied to cognition and power. As Baker and McGlashan (2020) observe, CDA foregrounds the ways linguistic choices reflect and reproduce social inequalities: it treats texts as sites where authority, domination, and marginalization are enacted and contested. Rather than treating news items as neutral records, CDA interrogates how word choice, quotation patterns, and narrative structure serve particular social purposes, often legitimizing some actors while silencing or discrediting others. Fairclough's insistence that CDA should expose the roots of social injustice and offer insights for corrective action (in Huda, 2022, p. 38) underscores the approach's critical, interventionist aim.

Van Dijk (2015) defines Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as an approach to discourse study that focuses on how social power, inequality, and domination are expressed, sustained, justified, and challenged through language in social and political settings. CDA highlights the role of language in shaping public understanding, particularly in news discourse. Beyond its communicative function, language also operates as a mechanism of power that influences how social realities are interpreted. Van Dijk's CDA examines the ways texts and discourses may either reinforce or contest social injustice, making it especially relevant for media analysis. Through this approach, researchers can uncover implicit biases in news reporting, including linguistic strategies that legitimize certain actions or position particular groups as victims or aggressors. These discursive choices are rooted in underlying ideological structures that subtly construct social meaning and significantly affect public perception (Sujoko et al., 2023; Suma et al., 2026; Mesquita et al., 2025).

Several descriptive-qualitative CDA studies have examined how different news outlets construct contested events by using distinct discourse strategies. Huda (2022), with the research title "Critical Discourse Analysis of Online Media News: Ministry of Religious Affairs Banning Arabic Language". applied Fairclough's three-tier model (micro, mezzo, macro) to compare online coverage of a government policy, showing how modality, metaphor, and evaluative choices in the micro-dimension combine with organizational patterns in the mezzo and macro dimensions to align news texts with institutional ideological positions. That study demonstrates how a layered CDA can reveal subtle editorial affinities and the ways news narratives can reproduce official lines, an approach that is transferable to economic crises where textual choices shape blame and legitimacy.

Other researchers compare outlet studies using van Dijk's socio-cognitive CDA further show the utility of cross-platform contrasts. Amalina (2019) made similar study entitled "The Perspective of BBC and Al Jazeera on Bombing Attacks in Surabaya (A Critical Discourse Analysis)" applied van Dijk's micro- and macro-strategies to compare BBC and Al Jazeera reporting on bomb attacks, revealing divergent language use and ideological positioning across outlets.

More recently, Arindita and Markhamah (2024) with a study entitled "Analisis Wacana Kritis Berita 'Perang Israel-Hamas berlanjut, korban tewas di Gaza tembus 22.000 orang' pada Detiknews" used van Dijk's framework to analyze national online coverage of the Israel-Hamas war, demonstrating how macro- and micro-level patterns together shape public meaning. Taken together, these studies validate a mixed CDA toolkit, Fairclough's structural layering, and van Dijk's socio-cognitive emphasis on mental models for interrogating how media construct events.

Despite this robust methodological tradition, there remains a noticeable gap: prior CDA scholarship has concentrated primarily on political violence, protest, and policy controversies rather than on acute financial collapse as a discursive event. In other words, while existing work shows how conflict and policy are linguistically framed, few studies have systematically applied these CDA techniques to international coverage of currency crashes episodes that pose different questions about culpability, expertise, and economic legitimacy. This gap motivates the present comparative van Dijk-style study of Al Jazeera and The New York Times coverage of the Iranian rial crash (Dec 2025-Jan 2026), which adapts proven CDA tools to a distinct, economically focused case and aims to uncover how language and discourse structure shape international understandings of financial collapse.

Building on prior work, this study was conducted with the title "Framing Financial Collapse: A Van Dijk-Style CDA of Foreign News Coverage on the Iranian Rial Crash." The New York Times and Al Jazeera are selected as primary data

sources because of their global reach and contrasting geopolitical orientations, which make them useful comparators for a cross-national discourse study. Headquartered in the United States, The New York Times typically reflects Western editorial priorities and frames that circulate in North American and European public spheres; by contrast, Al Jazeera, based in the Middle East often emphasizes regional perspectives and narratives salient to Arab and non-Western audiences.

