ALBANIA AND THE MIDDLE EAST
MEDIA, RELATIONS AND POLITICS
The case of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the State of Israel and the Islamic Republic of Iran

Alban Reli

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Authorship Declaration

This study is my original work. This work upholds the principles of academic integrity and contains no plagiarized material.. All authors have been properly cited and referenced in accordance with the rules of academic writing. I also declare that this work has not been submitted, either in whole or in part, to any other university for the attainment of any academic degree.

Abstract

This dissertation investigates how foreign-policy dynamics and media narratives interact to construct the international image of a small state. Focusing on Albania's relations with three key Middle Eastern actors—the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the State of Israel, and the Islamic Republic of Iran—this study analyses native-language media coverage of Albania in Al Arabiya (Arabic, pan-Arab), Ynet (Hebrew, mainstream Israeli), and IRNA (Persian, Iran's state news agency). The primary sources comprise articles published in Arabic, Hebrew, and Persian that address Albania within the respective periods under examination: Al Arabiya (2013–2024), Ynet (2005–2024), and IRNA (2012–2022). The study combines foreign-policy analysis with media-framing and critical discourse analysis within a comparative case-study design. The analytical model rests on two principal pillars: media theory—the elite model, indexing, and framing—and a constructivist approach to foreign policy. It uses process tracing to map media patterns on key events.

Findings converge on four results. *First,* cooperation yields favourable coverage: Al Arabiya and Ynet consistently frame Albania as a reliable partner open to trade and tourism. Ynet coverage also portrays Albania as a reliable partner in the field of security and cyber cooperation. Similarly, IRNA's reporting —despite the MEK's presence in Albania – remained cordial and soft power oriented until late 2017 and beginning of 2018—because, until then, bilateral ties were marked by high level visits and cooperation agreements in the economic, media, and cultural spheres; during this period, soft diplomacy predominated over securitized references to the MEK's relocation. *Second,* policy intersections with an adversary produce negative frames: From mid-2018 onward— following the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA (the nuclear agreement with

Iran), the emergence of the MEK as an exiled Iranian opposition group advocating regime change, and after the expulsion of Iranian diplomats for activities incompatible with their diplomatic status—IRNA, anchored in the Islamic Republic's "resistance" discourse, frames Albania's alignment with U.S. and Western policies in hostile terms. Accordingly, IRNA advances an adversarial narrative that portrays Albania—by virtue of hosting the MEK—as a state "harbouring terrorists" and "facilitating cyber operations against Iran." *Third,* great-power alignment and strategic identity condition tone: congruence with Western coalitions correlates with supportive narratives in Al Arabiya and Ynet. *Fourth,* crises intensify and polarize coverage such as in the case of 2022 cyber-attacks against Albania, attributed to Iran, and the diplomatic rupture between Albania and Iran in the same year.

Theoretically, the project shows that major outlets do not simply mirror Albania's reality but refract it through state-linked strategic lenses; Albania functions as a barometer of each state's external alignments and identity scripts. Methodologically, it contributes a native-language corpus and a transferable model for linking foreign-policy change to media framing. Policy-relevant implications follow for Albanian public diplomacy and strategic communication.

PREFACE

Two decades ago, in 2002—after several years of study in the capital of Saudi Arabia, Riyadh, where I graduated in Arabic Language and in Radio-television Journalism—I returned to Albania, where I began working as world news journalist at one of the Albanian national TV stations of that time, TVA. This period coincided with a major global event that would exert its influence over the next two decades and beyond: the Second Iraq War (also known as 'The Second Gulf War'). Being proficient in English and in Arabic, I was given the opportunity to follow the daily developments of this major event, in which Albania was part of the international coalition, the "Coalition of the Willing," consisting of 46 countries, including Albania – a coalition led by the United States.

The war began, as always, suddenly! … One spring night, in March 2003, I received a phone call from the newsroom, asking me to report at the news desk – the airstrikes over Baghdad had begun. All the world's TV networks were broadcasting live. Saddam Hussein had prohibited all foreign correspondents from broadcasting live from Baghdad—with the exception of one pan-Arab television channel, Al Jazeera.

All the major global networks—CNN, CBC, FOX News, BBC, etc.—had their translators in the "Translation Booth", translating from Arabic the correspondent of Al Jazeera. Translators at other Albanian national television stations were translating from this "double translation", and TVA was the only Albanian TV station translating directly from Arabic, because, as it is said in another Semitic language —Hebrew— "bemikre o shelo bemikre" ("by chance or not by chance") — it so happened that I was the only

world-news journalist (perhaps even the only journalist) in the Albanian media who was proficient in Arabic; therefore, I began simultaneous interpretation from that language.

Professionally, this was a great bonus for me, because, truth be told, after several months of work experience at that TV station, I had never imagined that Arabic—or any other Middle Eastern language—would ever attract particular interest in the Albanian media.

The following morning, after a sleepless night, I continued to follow the global news services to which TVA was subscribed, such as Reuters and AP, to prepare an extended report on that war, in which the armed forces of the Republic of Albania were also involved.

That evening, I returned once again to the “Translation Booth” for simultaneous interpretation—this time from English: the speech of the U.S. President, George W. Bush, and shortly after him, from Arabic: the speech of the Iraqi dictator, Saddam Hussein, who, after a few brief paragraphs in Arabic, began reciting an "epic poem”— at that moment, I ceased the simultaneous interpretation (to this day, I have never encountered anyone capable of performing simultaneous interpretation of poetry...).

The next morning, the editor-in-chief of the news department, his face glowing with excitement, said to me: “Alban, you’ve done me a great favor… today I received congratulations from the U.S. Embassy for the reports you prepared.”

That was another bonus of professional satisfaction; I had just started working at the TV station and received already international recognition—for monitoring television materials and preparing informative reports from the Middle East!

For two consecutive months thereafter—until the overthrow of Saddam Hussein and the establishment of coalition control throughout Iraq—the coverage of this event began to occupy a prominent place among the most important news stories. On the day coalition forces entered Baghdad, the images that went around the world were those of Saddam Hussein's statue being pulled down with a rope tied around its neck—images that reminded me of the toppling of Enver Hoxha's statue in the center of Tirana. It was a strikingly similar scene, except that the people around Saddam's statue were dressed in Arab attire and were striking the fallen statue with their sandals (the Middle East is, after all, known for its hot climate...).

However, it was not the images themselves that particularly impressed me—for I had already spent years in the Middle East and, as I mentioned earlier, had personally witnessed the fall of another dictator's monument, in Tirana. What caught my attention instead was the final paragraph of the Reuters report on the event, which stated that this enthusiasm was observed mainly in the Shiite neighborhoods of the city.

This was typical British journalism: no explicit commentary revealing partiality, but subtle "hints" conveyed through the selection of details. Having had more than seven years of "immersive" experience in the Middle East, I quickly realized that this was not merely a war to establish democracy in a Third World country lacking democratic culture, but rather a struggle to preserve some fragile geopolitical and ethno-religious balances in a "powder-keg" region that also happens to be the world's largest reservoir of hydrocarbons, one of the fastest-growing demographic areas, and—paradoxically—the cradle of some of the world's oldest and greatest civilizations.

While Albanian analysts and politicians in television studios continued to "lecture on democracy and dictatorship," in Iraq the tip of the "Volcanic Iceberg" of the "Middle

Eastern Desert" began to emerge; the establishment of a pro-Shiite government, the penetration of Iraq by Iranian-backed paramilitary proxy groups coordinated and trained by the Revolutionary Guard, and the radicalization of the loyalists of Saddam Hussein (who, like his statue, ended up with a rope tied around his neck)… This unstable situation created a vacuum that also enabled the spread of jihadist-fundamentalist extremism which, with the onset of the Arab Spring, would sow the seeds for the emergence of DAISH (الدولة الإسلامية للعراق والشام), known in the West as ISIS.

In fact, during those first months of the war, no one in Albania seemed to realize that these developments in the Middle East would have any implications for Albania. Everyone here regarded—or at least presented—the conflict as a regional one. After all, the Arab Gulf states had long-standing scores to settle with Saddam Hussein, ever since he had invaded Kuwait in 1990 and launched missile atacks against Saudi Arabia. Indeed, even the command of the allied forces had been established in an Arab Gulf country — Qatar.

Hence, in Albanian public discourse too, Saddam was perceived as "paying the price for his arrogance toward neighboring states and for the repression of his own people," while his downfall was expected to serve as a model for establishing democracy in the Middle East.

In fact, whether as a direct or indirect consequence of these developments, two of the most significant—though diametrically opposed—events have had an impact on both the public diplomacy and the national security of the Republic of Albania: the formation of ISIS, which managed to establish recruitment cells even within Albanian territory; and, subsequently, the relocation to Albania of members of the Iranian opposition organization in exile, the Mujahedin-e Khalq (Persian: مجاهیدین خلق), commonly known as MEK.

Until that time, the group had been residing in Camp Liberty in Iraq, but with the withdrawal of U.S. troops from the country, their lives became endangered due to the strong presence and influence of pro-Iranian Shiite paramilitary groups there. Therefore, in 2013, following the closure of that camp, started the proccess of their relocation to Europe—most of them to Camp Ashraf 3, located in Manëz, Durrës County, Albania—for humanitarian reasons.

The ideal of democratizing the Middle East, which found its expression in the Arab Spring of 2011—a movement that led to the overthrow of several regimes in a number of Arab states, mostly those with Ba'athist orientation—was, in fact, followed by the emergence of an explosive and destabilizing situation. This was marked by the spread of extremist-jihadist groups, the growing influence of Iran and its proxy groups in several Arab countries such as Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, and Yemen, as well as Iran's sponsorship of extremist organizations in Palestine, such as Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ).

At the same time, the return of Russian influence in the Middle East led to the deployment of Russian troops and the establishment of Russian military bases in Syria... These developments also triggered a massive wave of refugees fleeing from these regions, and Albania—due to its geographical position—became a transit point for the movement and trafficking of these refugees.

All these developments no longer represent a novelty; they have been part of the daily media coverage of events related to Albania, as well as the focus of studies and analyses carried out by various institutes and organizations—both domestic and international—that address issues of security and international relations. Albania is undoubtedly part of this new global reality, in which developments in the Middle East also have a considerable impact.

It is worth recalling here that, in terms of geographical proximity, the Middle East is as close to Albania as several Western European countries are—indeed, some of the Arab states are part of the Mediterranean basin.

Likewise, the State of Israel—although culturally and politically a Western democracy—is geographically part of this region. With the discovery of vast gas-bearing areas in its outer continental shelf, Israel—beyond being an avant-garde country in technology and innovation—is now also emerging as an energy superpower, exporting natural gas even to neighbouring Arab countries.

Of course, this region also includes other countries regarded as global energy superpowers, such as Qatar, which—with only three million inhabitants—ranks third in the world for natural gas reserves, holding around 12% of the global total. The entire Middle East accounts for approximately 36% of the world's natural gas reserves, while about 67% of global oil reserves are located within this region.

With the escalation of the conflict in Ukraine and the ongoing confrontation between Russia and the West, the European Union countries—which constitute the world's second-largest consumer of natural gas and import around 80% of this crucial product for their economies— are seeking alternative sources to Russian gas, which until 2021 accounted for about 45% of their imports. Among these alternative sources, the Middle Eastern countries are the main favorite, both due to their vast reserves and their geographical proximity—not to mention oil imports, since the largest oil reserves are located in the Middle East, particularly in Saudi Arabia.

These alternative sources will also necessitate the establishment of new transportation routes for gas, and Albania—because of its geographical position—represents one of the key potential transit points for the import of natural gas into Europe.

In light of these developments—and given that we live in a globalized era—I consider Albania's relations with the countries of the Middle East to be of particular importance. Albania is already receiving expertise from Israel to strengthen its cyber defense capacities—especially after facing a severe cyberattack from Iran, which led to the severance of diplomatic relations with that country. At the same time, Albania has signed investment agreements worth several hundred million dollars with various Middle Eastern countries, particularly with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and with investors from the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait. Under these circumstances, I believe that public diplomacy with these countries in general, and the perception of Albania within the public opinion of these countries in particular, hold special significance.

For this reason, I chosed to focus my doctoral dissertation on the representation of Albania in the media of these countries: What do they say about Albania? Why do they say it? Why is it important for Albania? How can this contribute to the development of Albania's relations with this region and beyond? Being familiar with the Middle East has made it clear to me that, although these countries may be geographically somewhat distant, they nonetheless hold significant importance and exert a tangible impact on our country.

Together with this, in my doctoral dissertation, I have sought to present a concise retrospective of the history of the Middle East, as well as the history and current state of Albania's diplomatic relations with some of the most prominent countries of this region—aiming to provide a broad perspective and an inclusive context for those interested in the subject.

A particular motivation for selecting this doctoral theses has been the fact that, following my studies in Arabic, I subsequently acquired proficiency in two other Middle

Eastern languages: Hebrew and Persian. In Hebrew, as with Arabic, I already have teaching experience as lecturer in the Faculty of Foreign Languages at the University of Tirana, as well as experience in translating several literary works—being the first translator of literature from Hebrew into Albanian. For three of these translated literary works, Albanian has been the first language into which they have ever been translated.

As for the Persian language, which I have acquired primarily through following news and media broadcasts, due to my particular interest in regional developments, my strongest skills lie in understanding the media and journalistic register of Persian.

This has been particularly helpful in enabling me to access news from the media of the countries in this region in their native languages—Arabic, Hebrew, and Persian—thus allowing me to engage directly with the local representation and public perception of developments related to Albania and its relations with the states of the Middle East.

For all of this, I am deeply grateful!

Above all, I am grateful to God, who endowed me with the knowledge and the necessary intellectual framework for the preparation of this dissertation, making my efforts fruitful and successful.

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I am also profoundly thankful to my family, who supported me throughout this journey.

I hope that this work will serve as a “Window into the Courtyard of the Middle East” for every scholar, academic, diplomat, Foreign Ministry official, student, or reader interested in this region, its media, politics, and international relations.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The foreign policy of small states is often shaped by a complex interplay of historical legacies, domestic transformations, strategic alignments, and evolving global structures. Albania's post-communist reorientation toward Euro-Atlantic structures has been widely studied; however, its relations with Middle Eastern countries remain underexplored in scholarly literature. These relationships, marked by a mixture of pragmatism, identity politics, security concerns, and normative commitments, provide a rich terrain for analyzing how foreign policy narratives are constructed, represented, and contested, both within Albania and in the external media spaces of these states.

The Middle East holds a central place in global politics due to its strategic location, vast energy resources, and complex historical, religious, and cultural significance. Geographically positioned at the crossroads of Europe, Asia, and Africa, it has long served as a critical hub for trade, migration, and cultural exchange. The region's substantial reserves of oil and natural gas make it indispensable to the world economy, shaping the foreign policies of both regional and global powers. It also plays a pivotal role in in counterterrorism strategies, and migration dynamics, while also serving as a testing ground for international diplomacy and peacebuilding efforts.

Culturally and historically, the Middle East is the cradle of the world's major monotheistic religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—and continues to influence global identity narratives, religious movements, and intercultural relations. Its importance, therefore, extends beyond material or strategic dimensions, encompassing deep civilizational and symbolic meanings that continue to shape global discourse and policy.

The advent of the Abrahamic Accords in 2020 marked a transformative moment in Middle Eastern diplomacy and regional order. Brokered by the United States, the accords formalized diplomatic relations between Israel and a number of Arab states, beginning with the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, followed later by Morocco and Sudan**,** and, in the current period, the U.S. President Donald Trump has reaffirmed ambitions to expand the Abraham Accords to include additional states (e.g., Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, Syria, Lebanon).

Symbolically named after the patriarch Abraham—revered in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—the Accords invoked a narrative of shared heritage and interfaith reconciliation. Substantively, however, they represented a strategic realignment driven by mutual security interests, particularly the containment of Iranian regional influence, and by the pursuit of economic and technological cooperation. Economically, the Accords opened unprecedented opportunities for trade, investment, tourism, and innovation, fostering an emerging network of partnerships across sectors such as energy, infrastructure, and technology.

The Abrahamic Accords marked also the beginning of a new era in the relations between the European Union and the states of the Middle East, and, consequently, in Albania's relations with these states, as a country aspiring to join the EU. The Accords open possibilities for Europe to connect with alternative energy sources and routes in the Middle East, thereby reducing dependence on traditional suppliers (e.g.: Russia). Joint ventures in technology, renewable energy, water management, and agriculture could deepen as European companies engage in projects across Israel–Gulf–European networks. The Accords strengthen coalitions formed against shared security threats

(notably Iran), which can create possibilities for European intelligence and security cooperation with new Middle Eastern configurations.

This new regional and global context opens favourable prospects for strengthening Albania's cooperation with the countries of the Middle East—a cooperation which, over the past five years, has already gained significant momentum through the signing of several economic agreements worth hundreds of millions of dollars with the Arab Gulf states, as well as agreements on cybersecurity, technology, and innovation with the State of Israel.

In light of the considerations outlined above, taking into account the importance of the Middle East region, this study seeks to explore how Albania is projected within the countries of this region. Given that the Middle East is a vast area comprising a large number of states which share certain common characteristics but also display considerable differences, I have chosen as focus of this study three countries:

1. *The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia* – as the largest economy of the Middle East, and as the religious epicenter of Sunni Islam, which constitutes the religious identity of the majority of the population in the Middle East.

2. *The State of Israel* – as a regional leader in technology and one of the most powerful military actors in the region, distinguished by being the only state with a Jewish identity—unlike the other states of the region with Muslim majorities—and by its political system of governance oriented toward Western democracy.

3. *The Islamic Republic of Iran* – as one of the largest military and economic powers in the region, with a dinstict Shi'a Muslim identity, but, at the same time, representing a unique case study in Albania's diplomatic relations, as it is the first and only country with

which the Republic of Albania has severed diplomatic ties since the collapse of the communist regime in 1990.

A further consideration underlying this selection concerns the linguistic identity of audiences in the Middle East, where the three main languages are: Arabic – with over 400 million Arabic-speaking inhabitants across the Arab countries; Hebrew – with an exclusive audience in Israel and in other Hebrew-speaking communities; and Persian – with approximately 80 million Persian-speaking inhabitants in Iran and several million others in Shi'a-populated regions of other countries in the Middle East. The fact that I am proficient in all three of these languages has enabled me to access the local media of these countries in their native language.

To analyze how Albania is represented in the public discourse of the selected Middle Eastern countries, this study focuses on three leading media outlets: Al Arabiya (Saudi Arabia), Ynet (Israel), and IRNA (Islamic Republic of Iran). These outlets were chosen according to three key criteria: (1) their status as major, widely accessible, and agenda-setting platforms in their respective media ecosystems; (2) their close alignment with or representation of state or elite foreign policy narratives (the case of Al-Arabiya and IRNA); and (3) the availability of a consistent digital archive of news coverage from the early 2000s onward.

Al Arabiya, launched in 2003 and headquartered in Dubai, is part of the Saudi-owned MBC Group and serves as one of the Arab world's most influential transnational broadcasters, reflecting Riyadh's regional and international outlook. *Ynet*, established in 2000 as the digital platform of Yedioth Ahronoth, is one of Israel's most-read online news outlets, represents the mainstream Israeli perspective and often mirrors dominant national-security and diplomatic narratives. *IRNA* (Islamic Republic News Agency),

founded in 1934 and restructured after the 1979 Revolution, functions as Iran's official state news agency and disseminates the government's position on domestic and international affairs.

Together, these three outlets offer a structured and comparative vantage point from which to observe how Albania is framed, legitimized, or contested in the foreign policy discourse of three ideologically and politically distinct Middle Eastern actors.

Importance of the Study

The study is important for several reasons. *First*, it addresses a significant lacuna in the literature on Albania's international relations, moving beyond Euro-Atlanticism to explore its engagement with non-Western actors. *Second*, it contributes to theoretical debates on the relationship between media and foreign policy by applying elite models of media framing. Constructivism underpinned by Realism (identities constructed by states as the main actors in the international system in ways that states deem important for them to preserve their interest and navigate the complexities of this international system) are used as theoretical lenses to understand the framing of Albania in the domestic media of the countries taken into analysis. *Third*, the thesis offers a comparative analysis across three distinct Middle Eastern main actors: Saudi Arabia, Israel and Iran — thus providing a layered understanding of how foreign policy is both practiced and narratively constructed. It contributes methodologically by combining foreign policy analysis with critical discourse analysis and media framing theory.

From a theoretical perspective, this study seeks to contribute to the development of an analytical model applicable to other cases, by proposing a new approach to the study of foreign policy —one in which the portrayal of a small state in the local media of a given region can provide valuable insights into the foreign policy behavior of major

powers. While researchers traditionally rely on established International Relations theories to explain foreign policy—drawing on domestic dynamics, ideological frameworks, and systemic variables—this study suggests that the foreign policy of major powers can also be explored through the analysis of the developments in small states like Albania, which at times become arenas of confrontation or cooperation among those powers.

As previously indicated, this study gains particular relevance through its focus on Albania's relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran during the period 2012–2022, culminating in the severance of diplomatic relations between the two countries. This development marks the first and, to date, the only instance in which the Republic of Albania has severed diplomatic ties with another state, since the collapse of the communist regime in 1990. Consequently, the chapter on Iran—the most extensive section of this study—presents a detailed timeline of the developments and dynamics that led to this rupture. Given the magnitude and implications of this event, it also appears in the other chapters, due to its extensive media coverage in both the Arab and Israeli media outlets. Therefore, it is treated here as a distinct and significant case study, relevant not only to researchers and academics but also to Albanian diplomats.

The purpose of this research extends beyond description; it seeks to articulate the analytical perspectives through which Albania's interactions with the Middle East region may be systematically understood and interpreted.

Objectives of the Doctoral Dissertation, Research Question and Hypothesis

This doctoral thesis investigates two interrelated dimensions: (1) the foreign policy dynamics that shaped Albania's relations with the region of the Middle East; and (2) the discursive and media representations of Albania within the official and mainstream media

narratives of the selected countries – the Kingdom of Saudi Arabiya, the State of Israel, and the Islamic Republic of Iran. By analyzing how Albania is portrayed, framed, and discussed, this study offers insights into the broader nexus between foreign policy formation, identity construction, and media framing.

The research question of the dissertation is: ***How do foreign policy dynamics and media narratives interplay in the construction of Albania's image in the relations with Middle Eastern region states for their domestic audiences?***

In order to answer to the research question, I have explored the main factors influencing the foreign policy of the countries taken into analysis, their foreign relations with Albania and how Albania is represented and framed in the domestic, local language, official and mainstream media of these countries. Based on constructivist perspective underpinned by realism and coupled with media framing theory, I hypothesize that *the closer or more cooperative bilateral relations lead to more favorable or neutral portrayal of Albania. Furthermore, if Albania's policies are aligned with a state's rivals its coverage becomes more negative and finally coverage intensifies and polarizes during global or regional crises, amplifying official foreign policy narratives toward Albania.*

In order to test the hypothesis, I have developed an analytical model grounded in two principal theoretical pillars:

- *Media Theory*: Elite Media Model (Herman and Chomsky, 1988) and Indexing Theory (Bennett, 1990) suggesting that media discourse tends to align with the range of debate among political elites, especially in foreign policy issues; Framing Theory (Entman, 1993): focusing on types of frames used (attribution of responsibility, conflict, human interest, economic consequences, morality) to represent Albania within the media ecosystems of the three countries.

- *Foreign Policy Analysis*: Constructivist Foreign Policy (Wendt) and Realism (Waltz, Mershaimer): emphasizing how identity, norms, and narratives shape foreign policy articulation and media representation and how states chose a specific narrative amongst many others which better serve their interests in the international system.

Organization of the Doctoral Dissertation

This Doctoral Dissertation is organized to move from context to theory to comparison and then to case specific analysis. *Chapter I* introduces the project, situates the research problem, and outlines methods and contributions. *Chapter II* provides a concise overview of the contemporary Middle East as a narrative environment relevant to the case, highlighting regional alignments and information politics that intersect with Albania. *Chapter III* reviews the relevant literature in media studies and international relations, covering framing, securitization, indexing, and strategic narratives, as well as core debates in small state foreign policy and public diplomacy. *Chapter IV* develops the theoretical framework and analytical model, specifies hypotheses and operational indicators, and details the methodology and corpus construction.

Chapters V–VII present the empirical analyses:

Chapter V is organized into three sections: 5.1 Foreign Policy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; 5.2 Relations Between the Republic of Albania and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; and 5.3 Portrayal of Albania in Al-Arabiya. The third section also outlines the criteria for selecting Al Arabiya as the case study, explains the rationale for the 2013–2024 time-frame, and presents a year-by-year analysis of the articles concerning Albania.

Chapter VI is organized into three sections: 6.1 Foreign Policy of the State of Israel; 6.2 Relations Between the Republic of Albania and the State of Israel; and 6.3 Portrayal of Albania in Ynet. The third section also outlines the criteria for selecting Ynet as the

case study, explains the rationale for the 2005–2024 time-frame, and presents a year-by-year analysis of the articles concerning Albania.

Chapter VII is organized into three sections: 7.1 Foreign Policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran; 6.2 Relations Between the Republic of Albania and the Islamic Republic of Iran; and 7.3 Portrayal of Albania in IRNA. The third section also outlines the criteria for selecting IRNA as the case study, explains the rationale for the 2012–2022 time-frame, and presents a year-by-year analysis of the articles concerning Albania.

Chapter VIII – the concluding chapter – synthesizes the empirical findings from the three case studies. It highlights how Albania is portrayed across Middle Eastern media, drawing comparative insights from the Saudi, Israeli, and Iranian cases, reassessing the hypotheses, and discussing implications for understanding how small states are represented within distinct media systems and global strategic narratives.

II. THE POLITICAL EVOLUTION OF THE MODERN MIDDLE EAST – A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW, 1920-PRESENT.

This chapter provides a historical overview of Middle Eastern foreign policy, with particular attention to the trajectories of Saudi Arabia, Israel, and Iran. Tracing these regional dynamics is analytically necessary for interpreting the actions and stated positions of these actors in salient episodes—especially those in which Albania is directly involved. By establishing this geopolitical context, the chapter supplies the groundwork for explaining variation in media portrayals of Albania, including patterns of framing and narrative construction when one of these Middle Eastern actors is a party to the event.

Hinnebusch (2014) identifies six ages in the history of domestic and international relations of Middle East region as follows: The Age of Imperialism (1920-1955), The Age of Pan-Arab Revolution (1956-1970), The Age of State-Centric Arabism (1970s), The Age of Realism (1970-1990), The Age of US Hegemony (1990-2010) and the Age of Arab Uprising (beginning 2010/2011). According to Buzan and Weaver (2003) the changes in the regional system of the Middle East region are influenced by a) the distribution of power among states which determined the level of polarity in the region; b) the interactions among states which were largely defined by the states' identity and adopted ideology and; c) levels of state formation (in Hinnebusch, 2014). Within this systemic arc, Saudi Arabia, Israel, and Iran function as pivotal poles whose trajectories repeatedly reconfigure the region's security dynamics, alliance patterns, and ideological contests.

Modern Middle Eastern order has been shaped by crises the repeatedly reset alignments and redistributed influence among pivotal actors such as Saudi Arabia, Israel and Iran. Understanding such crisis helps to clarify how ideology, regime security, rentier

political economy, and great-power penetration interacted to produce successive equilibria (Hinnebusch, 2003; 2014; Buzan & Weaver, 2003).

The retreat of European empires left borders misaligned with national imaginaries. The period from 1920 to 1955 in the Middle East, known as the *Age of Imperialism and Oligarchic Multipolarity* (Hinnebusch, 2014), saw the establishment of a state system under Western, particularly British, imperialism. This era was marked by irredentism, as national identities clashed with the often artificially drawn boundaries of new states. Peripheral states like Turkey, Iran, and Israel, more advanced in state formation and military strength, aligned with the West, while a weak, fragmented Arab core emerged from colonial control (Hinnebusch, 2003, 2014). In this landscape Saudi Arabia consolidated as a monarchy grounded in dynastic legitimacy and religious authority, cultivating relationships with Britain and, increasingly, the United States, while leveraging hydrocarbons for regime consolidation. Iran, under the Pahlavi dynasty represented relatively a more consolidated polity aligning with Western security interests and Israel's 1948 establishment instantly inserted a military mobilized, Western-linked non-Arab actor at the heart of the regional security dilemma. Israel's establishment amid regional war, institutionalized a durable security dilemma: Arab rulers linked domestic legitimacy to the Palestinian question, while Israel adopted doctrines of preemption and cumulative deterrence (Barnett, 1998; Hinnebusch, 2003). From the outset, foreign policy in Arab capitals was instrumentally tied to regime survival; in Jerusalem it became synonymous with maintaining a qualitative military edge; in Tehran, before 1979, it was defined by status-quo alignment on the non-Arab rim.

The Arab League, established in 1945, aimed to institutionalize sovereignty norms and collective response to common threats but struggled to effectively coordinate the

defense of Palestine. This era set the stage for the complexities of Middle Eastern geopolitics, with the interplay of imperialism, nationalism, and regional power dynamics shaping the region's political landscape (Maddy-Weitzman, 1993; Mufti, 1996).

The era of *Pan-Arab revolutions (1956–1970)* was a transformative period in the Middle East. The Suez crisis of 1956 crystallized anti-imperial mobilization revealing the limits of European power. Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt emerged as a central figure, advocating for pan-Arabism as a means to challenge traditional regimes and diminish Western influence, aiming to position Egypt as the leading power in the Arab world. Nasser's nationalization of the canal triggered British, French, and Israeli military action, yet U.S. – Soviet crises management force a withdrawal, diminishing London and Paris, while enhancing Washington's regional thermostat role (Gerges, 1994; Hinnebusch, 2014). Nasser's prestige surged, catalyzing pan-Arabism and intensifying pressure on conservative monarchies (Barnett, 1998; Gerges, 1994; Hinnebusch, 2014). Saudi Arabia navigated between Arab street sentiment and regime security, deploying oil leverage while deepening ties with the United States (Hinnebusch, 2014). During this period, Israel expanded its deterrent posture amid Arab fragmentation, benefiting from superior military organization and strategic alignment with Western Powers. Iran, still under the Shah, functioned as a status-quo, pro-Western balancer on the region's non-Arab periphery.

Mounting pressures over the Jordan waters, Palestinian militancy (al-Fatah), and inter-Arab rivalry culminated in the 1967 war, which shattered Egyptian-led pan-Arabism, entrenched Israel's territorial control, and ushered in a reluctant Arab recognition of Israel's permanence. The 1967 war shifted the balance of capabilities decisively. Escalation dynamics driven by inter-Arab rivalry, Palestinian militancy, and

miscalculated signals culminated in Israel's preemptive strikes and subsequent territorial gains in the Sinai, Gola Heights, East Jerusalem, and the West Bank (Barnett, 1998). Arab military defeat triggered ideological reassessment and the grudging acceptance of UN 242's land-for-peace formula (Hinnebusch, 2014).

The 1970s marked a pivotal transition in Middle Eastern politics, shifting from the era of pan-Arabism to a more state-centric approach, the *period of realism*. This period was characterized by the Arab-Israeli War of 1973, which saw Egypt and Syria, supported by Saudi Arabia, initiating a conflict to compel US intervention for a political settlement with Israel. The war marked a turning point, leading to a resurgence of Arab nationalism and a collective move towards peace based on UN Security Council Resolution 242. The oil embargo elevated Saudi Arabia's financial-diplomatic leverage and institutionalized petro-diplomacy as a core modality of influence (Barnett, 1998; Hinnebusch, 2014). Iran, still under the Shah, used windfall rents to deepen militarization and Western alignment. The 1970s witnessed the institutionalization of Arab summits within the framework of the Arab League, aiming to negotiate an Arab order among sovereign states and uphold the principle of non-intervention in internal affairs.

In 1979, two shocks reset the system. Iran's Islamic Revolution toppled the Pahlalvi monarchy, reframed legitimacy in Islamist-revolutionary terms, and positioned the new regime against U.S. primacy, Israel, and monarchical allies. In the same year, Egypt signed a separate peace with Israel at Camp David, re-orienting Cairo toward Washington and way from pan-Arab leadership (Hinnebusch, 2003, 2014; Barnett, 1998). Saudi Arabia faced an ideological challenge from revolutionary Iran and a strategic challenge in the Gulf balance; it answered with tighter U.S. alignment, religious soft power, and targeted fiscal statecraft. Israel removed the most formidable Arab military from the war

coalition in exchange for territory, freeing bandwidth for northern and Palestinian theaters while coping with the politics of settlement and autonomy. Tehran sought to export revolution and developed trans-state networks to compensate for conventional shortfalls, inaugurating a pattern of proxy politics that would endure.

According to Hinnebusch (2014) this period is considered the age of realism. It is characterized by the efforts of regional state-builders in the Middle East to address the instability of the revolutionary era. This era saw an increase in state military capabilities, which heightened interstate military threats. The fragmentation of the Arab world, due to the decline of pan-Arabism, left it more susceptible to stronger non-Arab states on its peripheries. The heightened interstate security dilemma prompted individual states to prioritize their own security through realist power-balancing strategies, such as arms races and alliance formation.

The Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988) entrenched militarization and polarized alignments. Baghdad's invasion, intended to exploit Iran's post-revolutionary turmoil, instead produced and attritional war that consumed resources and militarized the Gulf (Walt 1987). Saudi Arabia and other Gulf monarchies bankrolled Iraq to contain Iranian influence while deepening security ties to the United States; Washington and others tiled against Tehran while avoiding formal treaty commitments (Walt, 1987; Mufti, 1996). Israel benefited from the diversion of Arab attention and resources to the Gulf front. Iran institutionalized a doctrine of asymmetric and proxy deterrence, laying the foundations for a Levantine strategy that would later rely on Hezbollah and allied militias. The war normalized Gulf basing, securitized oil shipping, and habituated regional actors to long-duration conflict economies.

Saudi Arabia, meanwhile, gained inter-Arab influence through its potential leverage in the United States as OPEC's swing producer and by using its wealth to moderate inter-Arab conflicts. However, its military weakness and growing dependency on the United States for protection against Iran limited its rise in influence (Walt 1987; Mufti 1996).

The era of fragmented multipolarity was marked by several Arab states pursuing state-centric policies and aspiring for regional leadership, a result of Egypt's relative decline and the rise of other Arab powers. The Iranian Revolution transformed Iran from a status quo defender to a revolutionary exporter, disrupting the Tehran–Tel Aviv axis and posing a threat to Israel. However, the Iran-Iraq War, triggered by Iraq's invasion of Iran, reshuffled regional power dynamics in Israel's favor.

Lebanon’s 1982 war illustrated the evolving interplay between state force and non-state capacity. Israel’s invasion aimed to expel the PLO, reshape Lebanese politics, and check Syria, but it also catalysed Hezbollah’s rise under Iranian and Syrian sponsorship, embedding a hybrid adversary with growing deterrent value. The endurance of the Israel–Hezbollah dyad, underscored in confrontations such as 2006, signaled that the region had entered a mixed system where state militaries and networked non-state actors co-produced security outcomes (Valbjørn & Bank, 2012).

The era also saw the Arab world polarized into two rival coalitions: a "moderate" pro-Western bloc including Iraq, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and GCC states, focused on countering Iranian and Soviet threats, and a "Steadfastness Front" of radical states opposing Israeli revisionism. The Gulf states' fear of Iran led to a diversion of resources to support Iraq's war with Tehran, facilitating Cairo's inter-Arab rehabilitation despite its separate peace with Israel (Hinnebusch, 2014).

The 1990–1991 Gulf War formalized U.S. military predominance- the *era of US Hegemony* - without fully stabilizing the region. Saddam Hussein's seizure of Kuwait threatened oil arteries and the regional order, prompting a U.S.-led coalition that restored the status quo ante, expanded American basing, and deepened Saudi–U.S. interdependence (Hinnebusch, 2003; Mufti 1996). Israel refrained from direct participation but benefited from Iraq's strategic degradation and the opening to the Oslo process. Iran, formally neutral, profited from its rival's weakening while navigating sanctions and containment. Although a Pax Americana appeared to settle over the Gulf, the costs of dual containment and the asymmetries embedded in the Arab–Israeli peace process soon accumulated.

Post 1990 to 2010 are marked by a two decades of US hegemony over the Middle East region, a dominance resulting from several converging factors. The global triumph of neoliberal capitalism over socialism, combined with the economic challenges faced by overdeveloped Middle East states due to the oil price bust, led to debt and economic crises. These crises prompted economic liberalization and structural adjustment, which opened Middle East economies to the West and increased their dependency on Western trade and loans. Political Islam sought to mobilize those marginalized by these changes, and states increasingly aligned with the United States to contain domestic threats (Hinnebusch 2003b, 205–218; Mufti 1996).

The US intervention in the Gulf War aimed to achieve *military hegemony* (establishing extensive military bases in the Gulf), *economic dominance* (ensuring that Gulf petrodollars were recycled through US institutions) and *political control* (demonstrating the dependence of America's economic competitors on its role in securing oil supplies. The war was also used to banish the "Vietnam syndrome" and justify a new

post-Cold War mission for the US military-industrial complex. This strategy was so successful that the US convinced its economic competitors (Germany, Japan) and clients (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait) to fund the war (Aarts 1999; Kubursi and Mansur 1993; Hinnebusch 2003).