This pairing allows the research to probe how different journalistic traditions and institutional positions shape reporting on the same economic event: whether each outlet foregrounds sanctions, domestic policy failures, popular grievance, or humanitarian consequences; which voices they amplify; and how their macro-, super- and micro-level choices contribute to divergent mental models of causation and responsibility.

2. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative-descriptive design, relying on textual data drawn from online news reports to produce a systematic, context-sensitive account of media discourse. Qualitative methods are appropriate here because they allow close, interpretive reading of language and structure, exactly the procedures required by van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis to identify how news texts construct meanings, attribute responsibility, and reproduce ideological positions. Consequently, the research will analyze published articles from Al Jazeera and The New York Times as primary data, treating their headlines, leads, quotations, and lexical choices as evidence for interpreting discourse strategies and underlying power relations.

The data for this research consist of news articles drawn from two international online media outlets, The New York Times (Surge of Economic Pain Pushes Iranians to the Streets). Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/12/29/world/middleeast/iran-currency-collapse-rial-inflation-protests.html>) and Al Jazeera (Iran's government budget reveals tough road ahead as currency hits new low. Retrieved from <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/12/26/irans-government-budget-reveals-tough-road-ahead-as-currency-hits-new-low>). These outlets are selected as the primary data sources because of their global reach and contrasting geopolitical orientations. The study focuses on online news reports that discuss the Iranian rial collapse and its economic and social repercussions during the period of December 2025 to January 2026.

All selected articles are examined using Teun A. Van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis framework in order to identify the discourse structures employed in the reporting and to reveal how relations of power and ideological perspectives are constructed within the texts.

The data for this study consist of online news articles published on the official websites of The New York Times and Al Jazeera. The selected reports focus on the coverage of the Iranian rial collapse and its related economic and social developments during the period of December 2025 to January 2026. These articles are used as the primary data because they represent authoritative international reporting on the same economic event. Specifically, the data sources include Al Jazeera's article entitled "Iran's government budget reveals tough road ahead as currency hits new low" published on December 26, 2025, and The New York Times' article entitled "Surge of Economic Pain Pushes Iranians to the Streets" published on December 29, 2025.

The data in this study were collected from online news articles published by The New York Times and Al Jazeera through a systematic process. First, the researcher identified relevant news reports by searching the official websites of both media outlets using keywords such as "Iranian rial collapse," "Iran currency crash," and "Iran economic crisis." From the search results, the researcher selected reports published between December 2025 and January 2026 that specifically discussed the sharp depreciation of the rial and its social and economic consequences. Second, the selected articles were read carefully and repeatedly to gain a comprehensive understanding of their linguistic features, narrative focus, and perspectives on the causes and impacts of the rial collapse. Third, the news texts were categorized based on van Dijk's discourse framework, which includes macrostructure, superstructure, microstructure, and social cognition, including power relations and ideological orientation. This categorization was organized into analytical tables to facilitate comparison between the two media outlets.

The data analysis in this study was conducted through an in-depth interpretive process to produce a nuanced understanding of the news texts under examination. The analysis began by identifying and selecting relevant news texts related to the Iranian rial collapse. After that, the discourse structures of The New York Times and Al Jazeera were analyzed through several stages. Macrostructure analysis focused on identifying the overall themes or dominant topics conveyed in each report to reveal how the currency crisis was framed. Superstructure analysis examined the organizational pattern of the news texts, including headlines, leads, and the sequencing of information, to understand how events, causes,

and consequences were arranged. Microstructure analysis involved close examination of semantic choices, syntactic patterns, stylistic features, and rhetorical strategies to show how specific words, sentence constructions, and language styles shaped interpretations of the rial collapse. In addition, the analysis of power and the ideological square explored how both outlets used language to shape perceptions of the crisis by emphasizing certain actors, causes, and meanings while minimizing others. Finally, conclusions were drawn based on the results of the multi-level analysis to explain how The New York Times and Al Jazeera constructed the Iranian currency crisis in terms of language use, power relations, and ideological orientations.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Discourse Structure

3.1.1 Macrostructure

In Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), macrostructure refers to the overall meaning or dominant theme conveyed by a text. Within news reporting, this level captures the central issue that the article seeks to highlight or prioritize. Van Dijk (2008) explains that topics or themes are typically articulated through elements such as headlines, leads, summaries, and introductory statements. In this study, news headlines related to the Iranian rial collapse are therefore used as key data to identify and analyze the macrostructural framing adopted by the selected media outlets.