The Gulf War marked the end of pan-Arabism, as Arab states prioritized individual geopolitical interests and dependency on the West over collective Arab solidarity. Saddam Hussein's use of pan-Arabism to justify invading Kuwait contrasted sharply with the actions of anti-Iraq Arab regimes, which sought Western intervention through the Arab League. Saudi Arabia relied on US protection, Egypt leveraged the crisis to secure economic aid, and Syria aimed to weaken Saddam while gaining U.S. recognition. The Arab League's incapacity to unite and the failure of the "Damascus Declaration" underscored the shift towards Western alliances. Public pan-Arab sentiment waned post-Iraq's defeat, and the 1993 Oslo Accords allowed Arab states to distance themselves from the Palestinian cause. This fragmentation enabled Israel to exploit inter-Arab rivalries, securing separate peace deals and ending the Arab economic boycott, significantly altering the regional geopolitical landscape (Hinnebusch 1997; Barnett 1998).

The Gulf War initially established a Pax Americana in the Middle East, with the destruction of Iraq's military and economic power, making the region a virtual Western protectorate. The strengthened alliances with Saudi Arabia and Kuwait further entrenched US influence, and new access to Gulf bases bolstered this dominance.

After 9/11, U.S. strategy shifted from offshore balancing to direct occupation in Iraq. The 2003 invasion dismantled Iraqi state structures, triggered insurgency, empowered Shi'a actors with ties to Iran, and eroded U.S. legitimacy (Hinnebusch, 2007). Oil price rises augmented Iran's regional reach. Israel adapted to a more fragmented Arab

environment and increasingly prioritized the Iranian nuclear and regional portfolios. The war multiplied non-state actors, intensified sectarian narratives, and created permissive spaces for Iran's network strategy—dynamics that continue to shape balances today. It inadvertently empowered a "resistance" front, including Iran, Iraq, Hizballah, Syria, and Hamas, renewing anti-Israeli and anti-Western militancy (Valbjorn and Bank 2012). The rise in oil prices boosted Iran's influence, and US pressure on Syria backfired, strengthening Assad's nationalist credentials and pushing Syria closer to Iran.

In Palestine, the stalled peace process weakened moderate Palestinian leadership, leading to Hamas's electoral victory and complicating conflict resolution. The Iraq War precipitated another oil boom, reorienting Middle East oil exports towards Asia (Hinnebusch 2014; Valbjorn and Bank 2012). In 2011, the US pullback from Iraq and Afghanistan under President Obama, signaled a return to offshore balancing.

The Arab uprisings from 2010–2011 exposed the fragility of post-populist authoritarian bargains. Mass protest toppled rulers in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen; Syria fragmented into war. Outcomes tended toward hybrid or praetorian regimes rather than consolidated democracies, with external patrons quickly enlisted by domestic factions (Hinnebusch, 2014). Saudi Arabia combined fiscal tools, coercion, and a powerful media ecosystem to contain domestic threats and shape regional narratives while backing counter-revolutionary or anti-Iran alignments when expedient (Telhami, 2011). Iran doubled down on preserving its Levantine corridor to Damascus and Hezbollah despite sanctions and domestic contestation (Goodarzi, 2011). Israel managed a turbulent periphery amid Egyptian transitions, Syrian state collapse, and recurrent Gaza wars. Great-power involvement—by the United States, European states, and Russia—intensified but could not impose a stable regional order. The Arab core became more

penetrable, and information operations, sanctions, cyber tools, and proxy warfare joined conventional force as central instruments of competition.

Important events happening in the region in the post-Arab spring are: the ISIS's territorial surge across Iraq-Syria (2014) (Wilson Center, 2019); Yemen war (2015) with Saudi-led intervention against the Houthis, entrenching a protracted regionalized conflict; Russia's air intervention in Syria (September 2015) which stabilized Assad regime and locked-in long-term Russian bases (RAND, 2022); the Iran nuclear deal (JCPOA) (July 2015) which ended with the withdrawal of U.S. in May 2018 (EEAS, 2015; Trump White House, 2018); Abraham Accords (2022) widening de-escalatory pathways (Atlantic Council, 2025; The Guardian, 2022); Saudi-Iran normalization, brooked by China (March 2023) (Atlantic Council, 2024; Soufan Center 2023); Israel-Hamas war (from October 2023) with a ceasefire-hostage exchange implemented in January-March 2025 before renewed hostilities and wider spill-overs and; the collapse of Assad regime in Syria on 8 December 2024. Across the period, Saudi Arabia, Israel and Iran remain central nodes shaping conflict, diplomacy and narrative power.

The following table summarizes the power distribution, interactions and state formation of Middle East countries effective 1920s up till now as categorized by Hinnebusch (2014):

Table 1: Middle East Regional System Evolution

Period	Power Distribution	Interactions	State formation
The age of imperialism and oligarchic Multipolarity (1920-1955)	Dominated by Western imperial powers, particularly Britain. Peripheral states like Turkey, Iran, and Israel aligned with the West, while a weak Arab core emerged from colonial control	Marked by irredentism and fragmented Arab states with weak allegiance to new regimes. The Arab League aimed to institutionalize state sovereignty but struggled with effectiveness.	Arab states were narrow-based oligarchies heavily influenced by great powers, facing challenges like internal instability and wealth disparities.

The Age of Pan-Arab Revolution (1956-1970)	Shifted towards Nasser's Egypt, which sought to diminish Western influence and position Egypt as the leading Arab power	Driven by opposition to oligarchy and imperialism. Pan-Arabism fueled power struggles, with the establishment of the United Arab Republic and polarization between radical republics and conservative monarchies	Nasser's populist authoritarian model gained legitimacy, but military superiority of non-Arab states like Israel often countered the desired regional order by Arab nationalists.
The Age of State-Centric Arabism (1970s)	Post-1973 war, the "Arab triangle" of Egypt, Syria, and Saudi Arabia drove Arab cohesion, although differences over conflict resolution with Israel led to its dissolution.	Shift towards state sovereignty and self-help behaviors. The Lebanese civil war exemplified the breakdown of cooperative Arab dynamics.	Arab summits aimed to uphold sovereignty and non-intervention, but effectiveness waned, leading to increased state-centric policies and diminishing pan-Arab idealism.
The Age of Realism (1970-1990)	Characterized by fragmented multipolarity with several state vying for leadership. The decline of Egypt and the rise of other Arab powers shifted the balance.	Heightened interstate security dilemma led to realist power-balancing strategies, such as arms races and alliances. The Arab world was polarized into rival coalitions, with "moderate" pro-Western states. countering Iranian and Soviet threats.	Decline of pan-Arab norms and institutions, rise of political Islam, and vulnerability to revolutionary ideologies. The region saw an increased focus on state interests and self-help behaviors.
The Age of US Hegemony (1990-2010)	US military hegemony established through the Gulf War, economic liberalization, and structural adjustment programs. The US solidified control over the region's oil resources.	Arab states prioritized individual geopolitical interests over collective solidarity. The failure of pan-Arabism led to fragmented alliances and reliance on US protection.	Post-populist authoritarianism, with states increasingly aligning with the US to contain domestic threats. The period was marked by continuous efforts to contain Iraq and Iran, leading to regional opposition and instability.
The Age of Arab Uprising (2010s)	Regional power struggles among Turkey, Iran, and Saudi Arabia intensified. The uprisings shifted the balance of power towards a Sunni-Shiite cleavage.	Uprisings led to weakened hybrid regimes and praetorian instability. Domestic factions sought external support, and the influence of pro-Western GCC states grew.	Islamic movements gained prominence but faced constraints. The period saw increased vulnerability to external penetration and the emergence of new power dynamics in the region.

The evolution of the Middle East regional system reflects a dynamic interplay of external influences, internal state formations, and shifting power distributions. Each period brought unique challenges and transformations, from colonial dominance and the rise of pan-Arabism to state-centric policies and US hegemony. The Arab Uprisings underscore the ongoing volatility and complexity of the region, highlighting the persistent struggle for political stability, the influence of global trends, and the intensifying regional power struggles. This historical overview provides a comprehensive understanding of the factors shaping the Middle East region's past and present geopolitical landscape.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Foreign Policy and Media: Pluralist and Elite Model

The influence of media on public policy arises from a complex interplay of various factors, notably how media constructs policy definitions within the public sphere. Policy definitions, understood as distinct understandings of social and political realities, are substantially shaped by media discourse. This relationship is well-documented in the literature, with Princen and Rhinard (2006), and Mehta (2010) offering influential perspectives on the ways media frame policy issues, potential solutions, and public expectations. Such framing frequently creates an impetus for governmental response (Kent, 2005, p. 186). The main theories of media framing are the pluralist and elite model which will be explored below.

3.1.1 Pluralist Model in Democratic Societies

In democratic contexts, media systems are expected to uphold a pluralist model, prioritizing the decentralization of power to ensure media freedom and independence. Since the 1990s, this pluralist model has figured prominently in academic discourse, giving rise to the media empowerment thesis (Robinson et al. 2010; Robinson 2011). According to this thesis, communication innovations—including 24-hour news channels and the Internet—have intensified pressures on policymakers to address issues that journalists spotlight. The Internet's capacity to democratize political dialogue, along with the advent of social media, played crucial roles in facilitating public mobilizations, such as those observed in the Arab world.

Framing Foreign Policy

Media framing of foreign policy differs from domestic-issue coverage, as Wood and Peake (1998, p. 173) note, and it plays an essential role in guiding both public and policymaker perspectives, as underscored by Brewer et al. (2003). In this realm, media influence depends on several interlinked factors: the accessibility of news stories, the terminology and style adopted by journalists, and the depth or frequency of media exposure. Sustained coverage, in particular, can significantly shape public judgment (Nelson, Oxley, & Clawson, 1997).

Moreover, Brewer and Gross (2005) point out that people encounter multiple, and sometimes competing, policy definitions, which are chosen or filtered through individual values—thereby indicating how the media can influence the range of viable policy solutions. Hall (1961, p. 279) asserts that the framing of policy problems operates like paradigms, influencing not only policy aims but also how issues themselves are perceived. Media definitions of policy issues help determine both the forums where such problems are debated and the instruments used to address them. When the media highlight issues such as human rights abuses or terrorist acts, a sense of urgency can be generated, elevating these problems on the political agenda and significantly affecting policymaking—especially in foreign policy, where public interest tends to be lower (Rosenau, 1967; Iyengar & Simon, 1993).

Rosenau (1961) categorizes policy problems based on *territory, saliency, resource needs, and solution viability.* Kent (2005, p. 185) emphasizes the *role of cultural, belief, and institutional factors* in shaping policy problems. The author emphasized that policy expectations are rooted in deep cultural values and ideologies with some becoming long-term fixtures in policy-making (p.343). Mehta (2010, p.44) notes that media prominence

can lead to changes in public philosophy and he identifies three factors affecting the media's influence on policy: *the alignment of media framing with political environments, the scope of the problem's ownership, and the prevailing political context* (pp.35-36). Furthermore, the media acts as a *policy entrepreneur*, promoting specific policy solutions (Kingdon, 1997). Hall (1961) outlines three critical factors for policy adoption: *policy viability, administrative viability, and political viability*, which determine the likelihood of a policy solution's incorporation into official discourse and practice.

The following table summarizes the main theories on media discourse and the role of media in shaping policy:

Table 2: Integration of theories– Pluralist Model

Author	**Policy Problems**	**Factors Shaping Policy Problems**	**Role of Media in Policy Making**	**Factors influencing adoption of media discourse into public policy**
Rosenau (1961)	- Territory - Saliency - Resources needs - Solution viability			
Mehta (2010)				- Alignment of media framing with political environments - The scope of the problem's ownership - The prevailing political context
Kent (2005)		- Cultural factors - Belief/ ideological factors - Institutional factors		
Kingdon (1997)			Policy entrepreneur: promoting specific policy solutions	
Hall (1961)				- policy viability, -administrative - viability, - political viability

An integration of the research conducted by the above-mentioned authors would result in a five-step policy formulation as follows:

- *Step 1: Identification of Policy Issues:* Drawing on Resenau (1961), this stage focuses on factors such as territory, urgency (saliency), resource allocation, and solution viability. Strategic importance, urgency, and practical considerations often determine which issues appear on the public agenda.
- *Step 2: Influences on the Perception of Policy Problems:* Once issues are identified, Kent (2005) points to cultural, ideological, and institutional factors as shaping the perception and framing of these problems. These include:
  - *Cultural factors:* Societal norms and values that may elevate certain issues over others.
  - *Ideological factors:* Dominant political or economic doctrines dictating what is considered problematic.
  - *Institutional factors:* Structural and procedural elements within political and social institutions dictating which issues gain prominence and how they are addressed.
- *Step 3: Media's Role in Policy Framing:* As issues are identified and shaped by cultural, ideological, and institutional influences, they are presented and framed in the media. Kingdon (1997) introduces the concept of the policy entrepreneur who uses media strategically to promote specific policy solutions. The media plays a pivotal role by:
  - Highlighting the issues.
  - Framing these issues in ways that resonate with public sentiments and political climates.
  - Providing a platform for policy entrepreneurs to promote specific solutions.

- *Step 4: Factors Influencing the Adoption of Media Discourse into Public Policy:* Mehta (2010) and Hall (1961) detail how media-driven narratives evolve into actual policy. Hall (1961) reminds us that proposals must be administratively and politically practical to translate from discourse to policy. Mehta (2010) emphasizes alignment with existing political environments, clear ownership among stakeholders, and the broader political moment as decisive elements that encourage the incorporation of media framing.
- *Step 5: Materialization of Media-Influenced Solutions into Public Policy:* Finally, the transition from media discourse to public policy involves the actual adoption and implementation of solutions. This phase requires:
    - Policy Viability: The solution must effectively address the problem.
    - Administrative Viability: The solution must be implementable within the existing administrative structures.
    - Political Viability: The solution must garner enough political support, which often depends on how well it aligns with the interests of powerful stakeholders and the current political climate.

In sum, the lifecycle of a policy issue spans from its initial appearance to its final resolution in official policy, propelled by the interplay among problem identification, the shaping of perceptions, media framing, and eventual governmental adoption. Far from remaining a passive actor, the media actively shapes policy discourse, while simultaneously being influenced by cultural, ideological, and institutional factors.

3.1.2 Challenges from the Elite Model

While the media empowerment thesis posits that advanced communication technology and shifting geopolitical conditions have magnified the media's influence on policymaking, the pluralist argument encounters counterpoints in the elite model. This

model underscores a symbiotic relationship between the press and official sources. Indexing, priming, framing, agenda-setting and propaganda model are important perspectives within this model that help to understand how elite uses media to frame events and influence policies.

Indexing theory suggests that media discourse and policy definitions are heavily influenced by policymakers. Berry (1990, p. xiii) notes a particular alignment between the press and the foreign policy establishment. Generally, policymakers effectively convey their message through the media, especially when their policies are well-defined and free from conflict (Brody, 1992; Mermin, 1999; Herman and Chomsky, 2002; Robinson, 2011). Bennett (1990) observed that the U.S. media did not cover public opposition to official policy towards Nicaragua[1], indicating a tendency of journalists to align with policymakers. This alignment raises concerns about journalistic independence. Powerful interest groups, controlling both media and governments, can mobilize public support for governmental policies (Gilboa, 2005, p.32). Policymakers use various techniques to disseminate their message, such as speeches and media articles (Auerbach and Bloch-Elkon, 2005, p.95). As Jacobs and Shapiro notes, journalists often rely on policymakers as primary sources (2000). Thus, indexing theory implies that journalists serve as conduits of official policy discourse to the public, reinforcing policymakers' perceptions of public opinion and their role in foreign policy decision-making (Kennamer, 1994).

` *Agenda setting* captures how media highlight specific issues, guiding public focus and shaping their sense of importance (Bennet, 2004; Robinson, 2011). The concept traditionally refers to the media's ability to shape public opinion and perceptions

[1] Referring to the Iran-Contra Affair.

(McCombs and Shaw, 1972; McCombs and Ghanem, 2003; Besova and Cooley, 2009). The media's influence is most notable in emotionally charged situations and can pressure policymakers to address specific issues (Miller, 2007; Gilboa, 2005). Agenda setting also involves setting policy expectations and influencing decision-making processes, with the media reinforcing policymakers' commitments and reflecting activist perspectives (Touri, 2006; Page, 1996, 2000; Brüggemann and Wessler, 2009). However, in authoritarian or totalitarian regimes, news media typically fall under rigid state control. Here, media systems are characterized by direct ownership, harsh censorship, or legal constraints, aligning with the elite model of media, where information flows are dictated by governing authorities, and the media apparatus functions largely as an instrument for propagating official narratives and thus agenda-setting is done by the government rather than the media. This framework facilitates the maintenance of the political status quo, shaping public views in ways that bolster ruling elites while stifling dissent. On a final note for agenda setting, it is important to stress that it addresses what issues are emphasized or covered rather than how they are reported and discussed (Weaver, 2007).

Framing relates to how news presentation molds audiences' interpretations of events or policy challenges. Due to its importance in the theoretical framework of this dissertation, framing will take more space than the other theories that fall under elite model of media studies.

Scholars like Bernard Cohen (1963), Johnson-Cartee (2005) argue that media often reflect definitions advanced by other stakeholders, with framing predominantly tailored to particular events, matters, or personalities. De Vreese (2012, p. 367) expands on this, suggesting that journalists mostly act as intermediaries or advocates, channeling policymakers' perspectives to audiences. The theory goes beyond simple media effects

to encompass a range of impacts in different contexts. It is considered a middle-range theory. For Goffman (1974) frame analysis is the organization of experience and in similar vein Entman contended that framing creates order through “selection and salience”. Yves Gambier (2006) observes that media frames determine what is discussed and how it is discussed, and they (the frames) are far from being produced or processed neutrally. Frames, both in content and form, wield significant influence over audiences' interpretations and attitudes, generating specific emotional responses. “Where you point the camera and when you press the shutter determine which elements of the “blooming, buzzing confusion” of life make up the particular truth you seek to convey on that particular day”” (Vultee, 2023, p. 49).

Media's everyday framing practices, as Van Doorslaer (2009) points out, conceal potential linguistic, cultural, or perspective shifts in news facts or presentations. Frames often combine localization, simplification, and stereotyping to tailor how a person or topic is presented to the new target audience's knowledge or expectations. As Vultee points out “…facts need people before facts can become stories. Framing is the path down which information becomes news…. Politics has to be successful as politics, and journalism has to be successful as journalism, but both succeed by telling stories and by having those stories trusted. That is how scandals are uncovered, championships celebrated and reforms place on the public agenda” (p.4). Framing actors are identified as elites, such as government leaders, experts, the media, and the public (Chong & Druckman, 2007; Entman, 2004; Pan & Kosicki, 1993). Definitions of framing suggest that discourse presentations represent social reality in designated modes. Nisbet (2010) illustrates that communicators select interpretations, filtered by the audience's predispositions, shaping their judgments. Frames organize central ideas on an issue, serving various purposes,

including making sense for audiences, condensing events for journalists, defining policy options for policymakers, and communicating for experts (Nisbet, 2010). In public opinion studies, framing aims to generate public support through an interactive process involving various actors (Benford & Snow, 2000; Chong & Druckman, 2007; Entman, 2004; Matthes, 2012; Pan & Kosicki, 2001).

Common news frames, though not always concurrent, include a) attribution of responsibility, b) conflict, c) human interest, d) economic consequences, and e) morality. *Attribution of responsibility* frames assign blame for social issues, often diverting responsibility away from the government or system (e.g., Beaudoin, 2007; Iyengar, 1994; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). *Conflict frames* simplify complex debates into conflicts between individuals, groups, or institutions (Patterson, 1993). *Human interest frames* introduce emotional angles to capture audience interest (Bennett, 1995; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). *Economic consequence frames* focus on the economic impact of an event (Beaudoin, 2007; Graber, 1993). *Morality frames* relate events to religious or moral principles, often indirectly (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000).

In the realm of mass communication research, framing plays a pivotal role in bridging diverse areas such as the *origins of news, journalistic practices, content creation,* and *the resultant effects on audiences.* Matthes (2012) sheds light on the entire framing process and argues that framing essentially serves as a tool of strategic communication, aiming to shape public opinion and garner support for specific viewpoints (p.253). He identifies four overarching principles of framing: *competition among frames*, particularly in political contexts where issues are often contested and open to multiple interpretations; *the freedom of various actors*, including journalists and audiences, to select and modify frames; *the dynamic nature of framing*, reflecting its evolution over time; and the

consistency of frames, which are interconnected patterns involving issue interpretation, attribution, and evaluation. These frames are not exclusive to specific events or issues; rather, they are generic templates used across various media outlets. For instance, the attribution of responsibility frame focuses on identifying who is to blame for a given issue or event, influencing audiences to assign responsibility to certain entities or individuals over others.

Propaganda Model, coined by Herman and Chomsky (1988, 2002) in their seminal book 'Manufacturing Consent' echoes the elite model. They argue that mainstream media generally serve powerful elite interests by shaping public opinion to match those interests. Contrary to the assumption that a free press automatically presents a wide range of perspectives, Herman and Chomsky argue that major media outlets frequently reinforce the status quo through systematic filtering of news and opinions. Herman and Chomsky (1988) propose that mass media exist within a web of institutional, financial, and political relationships – corporate ownership structures, reliance on advertisers for revenue, and government – influence sources – that substantially limit the range of permissible opinions. As a result, public debate appears open and pluralistic but typically remains confined within the boundaries favored by established power holders (Freedman, 2014). This leads to "manufacturing consent," a process by which media cultivate public agreement with prevailing policies and ideologies.

The following table provides a summary of the abovementioned theories that falls under the Elite Model:

Table 3: Media Theory: Elite Model

No.	Theory	Key Concepts	Authors
1.	Indexing	Media discourse and policy definitions are heavily influenced by policymakers. The alignment between the press and foreign policy establishment is notable. Media often reflects the perspective of policymakers, especially when policies are clear and uncontested. The media acts as a conduit for policymakers, and this relationship can limit dissent and shape public acceptance of policies.	Bennett (1990); Herman and Chomsky (1988; 2002), Brody (1992); Robinson (2011); Auerbach and Bloch-Elkon (2005)
2.	Agenda-Setting	Focuses on how media can prompt political action by highlighting specific issues. Media shapes public perceptions and influences policymaker actions particularly in emotionally charged or humanitarian situations. The media's role in setting policy agendas underscores its influence in shaping democratic legitimacy in foreign policy by linking public opinion to policymaking processes.	McCombs and Shaw (1972); Bennett (2004); McCombs and Ghanem (2003); Robinson (2011); Wolfe et al. (2013); Akor (2011)
3.	Media Framing	Discusses how media frames shape public understanding and attitudes towards issues. Scholars explore how framing affects perceptions by emphasizing specific aspects of reality. Framing can involve several components, including problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and treatment recommendations. The process of framing is not neutral and often reflects the interests and perspectives of elites, influencing public opinion and policy deliberations.	Entman (2001; 2004); Scheufele & Tewksbury (2007); Tankard (2001;2003); Matthes and Kohring (2008);
4.	Manufacturing of Consent	Media in democratic societies subtly manipulates public opinion, manufacturing consent for policies that serve elite interests rather than genuinely informing the public.	Herman and Chomsky (1988)

Taken together, these theories – indexing, agenda setting, priming and framing – underscore the complex role of media in shaping public perception and policymaking.

3.2 Literature Review: Theoretical Approaches to Foreign Policy

Foreign policy analysis (FPA) lies at the intersection of International Relations (IR) theory and comparative politics, exploring how states formulate and implement their external policies. Traditionally, IR scholars have approached foreign policy through macro-level theories like Realism, Liberalism, Constructivism and Post-Structuralism, while specialists in FPA have placed emphasis on domestic political structures, the psychology of decision-makers, and bureaucratic processes. This literature review provides an overview of the major theoretical schools that have informed analyses of states' foreign policies.

3.2.1. Realism and Neorealism

Classical Realists such as Hans Morgenthau (1948) emphasize power and national interest as central motivations behind foreign policy. According to Morgenthau, states operate in an anarchic international environment, striving to maximize power or security. This view underscores the idea that policymakers, while shaped by human nature's drive for power, will generally pursue the national interest as the ultimate guiding principle.

With the advent of Neorealism (or Structural Realism), scholars like Kenneth Waltz (1979) shifted the focus to the structure of the international system—namely, its anarchy and the distribution of capabilities among states. In this view, foreign policy is largely constrained by systemic imperatives: states respond to external pressures by balancing against or bandwagoning with more powerful actors (Walt, 1987). Neorealist accounts of foreign policy maintain that states have limited freedom in shaping their external actions because survival and relative power positions matter most. Although neorealists generally refrain from analyzing specific foreign policy events, their logic influences how scholars interpret states' strategic choices (Rose, 1998).

Critics note that Realism and Neorealism often downplay domestic factors—such as regime type, public opinion, leadership idiosyncrasies, and bureaucratic politics—in shaping foreign policy (Legro & Moravcsik, 1999). Moreover, Realist perspectives may overlook the role of ideas and norms, especially when explaining non-material motivations behind certain policy decisions.

3.2.2 Liberalism and Neoliberal Institutionalism

In contrast to Realists, Liberal theorists stress the importance of domestic institutions, economic interdependence, and international organizations in molding foreign policy. Liberalism posits that state preferences are not solely about power or security; rather, they emerge from societal interests, which may include trade, human rights, or democratic values (Moravcsik, 1997). Foreign policy, in this lens, reflects coalitions of domestic interests, with state leaders acting as representatives of these competing or overlapping demands.

Neoliberal Institutionalism, championed by Robert Keohane (1984) and others, acknowledges the anarchical international system but asserts that international institutions (e.g., the United Nations, WTO) and regimes can mitigate uncertainty, reduce transaction costs, and enhance cooperation. Hence, in foreign policy terms, states are seen as rational actors willing to cooperate to achieve mutual gains, provided the appropriate frameworks and enforcement mechanisms exist (Axelrod & Keohane, 1985). Liberal approaches also emphasize the role of democratic peace theory, suggesting that democracies tend to maintain more peaceful relations with each other, which in turn shapes their foreign policy behavior (Doyle, 1986).

Realists argue that Liberalism is overly optimistic about the capacity of institutions to transcend power dynamics, noting that states will defect from agreements when it suits

their national interest. Additionally, critics claim that Liberalism may fail to account for cases in which domestic pressures and interests lead to aggressive or irrational foreign policies rather than cooperation.

3.2.3 Constructivism and the Role of Ideas, Norms, and Identity

Constructivism posits that international politics is made possible—and meaningful—through socially constructed realities. Interests, identities, and even what counts as a "threat" or an "ally" are not fixed derivatives of material capabilities; they emerge from intersubjective understandings produced in and through social interaction (Wendt, 1992, 1999; Onuf, 1989; Ruggie, 1998). From this vantage, foreign policy cannot be reduced to utility maximization under anarchy. Rather, it reflects how decision makers define who they are and what they value, and how those self understandings are stabilized vis à vis significant Others (Hopf, 2002). In short, states act on the basis of meanings—about self, other, and appropriate conduct—that are collectively created and historically contingent.

A core contribution of constructivism is to foreground norms—shared expectations about legitimate behaviour—as structuring forces in world politics. Norms do not merely constrain; they also constitute actors by shaping what they come to see as possible and appropriate (Finnemore, 1996; Ruggie, 1998). Classic accounts depict a life cycle in which norms emerge through entrepreneurship, cascade via socialization and emulation, and internalize as taken for granted standards (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). This dynamic is reinforced by international organizations, which function not only as arenas of bargaining but as social environments that teach and socialize states into particular scripts (Barnett & Finnemore, 2004; Johnston, 2001). Constructivists thus emphasize a "logic of appropriateness" alongside the "logic of consequences," arguing that policy often follows what is seen as proper for a given identity and role (March & Olsen, 1998).

Identity is central in this framework. National identities are relational—they take shape against internal and external Others—and they help specify the repertoire of roles a state finds sensible or legitimate to perform (Katzenstein, 1996; Hopf, 2002). Building on earlier foreign policy role theory, constructivists show how "national role conceptions" organize expectations and guide choices, sometimes in ways that depart from narrow cost–benefit calculations (Holsti, 1970).

Researchers combine process tracing with qualitative content and discourse analysis to uncover how specific ideas entered elite debates, how they reordered preferences, and how they were institutionalized; others use text as data or network approaches to measure diffusion and resonance. The result is a cumulative agenda that links macro social structures to micro level belief change.

For the analysis of foreign policy, constructivism reframes key questions. Instead of asking only whether a policy is efficient, it asks for whom it is appropriate; instead of assuming interests, it investigates how interests were defined; instead of treating international institutions as neutral instruments, it interrogates how they socialize and classify. This perspective does not deny material constraints but insists that those constraints acquire political meaning through interpretive practices. As such, constructivism complements rationalist approaches: it explains why similar material conditions yield different policies across states and time, and why rhetorical justifications—about identity, honour, solidarity, or civilization—so often do causal work in world politics.

Applied to empirical cases, constructivism sensitizes analysis to elite narratives, historical memories, and symbolic repertoires that anchor policy over time. It draws attention to how governments invoke norms (human rights, sovereignty, religious

solidarity), how they script roles (frontline state, mediator, revolutionary beacon), and how these scripts travel across domestic and international arenas to enable or constrain particular choices. In doing so, the approach provides analytical leverage on both continuity and change: it helps explain persistence in the face of shifting incentives when identities are at stake, and it specifies tipping points when new ideas or role claims reorganize what leaders—and societies—take to be thinkable and right.

3.2.4 Post-Structuralism and the Analysis of Foreign Policy

Post-structuralism in International Relations challenges the assumption—shared by realism, liberalism, and parts of constructivism—that, interests and identities precede policy. Instead, it foregrounds how language, discourse, and representation constitute the very objects of foreign policy and the boundaries of political possibility (Ashley, 1987; Campbell, 1998). Drawing on Foucault's account of power/knowledge and Derrida's deconstruction, post-structuralist IR treats meaning as contingent rather than fixed, produced through interpretive practices that stabilize certain identities and courses of action while rendering others implausible or unsayable (Foucault, 1972; Der Derian & Shapiro, 1989; Weldes, 1999).

From this vantage, foreign policy is not merely an instrument deployed in pursuit of pre-given interests; it is itself a discursive practice through which states narrate who "we" are, who "they" are, and what counts as threat, security, or normality (Campbell, 1998; Weber, 1995). Identity is relational and performative: the Self is articulated against an Other, and that boundary-making legitimates alliances, sanctions, interventions, or restraint. Post-structuralist readings thus probe how official documents, speeches, and media texts produce authority and normalize specific solutions, showing that the "logic"

of policy rests on prior acts of naming, ranking, and exclusion (Ashley & Walker, 1990; Hansen, 2006).

Methodologically, this work mobilizes discourse analysis, genealogy, and deconstruction to trace how policy problems are constituted, how silences and ambiguities do political work, and how particular narratives become dominant over time (Shapiro, 1988; Milliken, 1999; Dillon & Reid, 2009). Genealogical studies, for example, map the historical emergence of key categories — "terrorism," "rogue states," "humanitarian intervention"—to reveal the power relations and exclusions sedimented within them. Such analyses are not merely semantic; they show how discourses delimit the field of feasible policy by making some responses appear necessary and others unthinkable (Hansen, 2006).

Two clusters of contributions illustrate the approach's payoff. First, post-structuralists reconceptualize security. Rather than treating threats as objective conditions "out there," they examine how states discursively produce danger and mobilize public consent. Classic studies demonstrate how representing a regime as "evil" or a movement as "terrorist" can align domestic audiences behind sanctions or the use of force irrespective of material capabilities—a performative politics of danger (Campbell, 1992; Doty, 1993). Second, post-structuralism has reshaped critical geopolitics, analyzing how maps, borders, and "geographical imaginations" operate as technologies of rule. Spatial representations cast regions as "civilized," "backward," or "threatening," and those depictions channel diplomatic and strategic choices (Ó Tuathail, 1996). In both domains, the analytic move is the same: to show that what appears natural or necessary is the contingent outcome of discursive labor.

This perspective is not without critics. Skeptics fault post-structuralism for underplaying material factors—military capabilities, economic resources, institutional constraints—and for offering few operational policy prescriptions (Price & Reus-Smit, 1998; Smith, 2004). Some argue that its emphasis on contingency risks analytic indeterminacy. Post-structuralists respond that their aim is not to deny materiality but to demonstrate that material capacities acquire political meaning through discourse; even weapons and wealth must be narrated to function as leverage. On the question of prescription, proponents contend that revealing the politics of representation widens the range of imaginable policies by denaturalizing the taken-for-granted.

Thus, post-structuralism offers a distinctive optic on foreign policy: it shows how states and policymakers constitute identities, threats, and interests through discursive practices that both authorize and limit action. By recovering the contingency and contestability of these constructions, post-structuralist IR complements—and critiques—rationalist, statist accounts, equipping analysts to interrogate how power circulates in the very languages through which foreign policy is made and justified (Campbell, 1998; Weldes, 1999).

3.2.5 Foreign Policy Analysis in Post-Cold War and Contemporary Debates

After the Cold War, scholars sought to interpret shifts in international politics—from unipolarity under U.S. influence to emerging multipolarity with the rise of China and other powers (Layne, 1993). Debates intensified over how system-level variables (polarity, distribution of power) interact with domestic transformations (liberal democracy vs. authoritarian resilience) and identity shifts (resurgent nationalism, transnational movements).

In the post-9/11 context, the “War on Terror” prompted renewed interest in how ideologies, threat perceptions, and transnational networks shape foreign policy (Lake, 2002). Both Realists and Constructivists addressed the securitization of policy agendas, while Liberal arguments centered on coalition-building and institutional responses.

In terms of globalization and regional integration, the deepening of economic interdependence has reinforced certain liberal notions of cooperation. However, critics highlight enduring power rivalries, as well as populist backlashes within democracies, raising questions about the resilience of liberal frameworks (Ikenberry, 2011)

Finally, the post-cold era was characterized by the emerging middle and regional powers. States like Brazil, India, Turkey, or the Gulf monarchies exhibit varying blends of realist self-interest, soft-power approaches, and identity-driven foreign policies, challenging standard North Atlantic-centric IR theories (Acharya & Buzan, 2007).

To conclude, foreign policy theories can be parsed into systemic and sub-systemic (domestic, bureaucratic, and individual-level) approaches. Systemic theories tend to focus on how the anarchical structure, power balances, institutions, or shared norms constrain states, while sub-systemic scholarship spotlights leadership, bureaucracy, and societal dynamics to clarify why states might defy structural dictates.

Contemporary debates often seek to bridge these levels of analysis. Neoclassical Realists (Rose, 1998; Lobell et al., 2009), for instance, incorporate domestic factors—such as state strength, leader perceptions, and ideational forces—into a broader Realist framework that still acknowledges the importance of material power distribution. Some Constructivists likewise adopt more rigorous methods, examining how stable norms emerge and decline over time (Checkel, 2005). Meanwhile, pressing global issues—

ranging from climate change to cyber threats—challenge existing paradigms and spur new theorizations of how foreign policy might evolve.

IV. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK, ANALYTICAL MODEL AND METHODOLOGY

The dissertation examines how Albania is portrayed in the domestic-language media of three Middle East countries – Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, State of Israel and Islamic Republic of Iran – from 2005 onward, a period in which Albania becomes intermittently salient to their foreign-policy goals. The research premise is that portrayals depend on a complex interplay of bilateral relations, regional rivalries, alignment with Albania's strategic partners and major international developments affecting foreign policy orientations. The constructivist theoretical lens (informed by realist premises) is chosen to emphasize how discursive construction of Albania reflect shifting power dynamics and identities in the Middle East region (cf. Wendt, 1999; Hopf, 2002). A complementary elite/indexing and framing account of media behavior (Herman & Chomsky, 1988, 2002; Bennet, 1990) motivates the expectations that domestic outlets often amplify or mirror official frames in matters of foreign policy.

Methodologically, the study proceeds through qualitative discourse analysis (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002; Fairclough, 1992) conducted year by year and based on close readings of all articles in three domestic-language outlets: Al Arabiya (Arabic, KSA; 2013-2024), Ynet (Hebrew, Israel; 2005-2024), and IRNA (Persian, Iran; 2012-2022). The design is comparative and longitudinal: each outlet is treated as a within-case sequence that can be read against a timeline of external events (e.g., MEK relocation to Albania, expulsions, the 2022 cyber crisis; visa and cooperation milestones with Israel, partnerships in economy and culture with Iran, Saudi Arabia and Israel, JCPOA timeline etc), followed by cross-case comparison of the dominant frames and their inflections.