a. Al Jazeera

“Iran’s government budget reveals tough road ahead as
currency hits new low”

The headline’s global topic is economic crisis and state response: it frames the story around the government’s budget as a primary lens for understanding the crisis. The phrase “government budget reveals” foregrounds the state as an authoritative narrator (the budget reveals), positioning official documents and state actors as the source of legitimate interpretation. The subordinate clause “as currency hits new low” supplies the immediate factual trigger (the rial’s fall) and links the macro-theme of fiscal policy to the macro-theme of market collapse. The overall macro-meaning communicated to the reader is: the state’s fiscal outlook signals difficult times ahead because the currency has suffered a serious decline.

b. The New York Times

“Surge of Economic Pain Pushes Iranian to the Streets”

This headline’s global topic is economic-driven protest: it links a sudden intensification of hardship (the “surge of economic pain”) directly to collective action (“pushes Iranians to the streets”). The main message communicated at macro level is causal and mobilizing: worsening economic conditions are the primary explanation for social unrest. Readers are guided to understand the story as fundamentally about popular reaction to material hardship, not primarily about elite politics, foreign interference, or organized opposition groups.

3.2.1 Superstructure

Superstructure concerns the organizational pattern of a news text, including how information is arranged in the headline, lead, body, and closing sections. This structural scheme guides readers in following the flow of information and understanding how events, causes, and consequences are presented. In the context of this study, attention is given to how reports on the Iranian rial collapse are structured, with particular focus on headlines and opening sections as entry points that signal the overall direction and emphasis of the news and anticipate the content developed in the rest of the article.

a. Al Jazeera

Based on the headline “Iran’s government budget reveals tough road ahead as currency hits new low”, this news text is structured to foreground official economic policy before social consequences. The superstructure places the government budget as the primary entry point, positioning an institutional document as the main source of interpretation. The phrase “reveals tough road ahead” prepares the reader for a problem-oriented narrative focused on future challenges, while “currency hits new low” functions as contextual evidence that supports the seriousness of the budgetary outlook. This ordering suggests that the article is likely to open with policy explanations and macroeconomic conditions before moving to public reactions. The superstructure thus emphasizes economic diagnosis and structural difficulty, framing the crisis as a systemic problem rooted in fiscal and monetary conditions rather than immediate street-level unrest.

b. The New York Times

The headline “Surge of Economic Pain Pushes Iranians to the Streets” indicates a superstructure that prioritizes social impact and collective response. The phrase “surge of economic pain” foregrounds worsening hardship as the main trigger, while “pushes Iranians to the streets” highlights protest and popular mobilization as the central outcome. This suggests that the news text is likely to begin with scenes of demonstrations, public anger, or human suffering before providing economic explanations or policy background. The ordering constructs a cause–effect narrative in which economic conditions directly lead to social unrest. By placing protest at the forefront, the superstructure frames the crisis primarily as a people-centered phenomenon, emphasizing the lived consequences of economic decline rather than technical fiscal analysis.

3.1.3. Microstructure

Microstructure focuses on close examination of the fine-grained linguistic features of a text, including vocabulary selection, semantic emphasis, syntactic patterns, stylistic choices, and rhetorical devices. In this study, the microstructural analysis concentrates on the opening sections of news reports on the Iranian rial collapse, as these introductory passages often contain key evaluative language and framing cues that shape readers initial interpretations of the economic crisis.

a. Al Jazeera

Iran's currency has been registering new lows amid ongoing economic turmoil that is also reflected in a planned budget for next year that effectively shrinks public spending.

Each United States dollar was priced at about 1.36 million rials in the open market on Wednesday in Tehran, its highest rate ever, before the Iranian currency slightly regained ground on Thursday.

The embattled national currency has been rapidly declining over recent weeks as the US and its Western allies pile on their sanctions and diplomatic pressure, and the threat of another war with Israel lingers.

President Masoud Pezeshkian this week sent his administration's finalised proposed budget to the hardline-dominated parliament for the upcoming Iranian calendar year, which starts in late March. The budget will then have to be greenlit by the 12-member Guardian Council before being ratified into law in the coming weeks.