4.1 Theoretical framework and analytical model

Constructivism foregrounds how identities, norms, and narratives constitute what states take to be appropriate or threatening; realism (Walz, 1979; Mearsheimer, 2002) anchors these discourses in strategic context – alliances, rivalry, regime security. The analytical model links these layers: events and alignments (realist inputs) are translated by media – often in elite-indexed ways – into frames, tones, and story selection (constructivist outputs). Framing is understood as the selective emphasis of problem definitions, causal attributions, moral judgments, remedies (Entman, 1993), while agenda- setting (McCombs and Shaw, 1972) refers to when Albania becomes visible and how prominently. In practice, the model is implemented interpretively: I trace shifts in frame dominance and lexical/rhetorical cues around known events, reading for friend/foe scripts, Europeanization/modernization narratives, security/counter-terror/cyber frames, culture/memory motifs, and economy/tourism themes. The goal is not to count frames mechanically but to reconstruct how meaning is made for home audiences over time.

4.2 Corpus, sources, and retrieval

The primary sources are original-language articles in Arabic, Hebrew, and Persian. My proficiency in these languages enabled direct collection and interpretation without relying on translations. This is substantively important and methodologically novel: work on global news routinely shows that English-language editions are curated for international audiences and are not full mirrors of domestic output; they often reframe, condense, or re-select content (Bielsa & Bassnett, 2009; Figenschou, 2014; Phillips, 2012; Shoemaker & Reese, 2014). From a sociolinguistic perspective, audience design predicts systemic variation in tone and topic across language editions (Bell, 1984). Focusing on domestic-language material therefore recovers how these outlets speak to their own publics.

A purposive sampling approach ensures validity and consistency across the three Middle East countries. The media taken into analysis are Al Arabiya (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia/GCC), Ynet (State of Israel) and IRNA (Islamic Republic of Iran). The time frame is: 2013-2014 for Al Arabiya; 2005-2024 for Ynet and; 2012-2022 for IRNA. In the chapters of analysis, respectively 5.3, 6.3 and 7.3 I explain the reasons for selecting Al Arabiya, Ynet and IRNA and the time frame. In this section it is sufficient to say that this time frames captures significant geopolitical events, such as relocation of MEK members in Albania, tensions over the nuclear program, JCPOA, signing of a series of agreements between Albania and the three countries and the diplomatic break of Albania with Iran. Furthermore, Al Arabiya (Arabic edition) is selected for its influential pan-Arab reach and Saudi investor backing; Ynet (Yedioth Ahronoth, the Hebrew edition) is chosen for its wide outreach in the domestic Israeli audiences and finally, IRNA in Farsi is selected for its outreach and alignment with the Islamic Republic of Iran stance towards foreign policy.

Articles are retrieved via each outlet's archive and site-restricted searches using native-language strings for "Albania" and "Tirana" (Arabic: ألبانيا/تيرانا; Hebrew: אלבניה/טירנה; Persian: آلبانی/تیرانا). Inclusion criteria: news, features, or commentaries in which Albania is a principal topic or a central case in a regional narrative. Sports items are excluded unless they directly implicate foreign-policy identity or security frames. Each item is logged with date, section, original title, an English gloss, and URL, enabling annual synthesis and event linkage. The corpus sizes differ by outlet (IRNA: 309 articles; Al Arabiya: 77 articles; Ynet 63 articles, excluding sports); precise counts and thematic distributions are reported in the empirical chapters.

4.3 Method: Reading procedure and interpretive strategy

A qualitative discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1992; Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002) is employed within a constructivist framework, which posits that language and narratives actively shape foreign policy realities. The analysis is interpretative and diachronic. It is based on the premise that, media serve as transmission belts for elite views, tightly controlled to align with regime interests (Gilboa, 2005). Media coverage—especially regarding foreign policy and national security—is "indexed" to official discourse (Bennett, 1990), privileging elite sources and frames. Media discourses provide not an independent reflection but an ideologically loaded, politically mediated window into how Albania is positioned within each country's broader foreign policy agenda.

For each outlet:

1. I read the full set of relevant items, taking analytic notes on lexicon, metaphors, source selection, labels, images;
2. I synthesized frames and their internal logics, shifts relative to prior years, linkages to contemporary external events (treaties, expulsions, cyber incidents, diplomatic visits etc). In line with Tankard (2001) and Semetko and Valkenburg (2000), this phase looks for rhetorical devices in headlines, images, and key phrases that convey distinct angles. Tuchman's (1978) notion of how news framing "selects" and "emphasizes" particular features becomes a guiding principle here.
3. I measured salience/frequency of articles and link spikes with events in the international arena. According to Entman (1993), each reference to Albania's role or identity is neither neutral nor arbitrary but reflects deliberate editorial decisions.

4. I conducted intertextual and contextual examinations, situating discourses within broader foreign policy environments. Frequent references to official statements, repeated language, or mirrored wording across multiple articles can reveal evolving or reinforcing narratives. These observations underscore how media discourse does not stand alone but respond to, and in turn reinforces, each country's foreign policy priorities.

This procedure treats frames as patterns – co-occurring elements of problem definition, causality, moral evaluation, and remedy (Matthes & Kohring, 2008; Entman, 1993). It is compatible with process tracing: when a discursive shift coincides with an external upheaval (e.g., Albania's 2018 expulsions; the 2022 cyber rupture), I reconstruct plausible mechanisms of translation from event to narrative (George & Bennett, 2005; Beach & Pedersen, 2013), using textual evidence (Headlines, leads, quotes, sourcing, images).

4.4 Research question and hypothesis

The research question of the dissertation is:

How do foreign policy dynamics and media narratives interplay in the construction of Albania's image in the relations with Middle Eastern region states for their domestic audiences?

Sub-questions to help answering the main research questions are:

- How is Albania portrayed in the domestic, local language media of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, State of Israel, and Islamic Republic of Iran in the last two decades?

- What are the main factors – bilateral relations, regional rivalries, alliances with major powers, and international events/key moments - influencing Albania's foreign policy toward Saudi Arabia, Israel and Iran?

Following the reasoning of the realism and constructivism coupled with media framing theory, I hypothesized:

Hypotheses

H1: *Closer or more cooperative bilateral relations lead to more favorable portrayal of Albania in the local media:* In the framework of Elite model, positive editorial lines reflect official support for friendly partners.

H2: *When Albania's policies align with a given state's adversaries (e.g., hosting the MEK from Iran's perspective), that state's media shifts to unfavourable—often sharply critical—coverage:* In line with the realist perspective, media frames Albania as an adversary or an instrument of hostile forces.

H3 *Media portrayals on Albania are more favorable if the given state is aligned with Albania's major strategic partner(s) (e.g., U.S., NATO).* In line with constructivist perspective, positive or negative rhetoric aligns with each state's identity regarding Western alliances.

H4 *Coverage intensifies and polarizes during global or regional crises, amplifying official foreign policy narratives toward Albania:* Applying indexing (framing), domestic media escalate or shift framing to reflect leadership stances under crisis.

These hypotheses discipline the year-by-year readings and structure of the analysis, discussion and findings. In order to give an answer to the research question, I have identified the variables and their indicators:

Dependent Variable: Media Portrayal of Albania

Indicators:

- Tone: Negative/positive references (coded on a Likert scale).
- Framing: “Ally,” “threat,” “proxy,” “economic partner.”
- Frequency & Salience: Number of articles, prominence, editorial emphasis.
- Rhetorical Cues: Use of loaded terms (“puppet of the West,” “key ally,” etc.).

Independent Variables:

1. Bilateral Relations (IV1):
    - Definition: Diplomatic/economic ties, official visits, or tensions.
    - Measure: The existence of treaties, documented exchanges, or publicly reported disputes.
2. Regional Rivalries (IV2)
    - Definition: Strategic hostility between states (e.g., Iran–Saudi, Iran–Israel).
    - Measure: Article references linking Albania to adversarial blocs or shared enmities.
3. Alliances with Major Powers (IV3)
    - Definition: Each state’s stance toward Western alliances, especially the U.S.
    - Measure: The frequency of “pro-/anti-West” references in coverage of Albania.
4. International Crises/Events (IV4)
    - Definition: Diplomatic crises, military interventions, or global summits.

- Measure: Time-based spikes in coverage, shifts in tone around those events.

Tankard (2001) offers a practical approach to identifying frames in news content. He suggests creating a list of frames for a given domain and defining each frame with specific keywords, catchphrases, and images. He identifies eleven mechanisms for locating frames, such as headlines, subheads, photographs, photo captions, leads, source selection, quotes, pull quotes, logos, statistics, and concluding statements. I follow the same approach when analyzing Albania's portrayal in the three selected medias. In this way the information obtained is reliable and captures the image of Albania diachronically, thus revealing changes in Albania's framing making it possible to link it with changes and key moments in the international arena with focus on the Middle East.

4.5 Ethics

All materials are publicly available news texts; there are no human subjects. Articles are cited with dates and URLs.

4.6 Expected contributions

Empirically, the dissertation provides a longitudinal map of how three influential domestic outlets portray Albania, including inflection points linked to diplomacy and security crisis. Theoretically, it demonstrates a hybrid framework in which material shocks are translated into discursive frames through elite-indexed media. Methodologically, it shows the value of domestic-language analysis in setting where English-language portals are curated for external audiences and may diverge systematically from what home publics actually read.

V. PORTRAYAL OF ALBANIA IN THE ARAB MEDIA - THE CASE OF SAUDI-INFLUENCED MEDIA AL ARABIYA

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is undoubtedly the strongest economy, the state with the largest oil reserves, the country with the largest population, and consequently the most important actor in the Arabian Peninsula region on the global stage. To grasp its significance, it suffices to note that it is a permanent member of the G20, which brings together the world's twenty most powerful economies, and it is the only middle eastern member of this organization.

The last ten years have witnessed a marked rise in the level of relations between Albania and Saudi Arabia, reflected in increased trade exchanges, higher investment volumes, growth in cultural exchanges, and a series of high-level bilateral official meetings — all of which have been covered by *Al Arabiya* with a noticeably positive trend in assessing and promoting the development of these bilateral relations.

This chapter examines how Al Arabiya portrays Albania and asks what that portrayal reveals about the broader regional narratives in which Albania is embedded. As one of the most influential pan-Arab broadcasters with extensive regional and international reach, Al Arabiya offers a strategic vantage point from the Arab Gulf on European and Balkan affairs.

The chapter proceeds in three parts. *The first part* provides an overview of the foreign policy of Saudi Arabia, emphasizing the doctrines, partnerships, and security priorities most likely to shape media framing. *The second part* outlines the bilateral relationship between Albania and Saudi Arabia, including diplomatic milestones, economic ties, and issue-areas where interests converge; this provides the relational context against which media narratives are produced and received. *The third part* presents

a year-by-year analysis of Al Arabiya's coverage of Albania, cataloguing themes, headlines, and story types, and tracing how salience and tone shift across events. Together, these sections connect policy, relationship context, and media output, enabling a systematic assessment of how Al Arabiya's portrayal of Albania both reflects and projects Saudi Arabia's foreign-policy narratives.

5.1 Foreign Policy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Below is an overview of the foreign policy of Saudi Arabia. This overview is important to understand the position of this country in relation to the other countries in the region and to important international players such as USA. Since the central argument of this paper is that the articles on Albania are shaped by the international relations between Albania and the countries under analysis—and that these relations, in turn, are influenced by the interactions among those countries and with the United States—it is therefore essential to understand the foreign policy of these states. In this case, examining Saudi Arabia's foreign policy, its main partners in the international arena, and the key events that have shaped its diplomatic orientation becomes particularly important.

Saudi Arabia's foreign policy has undergone a major transformation in recent years, becoming integral to its Vision 2030 reform agenda. Riyadh pursues a policy of strategic multi-alignment, "balancing its longstanding United States (US) security partnership while expanding ties to China, Russia, and the Global South" (Wisdorff, 2025). This hedging strategy maximizes Riyadh's leverage. However, it should be emphasized that Saudi Arabia maintains its historical security ties with Washington even as it deepens engagement with Beijing, Moscow, and emerging markets (Wisdorff, 2025; Ali, 2025). This approach gives the Kingdom greater diplomatic flexibility. At the same time, Saudi leaders recognize that domestic priorities drive foreign policy: attracting

foreign investment, securing technology, and maintaining regional stability are essential to diversify the economy and sustain the social contract at home (Ali, 2025; Wisdorff, 2025).

In terms of regional security, Saudi policy prioritizes stability in its neighborhood. Riyadh invests heavily in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) unity and regional diplomacy. It has played a mediating role in conflicts from Yemen to Lebanon, and has engaged directly with Yemen's Houthi rebels through back-channel talks for long-term de-escalation (Ali, 2025).

In terms of international partnerships, beyond the great powers, Riyadh is forging ties with emerging economies. India and Brazil are key partners: Saudi investments in India's energy and mining sectors have grown markedly, and a Saudi-Brazilian coordination council was created in late 2024 (Ali, 2025). In Africa, Saudi Arabia hosted its first Saudi-Africa summit (November 2023) and launched multibillion-dollar initiatives (the King Salman Initiative) to fund infrastructure and development projects (Ali, 2025). These moves align with the "Going East" strategy and Vision 2030's aim to diversify market.

Saudi Arabia's foreign policy is thus characterized by pragmatism and adaptability. Domestically, the monarchy focuses on economic transformation and regime resilience, which requires a secure regional environment (Ali, 2025). Internationally, this translates into a more diplomacy posture after years of assertive intervention. For example, Riyadh has re-established relations with Iran (March 2023) despite lingering mistrust over Iran's nuclear ambitions and proxy activities (Wisdorff, 2025). It has refrained from aggressive military action since 2020, instead engaging in conflict mediation (e.g.: sponsoring negotiations in Yemen and backing Syria's

normalization in the Arab League). Saudi Arabia has even offered to host and facilitate talks in far-flung crises (such as U.S. – Russia negotiations on Ukraine) (Ali, 2025; Cafiero, 2025) and "has offered to mediate between U.S. and Iran in pursuit of a new nuclear deal (Cafiero, 2025).

Nonetheless, significant security challenges remain. Riyadh views Iran as its main strategic rival: even with diplomatic talks resumed, Saudi Leaders worry about Tehran's nuclear program and support for allied militias that target regional shipping. The 2024-2025 flaring of the Israel-Iran conflict has raised fears of a wider war. The kingdom has responded by publicly criticizing Israeli military actions and by deepening security cooperation with other partners. Notably, in September 2025 Saudi Arabia signed a strategic defense pact with Pakistan, seen by observers as potentially extending Pakistan's nuclear "umbrella" over the Gulf. While the U.S. remains the primary arms supplier (74% of Saudi major arms imports, 2020-2024), Riyadh's recent ties with China include reports of Chinese support for missile programs and drone co-development (Ali, 2025).

The European dimension is also important. The EU is Saudi Arabia's second-largest trading partner, and European companies supply crucial technology for Saudi diversification. Cooperation areas include green hydrogen, renewable energy, and digital infrastructure. Saudi oil also remains important to Europe: recent EU efforts to replace Russian energy have led to increased Saudi oil imports (Winsdorff, 2025).

Another important aspect of foreign policy of Saudi Arabia is that it portrays itself as a leader in the Muslim world, organizing the annual Hajj pilgrimage and playing a major role in the formation of the Organization of the Islamic Conference. The kingdom supports Muslim charities and causes worldwide, aligning its foreign policy with its domestic legitimation formula centered on Islam (Piscatori 1983; al-Yassini 1985).

However, this leadership role is flexible, allowing Saudi Arabia to maintain strong ties with the United States despite criticisms from more radical Muslim thinkers (Gause III, 2014). Its role in the Arab world emphasizes solidarity and cooperation among existing Arab states rather than unilateral leadership. The Kingdom has proposed initiatives for the Arab-Israeli peace process but avoids direct diplomacy with Israel. In OPEC, Saudi Arabia generally avoids assertive leadership, preferring consensus-building and deal-making to confrontational approaches (Petroleum Intelligence Weekly 1998, 1999). This quiet leadership style is consistent with Saudi foreign policy's overall cautious and balanced approach.

There has been a significant change in the personnel implementing Saudi foreign policy. Initially, diplomats and foreign policy advisers were often recruited from other Arab countries. However, with the development of the Saudi educational system, the foreign service has been entirely "Saudi-relied" resulting in a competent and professional group of diplomats who increasingly play significant roles in international organizations and on the global stage.

Saudi Arabia’s foreign policy has been shaped by its origins as a dynastic state built around custodianship of Islam’s holy places (Gause III, 2014), its search for regime security, and its embedding in a turbulent regional system. On the Arabia Peninsula, the Kingdom’s hegemonic ambitions – and the need to manage neighbors through the GCC while containing instability in Yemen – have encouraged cautious balancing and consensus-building. Wider Middle Eastern dynamics have been decisive: since 1979, rivalry with revolutionary Iran has blended conventional deterrence with competition by proxies and narratives, while the Palestinian question has constrained overt alignment with Israel and anchored Riyadh’s insistence on a credible two -state framework.

Translational identities – Arabism in the Nasser era and, later, Islamism – have periodically mobilized Saudi publics and limited diplomatic room for maneuver (Porath, 1986, Shlaim, 1988, Safran, 1985; Gause III, 2014), compelling foreign policy choices that protect domestic legitimacy as much as external interests. These legacies, together with the Kingdom's oil leverage (Vitalis, 1997; Gause III, 2014) and long security partnership with the U.S., provide the context for today's Vison-2030-era strategy of: multi-alignment, de-escalating regional flashpoints, hedging among great powers, and using energy and investment diplomacy to secure a stable environment for economic transformation.

5.2 Relations Between the Republic of Albania and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Diplomatic relations between the Republic of Albania and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia were formally established on December 2, 1992 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2024), marking the start of a partnership that has evolved over the decades through robust political ties, economic cooperation, and cultural exchange. Since then, both countries have maintained embassies in each other's capitals, underscoring their commitment to closer relations. In addition, Albania has an honorary consul in Jeddah, to support consular and commercial outreach (Albanian Embassy in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia).

The political relations between Albania and Saudi Arabia are considered very strong, underpinned by a series of high-level visits and mutual respect for each other's strategic importance. Over the years, Albania has actively sought to deepen political dialogue with Saudi Arabia, culminating in numerous official visits. Albanian leaders, including the Prime Minister, Presidents of Parliament, Ministers of Foreign Affairs, and of Defense, have visited Saudi Arabia multiple times (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2024). Notably, in February 2019, Prime Minister Edi Rama paid an official visit to Saudi

Arabia, which further solidified the bilateral relationship (Saudi Press Agency, 2019, February 6; Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affaris, 2024). On the Saudi side, Prince Faisal bin Farhan visited Tirana on 11 September 2021 for consultations aimed at deepening the relationship. Contacts continued at the leaders' level when Rama met Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in Athens in July 2022, where press reports indicated discussions on expanding economic cooperation and potential Saudi investment channels. The Albanian PM has thanked SA for its initiative to support Albania with $50 million USD and an addition $300 million dollars PIF (Public Investment Fund) (Asharq Al-Awsat, 2021; Euronews Albania, 2022; Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs of Albania, 2024; Saudi Press Agency, 2022). The focus of the meeting was the consolidation of the economic partnerships between the two countries. In November 2024, the Prime Minister received an official invitation from the Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince to visit Riyadh and discuss deeper bilateral ties (ATA, 06 Nov.2024)

Economic cooperation is anchored in development finance and, increasingly, energy trade. The Saudi Fund for Development (SFD) has financed transport infrastructure in Albania, including a 2009 loan for the Durrës overpass and support for the Qukës–Qafë Plloçë section of the Tirana–Elbasan corridor; in 2022 SFD approved an additional USD 49 million for that corridor, building on an earlier USD 25 million loan to improve connectivity and logistics (SFD, 2023; Embassy of Albania in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia). Beyond sovereign lending, Islamic Development Bank (IsDB)-linked entities have supported trade-finance and development operations in Albania, complementing multilateral and bilateral efforts in investment. According to Islamic Development Bank "Over the years, IsDB Group has approved a total funding of $654.3

million for 39 projects in Albania, with 36 completed and 3 currently active" (IsDB, 2025).

From the Saudi side, visits to Albania have included high-ranking officials such as the President of the Saudi Commission on Tourism and National Heritage, who visited twice (in 2016 and 2019), the Chairman of the Parliament of Saudi Arabia, Dr. Abdullah Al Sheikh, whose visit to Tirana marked the first of its kind by a President of the Saudi Majlis Alshura and the Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister (Prime Minister's Office, September 11, 2021). These exchanges have been pivotal in reinforcing political connections and laying the groundwork for broader cooperation in economic, cultural, and technical-scientific domains.

Cultural exchange has also played an integral role in Albania–Saudi Arabia relations. A 2012 Memorandum of Understanding on Cultural Cooperation laid the foundation for collaborative efforts in culture and education, reflecting a broader mission to promote mutual understanding. The legal framework governing the bilateral relationship is comprehensive, incorporating agreements on general cooperation, air services, avoidance of double taxation, and the promotion and protection of investments (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2024). These legal instruments help ensure smooth collaboration across various sectors.

Regarding foreign policy, Albania and Saudi Arabia share several common interests, particularly in regional stability and security. Albania values Saudi Arabia's influential role in the Arabian Peninsula and its efforts to maintain peace in the Middle East (Prime Minister's Office, September, 2021). The two countries cooperate within international organizations, with Saudi Arabia supporting Albania's foreign policy objectives, most notably its campaign for international recognition of Kosovo. Saudi

Arabia's early recognition of Kosovo's independence and its endorsement of Kosovo's membership in various international organizations constitute a key dimension of the Albania–Saudi Arabia relationship. Prime Minister Edi Rama has expressed gratitude for this support, underlining its importance to bilateral ties (Prime Minister's Office, September 11, 2021). The alignment on Kosovo's international status illustrates a convergence in foreign policy perspectives, particularly concerning the Balkans and the broader Islamic world.

Overall, the relationship between Albania and Saudi Arabia is characterized by robust diplomatic ties, significant economic collaboration, and a deepening cultural connection.

5.3 Portrayal of Albania in Al-Arabiya

Al Arabiya (*Arabic*: العربية – "*The Arabian*") is a pan-Arab television channel that began broadcasting in 2003 from Dubai, United Arab Emirates, and in 2021 relocated to Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia. This TV channel is part of the media group *MBC* (Middle East Broadcasting Center), which is one of the most powerful Arab media conglomerates, founded in London in 1991. The establishment of this media group is linked to the beginning of the era of massive satellite broadcasting expansion, which was accompanied, among other things, by the creation of global platforms and channels such as CNN, etc.

It should be noted that until this period, in all Middle Eastern countries (with the exception of Israel), local audiovisual media were predominantly—in some countries, such as Saudi Arabia, entirely—state-owned and subject to a "code of ethics and moral" (including dress codes). These outlets addressed almost exclusively domestic audiences in societies with distinctly conservative traits. Meanwhile, the new satellite channels of

Middle Eastern media groups, such as *MBC* or *ORBIT*, adopted a more liberal approach in their programming, even though they continued to be controlled by the same Gulf states through financial mechanisms, primarily via advertising sponsored by large companies from those countries.

This more liberal approach was evident not only in the "code of ethics," but also in the editorial line and debate programs, which were open to various global actors while maintaining an extensive presence of field correspondents covering events. In other words, this was an "Arab product for both internal and external consumption."

During the last decade, following developments in the Middle East and the onset of a period of liberalization in the Gulf countries, including Saudi Arabia, *Al Arabiya*—while continuing to maintain its pan-Arab profile—has positioned itself, from an informational standpoint, closer to the official stance of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, starting from its relocation from Dubai to Riyadh in 2021.

This trend is also evident in the coverage of events related to Albania, where an important place is given to intergovernmental meetings between representatives of the Government of the Republic of Albania and those of the Arab GCC countries, particularly the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Kuwait.

This study has taken into analyses the period 2013-2024. The resons for this timeline are as follows:

- *Substantive inflection points:* The window captures the consequential Albania-relevant events that spiked Al Arabiya's attention. This period encompasses the highest frequency of news coverage by *Al Arabiya* concerning Albania, showing a progressively increasing trend—particularly in relation to high-level official meetings and the signing of bilateral agreements. This period also includes

extensive media coverage of Saudi Arabia's strong moral support for Albania following the Iranian cyberattacks;

- Post-Arab Spring stabilization of pan-Arab newsrooms, the Riyadh relocation, and the maturing ditigal output of Al Arabiya yeld a relatively consistent editorial and technical environment for longitudianl content analysis;
- Relevance to the research question: The period maximizes observable interplay between foreign policy shocks (Syria chemical weapons, MEK, Albania-Iran rupture) and media framing effects in a Saudi-aligned outlet.
- Data availability and density: The time frame shows the highest concentration and diverstiy of Al Arabiya pieces mentioning Albania, enabling roubst year-over-year thematic analysis.
- Relevance: foccusing on recent events it provides information relevant and useful to the contemparary reader and policy maker.

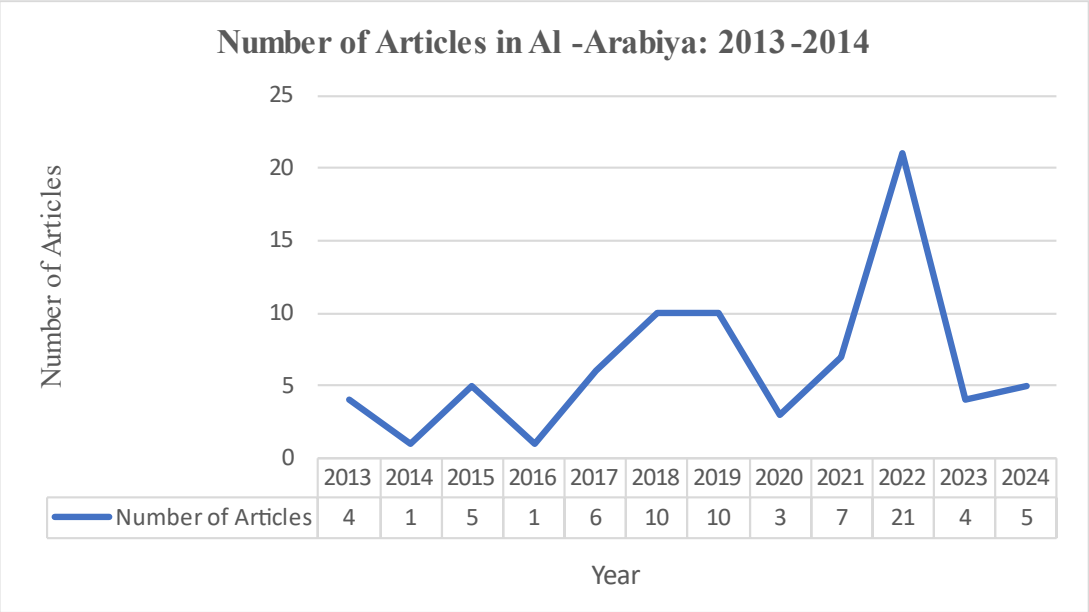
In the following we analyze how Albania is framed in the articles written for it in Al-Arabiya. According to Goffman (1974), "frame analysis" is a shorthand for studying the "organization of experience", which in our contexts, by identifying the number of articles and the topics these articles cover for Albania, we come to understand how Arab media 'organizes the experience of Albania in the international relations realm' for then understanding to what frames this organization of experience referrers to. Furthermore, in line with Entman (1993) due to the fact that framing creates order through "selection and salience" we will investigate as well the intensity of the articles and the positioning of the Saudi Arabia (Gulf countries) towards events happening in Albania and in relation to it.

This study undertakes a qualitative media content analysis of Albania-related news coverage published by the Arabic-language international news outlet Al Arabiya. The aim is to examine thematic patterns, geopolitical framing, and the representation of Albania within the broader context of Middle Eastern and global affairs. The corpus consists of 77 news articles published between 2013 and 2024. Articles were retrieved through keyword-based queries using terms such as "ألبانيا" (Albania), "تيرانا" (Tirana) etc. The data in Arabic includes news reports, political commentaries, event-based coverage, statements from government or international actors, regional diplomacy. These articles were compiled into a database containing titles of the articles, date of publishing and link of article (Annex 1: List of Al Arabiya articles).

The approach to sampling was purposive and exhaustive within the defined scope. Sports articles were not considered for analysis. All articles from Al Arabiya explicitly mentioning or significantly focusing on Albania were included. This method ensured full coverage of the media outlet's portrayal of Albania over the past decade.

The following graph shows the distribution of articles during the period 2013-2024:

Figure 1: Distribution of Articles on Albania in Al Arabiya 2013-2024



The line graph above illustrates the distribution of Al Arabiya's coverage of Albania over an 11-year period, revealing significant fluctuations in reporting volume. Notably, 2022 stands out as a peak year, with 21 published articles, a dramatic increase compared to the preceding and subsequent years. This surge correlates strongly with a cluster of geopolitical developments involving cybersecurity tensions between Albania and Iran, particularly Albania's decision to sever diplomatic relations with Iran following a state-sponsored cyberattack. The incident drew widespread regional and international responses, including condemnations from the United States, NATO, and Gulf states like Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, contributing to the spike in media attention.

The second-highest peak occurred in 2019, with 12 articles, many of which centered around MEK (Mujahedin-e Khalq) activities in Albania, including opposition conferences, Iranian intelligence threats, and statements from Albanian leadership regarding Iranian provocations. This reflects Albania’s growing role as a geopolitical actor within Middle Eastern-Iranian opposition dynamics.

The chart also highlights a steady increase in coverage from 2017 to 2019, corresponding to Albania’s deepening international partnerships, including NATO collaboration, investment initiatives, and its positioning in discussions related to regional security and energy diplomacy.

Overall, the peaks are closely tied to security-related events, especially involving Iran, illustrating how Albania is often portrayed in the Arab media through the lens of international conflict, alliances, and regional influence.

Timeline of Al Arabiya's Coverage of Albania (2013–2024)

The coverage of Albania by Al Arabiya between 2013 and 2024 reveals distinct fluctuations in media attention, shaped largely by Albania's evolving geopolitical relevance in Middle Eastern security discourse.

Al Arabiya's coverage begins with the relocation of MEK members from Camp Liberty in Iraq to Albania, reported on 22 June 2013 in an article titled "71 Iranian opposition members leave Iraq." Consistent with much of the outlet's reporting on Albania, the piece is strictly informational: it conveys international developments primarily through quotations from the actors involved, refrains from in-story commentary, and reserves analysis for dedicated opinion columns. Consequently, the event is framed chiefly through the curated selection of statements and contextual background drawn from primary sources.

In this report—sourced from the AFP bureau in Baghdad—Al Arabiya conveys statements by the UN representative in Iraq, Martin Kobler, who "noted that Albania has agreed to resettle 210 members of the MEK who are currently residing in Camp Liberty, on the western outskirts of Baghdad," and added that "in addition to Albania, Germany has offered to accept the resettlement of approximately 100 camp residents on its territory". The article further explains that Camp Liberty "is a former U.S. military base near Baghdad that has housed 3,000 Iranian dissidents since the beginning of the year. Under an agreement between Iraq and the United Nations, this camp serves as a transit point for Iranian dissidents before they leave Iraq." It also observes that "The Mujahedin-e Khalq (MEK), the largest faction within the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI), was founded in 1965 with the goal of overthrowing the Shah Pahlavi and then

the Islamic regime. It was expelled from Iran in the 1980s after launching several armed operations."

Although the report offers no direct commentary on the MEK, its framing—along with the very title of the news report "71 Iranian opposition members leave Iraq"—indicates that, within Al Arabiya's editorial line, the organization is described and regarded as part of the Iranian opposition and dissidence. The article subsequently provides a brief historical retrospective on the MEK. However, this background narrative omits the fact that the MEK was removed from the U.S. terrorist list in late September 2012, following earlier de-listings by the Euoropean Union in 2009 and the United Kingdom in 2008. This omission may be interpreted as reflecting a positive stance by Al Arabiya toward the MEK and, consequently, toward Albania's decision to host the members of this organization.



71 Iranian opposition members leave Iraq
22/06/2013
https://www.alarabiya.net/iran/2013/06/22/71-عنصرا-من-المعارضة-الإيرانية-يغادرون-العراق

This topic, as discussed later in this study, resurfaces with intensive informative coverage by Al Arabiya during 2016–2017, when Albania had completed the relocation of thousands of MEK members from Iraq to its territory- a process supported by the United Nations, the European Union, and the United States.

In 2013, Albania faced a public crisis of confidence when it was considered as a potential site for the destruction of Syria's chemical weapons. Despite U.S. pressure, the Albanian public overwhelmingly opposed the proposal, staging mass protests. The government ultimately rejected the plan, marking a rare moment of national consensus and popular resistance to perceived foreign imposition – even from key allies.

This development was covered by Al Arabiya, which tracked the dynamics of the event in three separate articles published between November 13–15, 2013, titled "Albanians demonstrate against the dismantling of Assad's 'chemical' in their country", "Albania refuses to destroy Syrian 'chemical' on its territory", and "Albanians refuse to contaminate their country with 'Assad's chemical'."

In the article of November 15, 2013, "Albania refuses to destroy Syrian 'chemical' on its territory", Al Arabiya reports:

> Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama announced on Friday that his country rejects the US request to allow the destruction of Syria's chemical weapons arsenal on its territory... 'It is impossible for Albania to participate in such an operation... because it does not have the capabilities,' Rama said in a live press conference, greeted by cheers from thousands of demonstrators in the main square in the center of the capital, Tirana.

Al Arabiya's portrayal cast Albania as a sovereign and democratic state in which the Prime Minister (i.e., the government) takes decisions in the public interest, even when these decisions do not comply with the demands and interests of a powerful ally such as the United States—and for this, he was "cheered from thousands of demonstrators in the main square in the center of the capital, Tirana".

To reinforce this framing, Al Arabiya then reports the position of the US ambassador to Tirana:

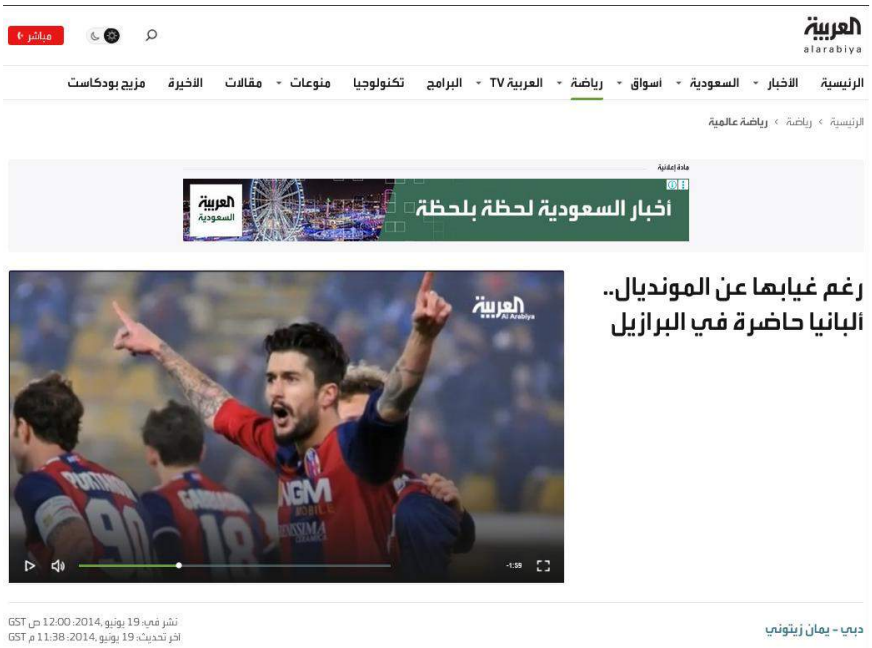
> Washington continued to apply pressure, with its ambassador to Albania, Alexander Arvizu, announcing in a local television interview on Thursday evening that Washington would be disappointed if Albania refused to allow the destruction of Syria's chemical weapons arsenal on its territory... 'We have provided every explanation and offered every possible guarantee,' said the US ambassador, whose remarks were translated into Albanian. 'We hope that Albania's decision will be positive, but if it is negative, we will certainly respect it, even though we will be disappointed'.



Albania refuses to destroy Syria's chemical weapons on its territory
15/11/2013
https://www.alarabiya.net/arab-and-world/syria/2013/11/15/ألبانيا-ترفض-تدمير-كيمياوي-سوريا-على-أراضيها-

Between 2014-2015, Al Arabiya published a series of articles on diverse topics, such as the success of Albanian players on the global stage, the fight against terrorism, the Balkan phenomenon of "female child abortion", Albanian tourism, the lifting of visa requirements for Saudi citizens wishing to visit Albania, as well as the evocation of historical figures of Albania, such as King Zog I, in the context of youth leadership success. Taken together, these articles depict Albania from multiple vantage points in its social and cultural life, as well as its political, historical, and security dimensions.

In a19 June 2014 article titled “Despite her absence from the World Cup Albania is present in Brazil”, Al Arabiya writes about the profile of a number of successful Albanian football players expected to play in the World Cup as part of other national teams, such as Valon Behrami, Blerim Xhemaili, Xherdan Shaqiri, Granit Xhaka, Admir Mehmedi, and others. The article casts Albania in a highly positive light and concludes with the statement: “Albania's second-to-last place in their group in the European qualifiers undoubtedly saddened their fans, but the Albanians will hold their breath this summer as they watch Tirana's seven ambassadors in Brazil.”