The presented budget nominally grew by just over 5 percent compared with last year, but inflation currently stands at about 50 percent – indicating that the government envisions lower spending while managing a so-called “resistance economy” as it faces a massive budget crunch yet again.

But minimum wages are to be raised far below the inflation rate, too, at only 20 percent, meaning that Iranians are once more guaranteed to have far less spending power next year as the embattled national currency sinks.

At the same time, the budget says the government sees taxes rising by a massive 62 percent next year, as authorities try to gradually decrease dependence on oil revenues amid US efforts to drive down Iranian exports, which are carried by a shadow fleet of ships mostly to China.

Figure 1. Al Jazeera News

Place of occurrence: The events are situated in Iran, with specific reference to Tehran's open market where the exchange rate is reported, and national political institutions such as the presidency, parliament, and Guardian Council, indicating a nationwide economic and political context.

Details: The text presents factual economic and policy details, including the rial's record-low exchange rate (“about 1.36 million rials”), high inflation (“about 50 percent”), limited budget growth (“just over 5 percent”), low wage increases

(“only 20 percent”), and a sharp tax rise (“62 percent”), alongside procedural information about the budget approval process.

Presumption: The discourse presumes worsening economic conditions and reduced purchasing power for Iranians, implying that the planned budget will deepen public hardship. It also presupposes a causal link between sanctions, diplomatic pressure, and the currency’s decline, presenting austerity as an unavoidable response.

Active/Passive sentence: Passive constructions such as “was priced” and “will have to be greenlit” emphasize outcomes and procedures rather than responsible actors, while active sentences like “President Masoud Pezeshkian... sent his administration’s budget” explicitly assign agency to political institutions.

Coherence: The text is coherently structured by linking currency depreciation to inflation, budget constraints, and declining purchasing power, forming a cause–effect chain that logically connects economic indicators to policy decisions and social consequences.

Pronouns: Pronouns and noun substitutes such as “his administration,” “the government,” “authorities,” and “Iranians” alternately personalize institutional responsibility and generalize the affected population, creating distance between decision-makers and citizens.

Lexicon: Evaluative terms like “embattled,” “massive,” “rapidly declining,” and “budget crunch” convey severity and urgency, while numerical data provide a technical and authoritative tone to the report.

-Metaphor: Metaphors such as “embattled national currency,” “registering new lows,” and “pile on their sanctions” frame the economic crisis as a struggle or downward movement, shaping the reader’s perception of the situation as severe and externally pressured.

b. The New York Times

Protesters took to the streets of the capital, Tehran, and other cities in Iran on Monday to decry surging inflation and the collapse of the national currency, which have thrown markets into chaos and punched holes in family budgets.

The currency plunged to a record low this past weekend against the U.S. dollar and the annual inflation rate rose to 42.2 percent in December.

Amid the turmoil, the head of Iran’s central bank, Mohammad Reza Farzin, resigned on Monday, pending the president’s acceptance, local news media reported. A former economy minister, Abdolnaser Hemmati, was set to replace him.

The economic turmoil poses a new challenge for Iran’s leaders as they seek to maintain control of their country of 92 million people while recovering from attacks on its nuclear facilities in June by Israel and the United States and a campaign of “maximum pressure” from the Trump administration aimed at securing a new agreement about Iran’s nuclear program.

President Masoud Pezeshkian responded to the demonstrations late Monday on social media.

“The livelihood of the people is my daily concern,” Mr. Pezeshkian said in a post on X. He said the government has actions planned to “reform the monetary and banking system and preserve the purchasing power of the people,” adding that he had also asked the interior minister to “hear the legitimate demands of the protesters through dialogue with their representatives.”

Mr. Pezeshkian’s conciliatory message and his earlier move to swiftly replace the central bank chief suggest he is seeking to project responsiveness and a sense of de-escalation.

Iran has experienced repeated waves of protests fueled by economic woes, drought and other grievances since 2017, and it was not immediately clear whether these new demonstrations would grow and spread to additional cities.

Iranian security forces have repressed previous protests with deadly force and arrests, raising the stakes for those who make their complaints public. Videos shared online on Monday showed security forces firing tear gas to disperse some of the protests in Tehran and at least two other cities.

Figure 2. The New York Times News

Place of occurrence: The events are located in Iran, specifically “the capital, Tehran, and other cities in Iran”, indicating that the protests are both centralized and nationwide. The repeated reference to Tehran foregrounds political significance, while “other cities” implies broader social reach.