Despite her absence from World Cup Albania is present in Brazil
19/06/2014
https://www.alarabiya.net/sport/international-sport/2014/06/19/رغم-غيابها-عن-كأس-العالم-ألبانيا-حاضرة-بقوة-في-البرازيل

The subject of the fight against terrorism appears in an article dated March 25, 2015, titled “Italy is going to arrest 3 terrorism suspects”, which reports: “A judicial warrant has been issued for the arrest of two Albanians and an Italian on suspicion of involvement in terrorism. Italian police launched a search operation in several locations in northern Italy on Wednesday”. The article further implies regional cooperation between Italian and

Albanian authorities in the broader fight against terrorism: “Police indicated that the search in Lombardy, Piedmont, and Tuscany is focused on those suspected of sympathizing with extremist groups. Police and counterterrorism officers are also active in the area around Tirana, Albania”.



Italy is going to arrest 3 terrorism suspects
25/03/2015
https://www.alarabiya.net/arab-and-world/2015/03/25/إيطاليا-تسعى-للقبض-على-3-متهمين-بالإرهاب

Within less than two months, on May 3, 2015, Al Arabiya published a social-themed report titled “Female pregnancy is an unforgivable crime in some Balkan countries.” The report recounts the story of a “31-year-old woman who came to the capital, Tirana, from Kruja in the north of the country, with her mother-in-law, hoping to find someone in one of its private clinics who would perform an abortion”, because “She is pregnant with a girl after having given birth to three girls, the oldest of whom is four years old. She is committing an unforgivable crime in the eyes of her society, which favors boys over girls”. This report, sourced from AFP, presents the phenomenon in explicitly negative terms – nevertheless, it is framed as a Balkan-wide issue, cause the

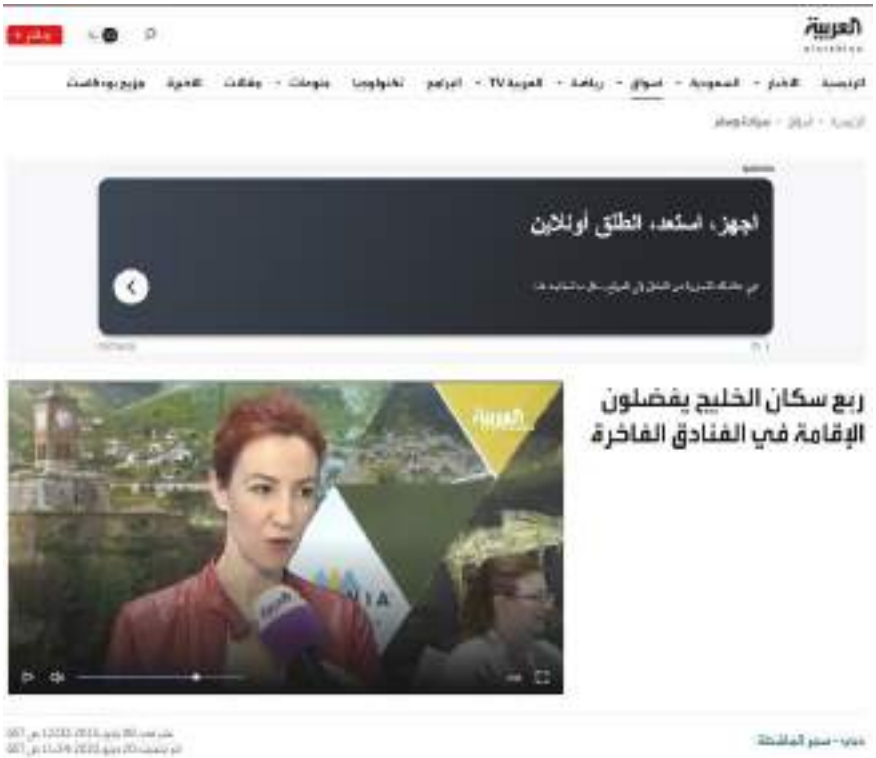
article adds: “This young woman’s situation is similar to that of many of her compatriots, a situation that extends to several Balkan countries, where the preference for sons and the abortion of girls leads to an imbalance between the sexes” and “Female abortion is also prevalent in Montenegro, where society still favors boys over girls, according to Maja Račević of the Women’s Rights Center in the capital, Podgorica”.



Pregnancy with a female is an unforgivable crime in some Balkan countries
03/05/2015
https://www.alarabiya.net/last-page/2015/05/03/الحمل-بأنثى-جريمة-لا-تغتفر-في-بعض-دول-البلقان

In May 8, 2015, Al Arabiya published another article entitled “A quarter of Gulf inhabitants prefer to stay in luxury hotels”, about the Arabian Travel Market (ATM) – an annual travel and tourism event in Dubai that serves as platform for inbound and outbound tourism professionals in the Middle East and provides information on destinations, accommodation options, attractions, and the aviation industry in the Middle East and worldwide. In this article, Al Arabiya notes Albania’s participation in the event, stating: “Julinda Dhami, Secretary General of the Ministry of Economic Development and Tourism in Albania, said that her country is participating in the Arabian Travel Market

for the first time to attract Gulf tourists, stressing that tourism products around the world are now targeting visitors from regions with the highest tourism spending".



A quarter of Gulf inhabitants prefer to stay in luxury hotels
08/05/2015
https://www.alarabiya.net/aswaq/travel-and-tourism/2015/05/07/ربع-سكان-الخليج-يفضلون-الإقامة-في-الفنادق-الفاخرة

In the same context of the development of relations in the field of tourism and freedom of movement between Albania and Saudi Arabia, on 18 August 2015 Al Arabiya published an article titled "Saudis to Albania without a visa for 5 months period", stating: "The Director of the General Department of Public Relations and Media at the Ministry of Interior, Major General Dr. Mohammed bin Abdullah Al-Maroul, explained that all Saudis can enter Albania without a visa, starting from June 1 to November 1, 2015" stating that "this came in a telegram received by the Ministry of Interior from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding the decision of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Albania in this regard".



Saudis to Albania without a visa for 5 months period
18/08/2015
https://www.alarabiya.net/saudi-today/2015/08/18/السعوديون-إلى-ألبانيا-من-دون-تأشيرة-لمدة-5-أشهر

A particularly interesting article of this period is that of May 18, 2015, titled "Young Officials... and Great Achievements – What prompted Obama to express his admiration for the wisdom of the Saudi Deputy Crown Prince, despite his young age?". The article is dedicated to Prince Mohammed bin Salman—then Minister of Defense and Deputy Crown Prince (January 2015–2022), now Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia (2017–ongoing) and one of the most influential figures in regional and global politics—who, even though being at that time only 29 years old, had already ascended the ranks of state leadership, holding a series of important posts and becoming one of the most prominent figures of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Al Arabiya emphasizes his rapid rise with the opening observation: "At the Camp David summit with Gulf leaders (and their representatives), what most caught U.S. President Barack Obama's attention was the youth of Saudi Deputy Crown Prince and Defense Minister Prince Mohammed bin Salman. Obama expressed his admiration on the record—both audio and video—saying of the prince, who

would turn 30 the following August, that he "has a wisdom beyond his years," according to an interview he gave to Al Arabiya the previous Friday.

What links this article to Albania is a parallel drawn in its first part where Al Arabiya lists a number of historical figures from different countries who assumed high state positions before the age of 30, noting that: "Prince Mohammed bin Salman has joined the 'club of young celebrities,' a number of whom became known in history for holding important positions in their countries, including presidential and royal leadership positions, and emerged far more successful than their elder predecessors…". Among these personalities—alongside renowned historical figures such as Alexander the Great, Napoleon, and Queen Elizabeth II of Britain— the article includes King Ahmed Zogu of Albania: "In Albania, the famous Ahmed Mukhtar Bey Zogolli, known as Ahmed Zogu, served as prime minister for two years when he was just months younger than 27 in 1922. Three years later, he became president and in 1928 he became king for ten years "building modern Albania from a period of chaos", reflecting thus a distinctly positive treatment of an Albanian historical figure.

Although this is not a dedicated article to the King of Albania, Ahmed Zogu I, the fact that he is mentioned as a model of successful leadership at a young age, and as "building modern Albania from a period of chaos", shows a positive approach towards the Albanian historical figures.







وفي ألبانيا تعتلي الشهير أحمد مختار بيه زوغللي، المعروف اختصاراً باسم أحمد زوغو، رئاسة الوزراء لعامين حين كان عمره في 1922 أقل بأشهر من 27 سنة، وبعد 5 أعوام أصبح رئيساً للبلاد، وملكاً عليها بدءاً من 1928 طوال 10 سنوات. قبل ألبانيا الحديثة بعد أن كانت تعمها الفوضى.

Prince Mohammed bin Salman has joined the "club of young celebrities," a number of whom became known in history for holding important positions in their countries, including presidential and royal leadership positions, and emerged far more successful than their elder predecessors. Among those classified by "Al Arabiya.net" is Alexander the Great, who succeeded his murdered father as king at the age of barely 20. However, he changed the course of history and built an empire before his assassination 10 years later, bringing about positive changes in the world, some of which were cultural and geopolitical, the effects of which continue to this twenty-first century...

“In Albania, the famous Ahmed Muhtar Bey Zogolli, known simply as Ahmed Zogolli, served as prime minister for two years when he was just months younger than 27 years old in 1922. Three years later, he became president of the country and, starting in 1928, king for 10 years. He built modern Albania after it had been engulfed in chaos”.

Young Officials... and Great Achievements

18/05/2015

https://www.alarabiya.net/arab-and-world/2015/05/18/صغار-بالسن-وصلوا-الى-السلطة-وأفلحوا-أكثر-من-الكبار

The issue of the MEK returned to Al Arabiya’s focus in an article dated 10 September 2016, titled “UN moves MEK from Iraq to Europe”, which reports: “The Secretariat of the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI) in Paris stated in a statement received by Al Arabiya.net that with the transfer of the last group of Camp Liberty residents (more than 280 people) from Baghdad to Albania, the project to transfer the Mujahedin-e Khalq from Iraq to Europe has concluded.” The piece continues:

“According to the statement, during this four-and-a-half-year process, the residents of Camp Liberty were transferred to European countries, including Germany, Norway, Britain, the Netherlands, Finland, Denmark, Belgium, Italy, and Spain. Since the beginning of 2016, approximately 2,000 people have left Iraq”.

Al Arabiya, via the same source, describes the persecution and terror experienced by MEK members in Camp Liberty prior to relocation - at the hands of pro-Iranian Shi’ite militias supported by the Quds Force (a branch of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps – IRGC), as well as by individuals affiliated with Iran within the Iraqi judiciary allegedly affiliated with Iran and, more broadly, the then- Iraqi government (portrayed as supportive of pro-Iranian militias). Among other points, the report notes:

According to the statement, Iran has filed red notices with Interpol and issued fabricated arrest warrants from the Iraqi judiciary, seeking to prevent the departure of 1,000 members of the Mujahedin-e Khalq (MEK) and arrest their leaders and well-known figures… Through its affiliated militias in Iraq, Iran has targeted the organization's members at Camp Ashraf. It has carried out five missile attacks on Camp Liberty, two hostage-takings, and an eight-year siege that has claimed the lives of 177 members of the organization… The Secretariat of the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI) confirmed that ‘the terrorist Quds Force has, in recent weeks, tasked three of its proxy groups (Kata’ib Hezbollah, Asa’ib Ahl al-Haq, and al-Nujaba) with firing rockets at Camp Liberty and provided them with various missiles to attack Camp Liberty at the first opportunity… The Maliki government had previously confiscated $550 million of the residents’ assets in Camp Ashraf, which were placed at the disposal of the Iraqi government’s military forces and militias.

The fact that Al Arabiya, in this article, publishes statements from the Secretariat of the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI)—a coalition of Iranian dissident groups led by the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (MEK) — indicates recognition of, and alignment with, MEK positions within Al Arabiya's editorial line, treating the group as part of the Iranian opposition.

In this context, it is worth recalling that nine months earlier, in January 2016, immediately after the violent attacks on Saudi diplomatic missions in Tehran and Mashhad, Saudi Arabia severed diplomatic relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran and declared Iranian diplomats in Riyadh persona non grata, ordering them to leave the Kingdom within 48 hours. This rupture followed several years of tense relations, due to Iran's support for Shi'ite militias in Lebanon, Syria, and especially the Houthi militias in Yemen, whose attacks had violated the territorial integrity of Saudi Arabia and undermined the strategic and economic interests of several Arab and Western countries—leading to Saudi Arabia's military intervention in Yemen[2] as part of a coalition of nine Arab states, including the UAE and Bahrain. Under these circumstances, in articles addressing the MEK in Albania, Al Arabiya frequently cite the Secretariat of the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI)— that is, the MEK itself.

[2] On 26 March 2015, Saudi Arabia, leading a coalition of nine countries from West Asia and North Africa, launched a military intervention in Yemen at the request of Yemeni president Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi, who had been ousted from the capital, Sanaa, in September 2014 by Houthi insurgents during the Yemeni civil war.



UN moves MEK from Iraq to Europe
10/09/2016
https://www.alarabiya.net/arab-and-world/iraq/2016/09/10/مجاهدي-خلق-غادرت-العراق-بالكامل-إلى--أوروبا

By the end 2016, Albania had completed the relocation of thousands of MEK members from Iraq to its territory, a process supported by the United Nations, the European Union, and the United States. This humanitarian gesture not only drew praise from Western governments but also stirred sharp criticism from Iran, particularly when high-profile American figures such as Senator John McCain and Senator Roy Blunt visited Tirana to meet with MEK leadership, including Maryam Rajavi. Such visits underscored Albania's deepening alignment with U.S. policy in the region and its symbolic stance against the Iranian regime. MEK's relocation and growing influence in Albania coincided with high-level conferences and public support for regime change in Iran, hosted in Paris and broadcast to MEK members in Tirana. These events, attended by prominent Western officials such as John Bolton, Rudy Giuliani, and Newt Gingrich, portrayed Albania as a secure base for organizing opposition activities against Tehran.

From April 2017 onward, Al Arabiya brings expanded media coverage to these developments and events, which continued to dominate its reporting throughout the subsequent period.

This coverage begins with a 15 April 2017, titled "John McCain Visits MEK in Albania", where Al Arabiya provides an extended report on the visit of Senator John McCai - then Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee - to the headquarters of the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI/MEK) in the Albanian capital, Tirana, which had recently hosted thousands of members relocated from Iraq. Authored by Iran expert Saleh Hamid, the article contains no editorial commentary; instead, it presents a curated selection of quotations from the two central figures of the meeting—U.S. Senator John McCain and MEK leader Maryam Rajavi. The article reports: "According to a statement issued by the NCRI Secretariat from its headquarters in Paris, Senator McCain addressed the members of the organization during his visit, saying:

> There is no doubt that you have not only endured great pain and suffering, but you have also lost many of your families at the hands of the authoritarian regime ruling Iran… You rose up for freedom, for the right to a free life and the right to choose your future—rights that God has given to every human being. You fought and sacrificed for them… I thank you for being an example of those who, when they make a decision, are willing to sacrifice for freedom, and they achieve it. You are an example to those who struggle for freedom around the world… I am confident that one day Iran will be free, and we will gather in Freedom Square.

The article then continues with excerpts from Maryam Rajavi's speech, stating:

> There is a consensus in the region today regarding the destructive role played by the mullahs' regime. There is no doubt that the religious fascist regime ruling Iran is the main source of wars, terrorism, and crises in the region... Regime change in Iran is not only necessary to end the blatant violations of human rights in Iran, but also to end wars and crises in the region and achieve peace and tranquility… As long as the Mullahs' regime remains in power, it will not abandon its export of terrorism and extremism.



John McCain Visits MEK in Albania
15.04.2017
https://www.alarabiya.net/iran/2017/04/15/جون-ماكين-يزور-مجاهدي-خلق-في-ألبانيا

Immediately after this meeting came Iran's response, reported by Al Arabiya in an article dated 17 April 2017, titled "Iran protests John McCain's meeting with MEK leaders", which stated: "Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Ghasemi protested the visit of Senator John McCain, Chairman of the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee, to the headquarters of the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (MEK) in the Albanian capital, Tirana, and his meeting with Maryam Rajavi, the organization's leader and president of the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI)." According to Al Arabiya, Ghasemi said, 'The U.S. administration will pay the price for its mistakes in the region, including the recent meeting between a U.S. congressional official and the leader of the terrorist group Monafeqin-e Khalq,' as he described the MEK, adding: "Such meetings are not new, and U.S. officials have often failed to learn lessons from their past actions. Their wrong policies have led to the spread of terrorism in the region, and the meeting with the leader of the hypocrites group falls within the same framework."

This harsh, threatening, and derogatory language used by Iran against the world's greatest power, and directly against the U.S. administration itself, reflects Iran's deep concern over this meeting, which occurred in a new political context: the arrival to power in January 2017 of the Trump administration, which held a profoundly distrustful stance toward Iran, portraying it as a destabilizing factor in the Middle East region, as a threat to the U.S.'s regional allies—Israel, Saudi Arabia, and other Gulf states—and to America's strategic and economic interests in the region. With this meeting- followed by several similar encounters - the MEK increasingly appeared as an exiled opposition organization calling for regime change in Iran. Al Arabiya's publication of the Iranian Foreign Ministry's statement, with its overtly threatening and derogatory language toward the United States, is not accidental: aimed at an Arabic-speaking audience, Al Arabiya seems to use these selected wording to underscore the perceived danger posed by Iran; a state willing to warn the world's greatest power by declaring that "The U.S. administration will pay the price for its mistakes in the region, is by implication, an even greater threat to neighbouring Gulf countries such as Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain.



Iran protests John McCain's meeting with MEK leaders
17/04/2017
https://www.alarabiya.net/iran/2017/04/17/إيران-تحتج-على-لقاء-جون-ماكين-بقادة-مجاهدي-خلق

Four months later, on 1 July 2017, Al Arabiya published another article titled "Rajavi: There is no solution to eliminate ISIS except by toppling the Tehran regime", which brings a report about the annual conference of the Iranian opposition People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI/MEK) held in Paris on that date. According to Al Arabiya, the conference "was attended by tens of thousands of supporters, along with American, Canadian, European, and Arab dignitaries. The conference was held under the slogan 'Overthrowing the Mullahs' Regime Through the Iranian Resistance'."

The article conveyed, among other things, excerpts from the speeches delivered at the event by three U.S. dignitaries: John Bolton, Rudy Giuliani, and Newt Gingrich. According to Al Arabiya:

> John Bolton, the former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, said in his speech that 'there is no solution to Iran except through the overthrow of the regime'. He added that 'for the first time in eight years, we have a president in the United States who is completely opposed to the Iranian regime, unlike his predecessor, President Obama' … 'there is a new U.S. policy toward Iran, and Congress is moving quickly to impose new economic sanctions on the Iranian regime'.