Details: The text provides concrete descriptions of economic crisis and political response, including protests “to decry surging inflation and the collapse of the national currency”, the currency falling to “a record low”, inflation reaching “42.2 percent in December”, the resignation of the central bank chief, and the deployment of security forces “firing tear gas to disperse some of the protests”. These details combine economic statistics, institutional changes, and street-level events.

Presumption: The discourse presumes that economic hardship directly motivates public protest and instability. Phrases such as “punched holes in family budgets” presuppose widespread household suffering, while references to past repression (“repressed previous protests with deadly force”) presume a high-risk environment for dissent and anticipate potential escalation.

Active/Passive sentence: Active constructions: “Protesters took to the streets”, “security forces firing tear gas”, “Mr. Pezeshkian responded to the demonstrations” these clauses explicitly assign agency to protesters, state forces, and political leaders. Passive constructions: “it was not immediately clear whether these new demonstrations would grow” and “previous protests [were] repressed” obscure specific agents, softening direct attribution of responsibility. This alternation highlights popular action while partially diffusing state accountability.

Coherence: The text maintains coherence through a cause–effect sequence: economic collapse → public protests → leadership reshuffle → presidential response → security repression. This progression is reinforced by temporal markers (“on Monday,” “this past weekend,” “late Monday”) and logical connectors (“amid the turmoil,” “as they seek to maintain control”), linking economic data, political decisions, and social consequences into a unified narrative.

Pronouns: Pronouns and referential expressions distinguish between actors and affected groups: “Protesters,” “Iran’s leaders,” “security forces” identify institutional and collective agents, while inclusive terms like “the people” and “family budgets” generalize the population as victims. The president’s use of “my daily concern” personalizes responsibility and attempts to construct proximity with citizens.

Lexicon: The text employs evaluative and emotive vocabulary such as “surging inflation,” “collapse,” “chaos,” “punched holes,” “economic turmoil,” “deadly force,” and “legitimate demands”. These lexical choices emphasize crisis severity and moral stakes while blending technical economic language with affective descriptors.

Metaphor: Several metaphors frame the crisis vividly: “punched holes in family budgets” conceptualizes economic loss as physical damage; “thrown markets into chaos” depicts disorder spatially and emotionally; “maximum pressure” frames sanctions as coercive force. These metaphors shape readers’ mental models by portraying the economic crisis as violent, destabilizing, and externally intensified.

3.2. Power and Ideological Square in the discourse structures of The New York Times and Al Jazeera

Power in discourse refers to the capacity of actors or institutions to shape what is said, who is heard, and which interpretations become acceptable (Rahmah, In Amalia 2019). In news texts this shows up as control over framing, voice selection, and the allocation of agency, for example, by quoting government officials more than protesters, foregrounding certain causal explanations, or using grammatical constructions (passives, nominalizations) that hide responsibility. Such textual moves are not neutral: they help powerful actors manage public meaning and limit the range of plausible interpretations available to readers.

Ideology, understood as a shared system of beliefs and assumptions, is embedded in these textual choices. Ideology operates as social cognition: it shapes authors’ expectations of audiences and guides how events are presented—what counts as a legitimate cause, who is a credible witness, and which solutions are reasonable (Van Dijk, 2011). In media coverage of the Iranian currency collapse, ideological orientations may therefore appear as recurrent themes (blaming sanctions, blaming domestic misrule), favored metaphors (a “plunge” versus a “correction”), and patterns of source attribution that normalize particular political or economic narratives.

The following table presents the ideological square analysis of the news coverage of the Iranian rial crash using van Dijk’s framework. It identifies how the text constructs meaning through four discursive strategies: emphasizing positive actions of “us,” minimizing negative actions of “us,” emphasizing negative actions of “them,” and minimizing positive actions of “them.” Through this lens, the table shows how the news discourse shapes readers’ understanding of Iran, the media outlet, and the economic crisis.

3.2.1. Sub-section 1: Emphasizing “Our” Good Things

This section shows how the news discourse presents the media outlet and its reporting style as credible, factual, and authoritative. In the document, both The New York Times and Al Jazeera rely on statistics, official statements, and structured reporting to appear objective and informed. This creates a positive self-presentation because the outlets position themselves as reliable observers of the crisis rather than as biased commentators.

Table 1. Quadrant 1 – Emphasize “Our” Good Things

Element	Content
Quadrant	1 – Our Good
Key Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media presents itself as objective and data-driven • Use of statistics and expert voices builds credibility • Institutional actors (government, economists) framed as rational decision-makers
Strategy	Show the positive qualities of “our” group (media institutions like The New York Times and Al Jazeera)
Example News	<p>in “The budget reveals tough road ahead...”</p> <p>“Inflation reached 42.2 percent...”</p>
The Goal	To construct authority, credibility, and trustworthiness of the news outlet as a reliable narrator

3.2.2. Sub-section 2: Emphasizing “Their” Bad Things

This section is visible in the way Iran is represented through crisis, instability, and failure. Your document shows that the rial crash is described with expressions such as “record low,” “collapse,” “surge of economic pain,” and “embattled national currency,” which emphasize economic weakness and social unrest. Through this strategy, the news discourse constructs Iran and its institutions as troubled, ineffective, and under pressure, making “them” appear negatively.

Table 2. Quadrant 2 – Emphasize “Their” Bad Things

Element	Content
Quadrant	2 – Their Bad
Key Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Iran framed as economically unstable and politically problematic • Emphasis on inflation, protests, and policy failure • Government portrayed as struggling or ineffective
Strategy	Highlight negative aspects of “them” (Iranian government, economy)
Example News	<p>in “Collapse of the national currency”</p> <p>“Surging economic pain pushes Iranians to the streets”</p> <p>“Embattled national currency”</p>
The Goal	To construct Iran as a crisis-ridden “other” and reinforce negative perception

3.2.3. Sub-section 3: De-emphasizing “Our” Bad Things

This section refers to the way the text avoids drawing attention to possible bias, selective sourcing, or ideological framing by the media itself. In the document, the articles are analyzed as if their language is neutral, even though choices of headline, source selection, and emphasis may shape readers’ interpretation. By not openly problematizing the outlet’s own perspective, the discourse hides any negative aspects of “our” side and maintains the appearance of neutrality.

Table 3. Quadrant 3 – De-emphasize “Our” Bad Things

Element	Content
Quadrant	3 – Our Bad (Hidden)
Key Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited reflection on media bias or framing choices • Western or institutional perspectives presented as neutral • Lack of critique on how reporting may influence perception
Strategy	Downplay or omit weaknesses of “our” group (media ideology, selective sourcing)
Example News	<p>in Absence of statements like: “This framing may reflect editorial bias”</p>
The Goal	To maintain the illusion of neutrality and avoid questioning the media’s ideological role

3.2.4. Sub-section 4: De-emphasizing “Their” Good Things

This section refers to the minimization of positive aspects of Iran, such as resilience, policy efforts, or attempts at recovery. In the document, the focus is mainly on inflation, protests, sanctions, and currency decline, while the strengths or constructive responses of Iranian actors are not strongly highlighted. As a result, the discourse limits a balanced view and keeps readers focused on crisis rather than on possible achievements or solutions.

Table 4. Quadrant 4 – De-emphasize “Their” Good Things

Element	Content
Quadrant	4 – Their Good (Hidden)
Key Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimal focus on resilience, recovery efforts, or policy solutions • Limited representation of government efforts to stabilize economy • Citizens mainly framed as victims, not active agents
Strategy	Downplay positive aspects of “them” (Iran’s agency, policy responses, resilience)
Example News	<p>in Little emphasis on: “Government reform efforts” “Public adaptation or resistance strategies”</p>
The Goal	To prevent a balanced view and sustain a one-sided crisis narrative

3.2.4. Summary Diagram: Summary of All Four Sub-sections (The Ideological Square)

The four quadrants of van Dijk’s ideological square show how the news coverage of the Iranian rial crash constructs meaning through selection, emphasis, and omission. In the analyzed articles, the media foregrounds the severity of Iran’s economic crisis, highlights institutional responses and crisis indicators, and gives less attention to positive aspects of Iran’s condition or recovery efforts. This pattern helps shape readers’ understanding of the rial collapse as a serious and unstable event while also maintaining the authority of the news outlets as credible reporters.

Table 5. Summary

Quadrant	Strategy	Key Points	Example in News	The Goal
1. Our Good	Emphasize the positive side of “our” group	The present reporting factual, based, outlets their as data- and	“The budget reveals tough road ahead...”, “Inflation reached 42.2 percent...”	To make the news outlet appear credible, objective, and trustworthy.

				authoritative by using statistics, official statements, and structured explanations.		
2. Bad	Their	Emphasize the negative side of "their" group	the	Iran is represented through collapse, inflation, protests, and institutional pressure, making the crisis appear severe and unstable.	"Collapse of the national currency"; "Surge of economic pain pushes Iranians to the streets"; "embattled national currency"	To make Iran appear weak, troubled, and crisis-ridden.
3. Bad	Our	Hide the negative side of "our" group		The articles do not strongly question the outlets' own framing, source selection, or possible ideological bias.	The reporting is presented as neutral, while framing choices remain unexamined.	To maintain an image of neutrality and avoid exposing media bias.
4. Good	Their	Hide the positive side of "their" group		The coverage gives little attention to Iran's resilience, recovery efforts, or constructive responses to the crisis.	Limited emphasis on policy solutions, public resilience, or positive developments.	To keep attention on the crisis and reduce a balanced portrayal of Iran.

3.3 Discussion

The news coverage of the Iranian rial crash shows that economic reporting is not merely a presentation of facts, but also a discursive practice that shapes how audiences understand crisis, responsibility, and legitimacy. In the articles analyzed in the document, both Al Jazeera and The New York Times frame the rial collapse through crisis language such as "record low," "collapse," "economic pain," and "protests," which emphasizes instability and urgency. At the same time, the reports rely on official statements, statistics, and structured explanation to appear objective and credible. This means that the media are not only informing readers about the financial collapse, but also guiding them toward certain interpretations of the event and the actors involved.

This phenomenon can be explained through van Dijk's ideological square, which divides discourse into four strategies: emphasizing good things about "us," hiding bad things about "us," emphasizing bad things about "them," and hiding good things about "them." In the context of your study, "us" refers to the news institutions and their reporting stance, while "them" refers mainly to Iran and its political-economic situation. The analysis shows that both media outlets present their reporting as factual and authoritative, which strengthens their positive self-image as reliable news sources. At the same time, they foreground Iran's currency collapse, inflation, protests, and institutional pressure, while giving less attention to recovery efforts, resilience, or constructive policy responses. In this way, the discourse creates an imbalance that makes the crisis appear dominant and the positive side of the affected side less visible.

The ideological effect of this pattern is significant. By repeatedly highlighting decline, hardship, and social unrest, the coverage encourages readers to view the Iranian economic situation as severe and unstable. This can shape public cognition by making the audience associate Iran mainly with crisis rather than with complexity or resilience. At the same time, the articles preserve the authority of the media outlet by presenting the reporting as neutral, data-based, and

professionally organized. As a result, the discourse does not simply describe the Iranian rial crash; it also constructs a particular mental model in which crisis, weakness, and failure become the most visible meanings attached to the event.

The findings of this study are relevant because they show that van Dijk's ideological square can be applied effectively to economic news, not only to political conflict or social controversy. Your document already positions this research as a contribution to CDA by extending it into financial journalism and by comparing two international outlets with different geopolitical orientations. This comparative approach is important because it helps reveal how the same event can be framed differently depending on institutional position, source selection, and narrative emphasis. In that sense, the study demonstrates that news discourse on economic collapse is also a site of ideology, power, and selective representation.

4. Conclusion

The expected result of this research is that The New York Times and Al Jazeera frame the Iranian rial collapse differently through their use of macrostructure, superstructure, and microstructure. The New York Times is likely to emphasize public suffering, protest, and the social impact of the crisis, while Al Jazeera is likely to foreground state policy, economic pressure, and structural causes. These differences show that news language is not neutral; it shapes social cognition, assigns responsibility, and builds ideological meanings about who is blamed and who is seen as a victim.

The logical consequence for the development of Islamic education is the need to strengthen critical literacy and media awareness among students and educators. In science, this study broadens the use of Critical Discourse Analysis in Islamic education research, especially for reading media texts ethically and critically. In praxis, it helps Islamic education promote values of honesty, fairness, responsibility, and wisdom in responding to social and economic issues, so learners do not accept media messages passively but evaluate them with moral and intellectual awareness.

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