Further on, the article cited Rudy Giuliani, former Mayor of New York and former U.S. presidential candidate who has stated that 'the Iranian regime has become a danger to the region and the world and wants to possess a nuclear bomb'. Newt Gingrich, Former Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, is also quoted in the article to have said: Iran must be liberated from dictatorship.

Even though the convention took place in Paris, this event had a direct connection to Albania. At the conclusion of the article Al Arabiya notes:

> Participating in the conference were parliamentary delegations from Britain and Italy, a large delegation from Albania headed by the former Prime Minister, a delegation of Syrian opposition leaders, figures from Algeria headed by Sid Ahmed Ghazali, a delegation from the Egyptian Parliament, parliamentary delegations from Palestine, Jordan, Tunisia, and delegations from various European countries... Thousands of Mujahedin-e Khalq (MEK) members, recently transferred from Camp Liberty in Iraq to Albania, also participated in the conference via satellite from Tirana.



Rajavi: There is no solution to eliminate ISIS except by toppling the Tehran regime
01/07/2017
https://www.alarabiya.net/iran/2017/07/01/دعوات-لإسقاط-نظام-إيران-بمؤتمر-المعارضة-بباريس-

On August 13, 2017, Al Arabiya published another article on this subject, titled "U.S. Senate Delegation Meets Iranian Resistance Leader", reporting that:

A delegation of U.S. Senators met with Maryam Rajavi, President of the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI), during their visit to the office of the PMOI/MEK in the Albanian capital, Tirana... According to a statement issued by the NCRI Secretariat in Paris, a copy of which was received by Alarabiya.net, the delegation discussed the situation of the MEK in Albania and the latest developments in Iran and the region. They also discussed solutions to end the current crises in the region, solutions that require democratic change in Iran… the U.S. Senators' delegation was headed by Senator Roy Blunt, Vice Chairman of the Senate Republican Conference and a member of the Senate Budget and Intelligence, Laws and Administration, and Commerce, Science, and Transportation committees. Also participating in the meeting were Senator John Cornyn, the Senate Republican Caucus Coordinator and a member of the Judiciary, Intelligence, and Finance Committees, and Senator Thom Tillis, a member of the Armed Services Committee, the Judiciary Committee, the Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee, and the Veterans Affairs Committee… During the meeting, Maryam Rajavi, thanked the U.S. senators for their firm stance against the Iranian regime, particularly their endorsement of the designation of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) as a terrorist organization and their approval of the new resolution to boycott the IRGC and the leaders of the clerical regime for human rights violations, missile projects, and the export of terrorism... Rajavi also called for "the expulsion of the Revolutionary Guards and its proxy militias from Syria, Iraq, and other countries in the region". She further emphasized the need for urgent measures to hold the regime accountable for widespread political executions, especially the massacre of 30,000 political prisoners in 1988. She also emphasized the need to launch independent investigations into this major crime against humanity, bring those responsible to justice, and impose comprehensive sanctions on the banking systems and oil revenues of this repressive regime.

It is evident that Al Arabiya—while, as noted above, avoiding overt editorial commentary—reproduces almost in full the NCRI communiqué regarding the meeting, a copy of which it had obtained; in other words, it presents the event to its Arabic-speaking audience largely through the NCRI/MEK's perspective.



U.S. Senate Delegation Meets Iranian Resistance Leader
13/08/2017
https://www.alarabiya.net/iran/2017/08/13/وفد-من-مجلس-شيوخ-أميركا-يلتقي-زعيمة-المقاومة-الإيرانية

In the next article, dated 4 September 2017, titled “In pictures. 17 Female Defence Ministers Around the World”, Al Arabiya shifts focus to profile the “Iron Ladies”, Ministers of Defense in various countries of the world – among them Germany’s Ursula von der Leyen, Roberta Pinotti of Italy, Marise Payne of Australia, Nirmala Sitharaman of India – and includes Albania’s defense minister: “Mimi Kodheli is the first woman to be appointed Minister of Defense in Albania. She is 54 years old”. An interesting detail is that, of the 17 ministers featured, Al Arabiya selected as the article’s lead image a collage showing Albania’s Mimi Kodheli alongside India’s Nirmala Sitharaman.



In pictures… 17 femail Defence Ministers Around the World
04/09/2017
https://www.alarabiya.net/last-page/2017/09/04/بالصور-وزيرات-الدفاع-حول-العالم

However, two days later, on 6 September 2017, Al Arabiya published another article on MEK, titled “MEK Chooses New Leadership”, reporting: “The Iranian opposition group Mujahedin-e Khalq (MEK) elected Zahra Merrikhi as its new Secretary-General during its General Conference on Wednesday… According to the organization, the General Conference was timed to coincide with the 52nd anniversary of its founding

and was convened in Tirana—the Albanian capital to which the remaining members were recently relocated from Iraq—as well as in five other European capitals."



The Iranian organization Mujahedin-e Khalq (MEK) elects new leadership
06/09/2017
https://www.alarabiya.net/iran/2017/09/06/منظمة-مجاهدي-خلق-الايرانية-تختار-قيادة-جديدة

In 2018 and 2019, Albania emerged as a pivotal stage in broader geopolitical and ideological confrontations, particularly between Western powers and Iran. The small Balkan country increasingly positioned itself not only as a regional player, but as an international actor aligned with U.S. and European policies on security, democracy, and counterterrorism. A defining aspect of this period was Albania's growing entanglement with Iranian affairs through its hosting of the Iranian opposition group, Mujahedin-e Khalq (MEK). International media coverage framed Albania as a safe haven for the exiled group, spotlighting the multiple terror plots allegedly orchestrated by the Iranian regime and thwarted on Albanian soil. These incidents led to the expulsion of Iranian diplomats, gaining Albania praise from U.S., Saudi, and European officials. This security narrative

reinforced Albania's image as a loyal ally to the West, firmly embedded in the global fight against terrorism and authoritarian influence.

In 2018, MEK and Iran related topics dominated Al Arabiya's media coverage of Albania. Of the eleven articles mentioning Albania that year, only two fall outside this theme: the 8 January 2018 article, "Historic' rise in asylum applications in France," – noting that "Albania was the leading country of origin for asylum seekers last year (7,630 applications), despite being considered a 'safe' country" – and the 11 August 2018 article, "Albanian police chase gunman who killed 8 members of his family," – a sensational report on a mass killing attributed to a mentally ill perpetrator.

In the article of 9 August 9 2018 titled "Opposition: Iran's intelligence is responsible for bombings in Europe", Al Arabiya reported: "The National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI), affiliated with the opposition Mujahedin-e Khalq (MEK), revealed that an Iranian intelligence agency, supervised by a senior intelligence officer, is responsible for assassinations and bombings in Europe and was behind the failed attack on the organization's conference in Paris on June 30". The article focused on a report by Mohammad Mohaddessin, Head of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the NCRI, "containing new information, based on evidence and from reliable sources within the Iranian regime, regarding the plot to bomb the opposition conference in Paris and the arrest of its mastermind, the Iranian diplomat at the Iranian embassy in Austria—Asadollah Asadi". According to Mohaddessin, "the entity that ordered the attempted bombing of the conference in Paris is an organization that coordinates the activities of the Ministry of Intelligence's stations in the regime's embassies abroad, linked to the 'Foreign Intelligence and Movements Organization' within the Ministry of Intelligence". The article further noted that Mohaddessin disclosed the identity of the head of the

“Foreign Intelligence and Movements Organization” within the Ministry of Intelligence, explaining that he is Reza Amiri-Moqaddam, who maintains direct contact with the Minister of Intelligence and Security, Mahmoud Alavi, adding that “Asadollah Asadi reported directly to Amiri-Moqaddam”.

The article links these claims directly to Albania is Mohaddessin’s statement that: “Asadi is the mastermind of the recent terrorist attack against the Paris conference, under the command of Amiri-Moqaddam. The terrorist attempt in Albania was also under the command of Amiri-Moqaddam”. The article further reports that: “This came during a press conference held by the NCRI on Wednesday in Brussels to reveal details of the operation thwarted by security services in France, Belgium, and Germany. Belgian authorities arrested a Belgian man and his wife of Iranian origin, both Belgian nationals, carrying 500 grams of a highly explosive substance and a detonator near Brussels”. The involvement of Iranian diplomats in organizing terrorist acts, and the reference to a terrorist attempt in Albania linked to the “Foreign Intelligence and Movements Organization” of the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence, is an indication that what occurred in Albania with the Iranian diplomats was not an isolated case, but a response to covert activities for terrorist operations conducted under diplomatic cover.



Opposition: Iran's intelligence is responsible for bombings in Europe
09/08/2018
https://www.alarabiya.net/iran/2018/08/09/المعارضة-مخابرات-إيران-مسؤولة-عن-تفجيرات-بأوروبا

Five months later, this topic resurfaced in a 15 December 2018 article, titled “Iran's diaspora demand international action to confront regime terrorism”, reporting that: “A joint conference of Iranian diaspora communities from 50 cities around the world on Saturday called for confronting the regime's increasing domestic and foreign terrorism against its own people and the peoples of the region”. The piece added: “During the main gathering held at the MEK headquarters in the Albanian capital, Tirana, Maryam Rajavi, President of the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI), said that the world must respect the Iranian people's demands for freedom and democracy”. Former U.S. Representative Patrick Kennedy (Democratic Party) also addressed the meeting, saying that the regime’s approach is to suppress domestic movements and spread terrorism abroad, and calling for intensified sanctions to weaken it. The article concluded: “During 2018, four plots to carry out terrorist operations by the Tehran regime in Europe and the United States were thwarted… Currently, a regime diplomat and three other agents are

imprisoned in Belgium and another in Denmark, accused of attempted bombings and assassinations against opponents in Paris and Copenhagen."

Like its predecessor, this article highlights the double standard of the Islamic Republic of Iran with regard to the issue of terrorism: while accusing its neighbors and Western powers of supporting terrorism, it has simultaneously established specialized structures to organize terrorist attacks in Europe and the United States, involving not only the IRGC, but also state institutions such as the Ministry of Intelligence and members of the diplomatic corps. This spotlight is important for Al Arabiya's Arabic-speaking audience to grasp the context of subsequent developments relating to Albania, including the expulsion of Iranian diplomats, as discussed below.



Iran's diaspora demand international action to confront regime terrorism
15/12/2018
https://www.alarabiya.net/iran/2018/12/15/جاليات-ايران-تطالب-بتحرك-دولي-لمواجهة-ارهاب-النظام

Two days later, on December 17, 2018, Al Arabiya published an article titled "Zarif denounces Twitter ban for loyalists… and a member of opposition replied, 'He hit me and cried'", noting: "At a time when Iranian authorities block many social media sites,

preventing the Iranian people from freely expressing their opinions and criticism on Twitter and other platforms, and many activists and opposition figures being arrested and silenced, the Iranian Foreign Minister denounced Twitter's ban on what he called 'real Iranians' on Sunday night". According to Al Arabiya, "He wrote on his Twitter account, addressing Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey: 'Hello, Jack. Twitter shut down the accounts of real Iranians, including TV anchors and students, on the assumption that they were part of an operation aimed at influencing public opinion'… He added, wondering, 'What about actual accounts in (the Albanian capital) Tirana being used to promote regime-change propaganda emanating from (Washington, D.C.)?'". The article then explains that Zarif's comment followed actions by Facebook, Twitter, and Alphabet (Google), which in August had collectively deleted hundreds of accounts linked to an Iranian propaganda operation, as part of broader efforts to combat disinformation and terrorist propaganda. The measures included suspending and blocking 39 channels affiliated with the state-run broadcaster IRIB, which Google had previously restricted on YouTube. The article adds: "Facebook stated in late August that Iran was behind a sprawling disinformation operation on Facebook that targeted hundreds of thousands of members around the world".

Through its media framing, the article thus provides, among other things, a counterbalance to Iran's accusations "about actual accounts in (the Albanian capital) Tirana being used to promote regime-change propaganda emanating from (Washington, D.C.)", by highlighting the double standard of the Islamic Republic on a critical issue such as cyber-warfare: while accusing exile opposition groups like the MEK of involvement, Iran itself was already engaged in a massive cyber-warfare campaign.



Zarif denounces Twitter ban for loyalists…
and a member of opposition replied, "He hit me and cried"
17/12/2018
https://www.alarabiya.net/iran/2018/09/17/ظريف-يستنكر-حظر-تويتر-لموالين-ورد-معارض-ضربني-وبكى-

December 2018 brings the densest media coverage of Albania by Al Arabiya during this period—largely due to an event that made headlines in major global media outlets: Albania's expulsion of two Iranian diplomats. The coverage of this event in Al Arabiya begins with an article dated December 20, 2018, titled "America supports Albania's decision to expel Iranians. 'We must unite'," reporting that: "U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said on Thursday that the world must unite to impose sanctions on the Iranian regime until it changes its destructive policies… In a tweet, Pompeo commended the Albanian Prime Minister's decision to expel Iranians who planned terrorist attacks". Alongside the reaction of U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo regarding the incident, the article also features the reaction of U.S. National Security Advisor John Bolton, who "expressed U.S. support for Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama's decision to expel the Iranian ambassador from his country, considering his action a testament to his and the Albanian people's opposition to Iran's reckless behavior in Europe and the world".

As to the grounds for expulsion, Al Arabiya reported: “Albanian media indicated that the matter related to Iran’s attempt to carry out a terrorist act during the match held in Tirana between the Albanian and Israeli national teams two years ago during a World Cup qualifier.”



America supports Albania's decision to expel Iranians. "We must unite"
20/12/2018
https://www.alarabiya.net/arab-and-world/american-elections-2016/2018/12/20/بومبيو-يجب-على-العالم-أن-يتحد-لمعاقبة-ايران

The first article on 21 December 2018, posted at 01:02 a.m., titled “Trump thanks Albanian PM for expelling Iranian diplomats,” stated: “U.S. President Donald Trump expressed his gratitude to Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama for expelling two Iranian diplomats from the country, accused of planning terrorist attacks”, adding: “According to

the Associated Press, Trump said in a letter to the Albanian Prime Minister on Thursday: We thank you for your steadfast efforts to stand up to Iran and confront its destabilizing activities and its efforts to silence dissent around the world". The article further reports that the U.S. Embassy in Tirana posted the letter, dated 14 December, on its Facebook page on Thursday, stating that the expulsion of the diplomats "reflects our joint efforts to show the Iranian government that its terrorist activities in Europe and around the world will have severe consequences". The article then summarized reactions to the decision from Iranian representatives on the one hand, and from MEK representatives on the other. This is followed by a brief context, citing the NCRI:

> Last April, Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama announced the foiling of a terrorist plot by the clerical regime against the PMOI/MEK... In 2016 and 2017, the NCRI exposed the role of Gholamhossein Mohammadnia, Iran's ambassador to Albania, and Mostafa Roudaki, the head of the Iranian intelligence station in Albania, both senior officials in the Ministry of Intelligence... Mohammadnia was the Ministry of Intelligence representative in the delegation led by Foreign Minister Javad Zarif during the nuclear talks that led to the Iran nuclear deal.

This is the first instance in which Al Arabiya explicitly refers to the JCPOA nuclear deal, also known as the 5+1 agreement (the five permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany), from which the United States withdrew in May 2018.



Trump thanks Albanian PM for expelling Iranian diplomats
20/12/2018; 01.02 a.m.
https://www.alarabiya.net/iran/2018/12/21/ترمب-يشكر-رئيس-وزراء-ألبانيا-لطرده-دبلوماسيين-ايرانيين

At 02:34 a.m. the same date, Al Arabiya published another article titled "Albania expels Iranian diplomats for threatening security", reporting:

> Albania announced that it had expelled two Iranian diplomats on suspicion of illegal activities that jeopardized the country's security," and noting - via an Albanian Foreign Ministry spokesperson quoted by the Associated Press "that the diplomats were expelled for 'violating their diplomatic status". The article then situated the event within a broader European security context, stating: "In recent months, Tehran's relations with various European capitals have been strained, as a result of accusations that Iranian diplomats were involved in bombing and assassination attempts against its opponents... France and Denmark both claim to have foiled plots by Iranian diplomats and security personnel to attack Tehran's opponents in their countries... In this context, Germany arrested an Iranian diplomat in Bavaria who was working in Austria. He is Assadollah Assadi, who is accused of supplying explosives to a couple to attack a MEK rally in the suburbs of Paris last May... Denmark also arrested a Norwegian citizen of Iranian origin suspected of attempting to assassinate members of the Arab Struggle Movement for the Liberation of Ahwaz (ASMLA) in Denmark.



Albania expels Iranian diplomats for threatening security
20/12/2018; 02.34 a.m.
https://www.alarabiya.net/arab-and-world/2018/12/21/البحرين-ترحب-بقرار-ألبانيا-طرد-دبلوماسيين-ايرانيين

Also, on 21 December 2018, the first reaction from Arab countries in the region appeared in a 12: 36 p.m. article title “Bahrain welcomes Albania's decision to expel Iranian diplomats”, reporting that Bahraini Ministry of Foreign Affairs “affirmed its support for Albania's decision and expressed its hope for continued international efforts to counter Iran's policies of supporting extremism and terrorism, and to compel Iran to respect the principles of international relations, good-neighborly relations, the sovereignty and independence of other countries, and non-interference in their internal affairs, in order to preserve security and peace in the region and the world”.



Bahrain welcomes Albania's decision to expel Iranian diplomats
21/12/2018
https://www.alarabiya.net/arab-and-world/2018/12/21/البحرين-ترحب-بقرار-ألبانيا-طرد-دبلوماسيين-ايرانيين

The second reaction from the region came from Saudi Arabia. It was reported by Al Arabiya 22 December 2018 in an article titled "Saudi Arabia backing Albania's decision to expel Iranian diplomats", noting:

> According to an official source at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia approved the measures taken by the Republic of Albania to expel two Iranian diplomats, one of whom was the Iranian ambassador, for their involvement in terrorist activities that harm the security of Albania… The source added that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has repeatedly emphasized the danger of Iran's support for terrorism and the need for the international community respond firmly.



Saudi Arabia backing Albania's decision to expel Iranian diplomats
22/12/2018
https://www.alarabiya.net/saudi-today/2018/12/22/تأييد-سعودي-لقرار-ألبانيا-بطرد-دبلوماسيين-ايرانيين

Al Arabiya's coverage of Albania in 2019 again opens with Saudi Arabia – this time with a focus on developing bilateral cooperation. The 6 February 2019 article, "King Salman witnesses signing of two cooperation agreements with Albania", reports Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama's visit to Riyadh and his meeting with King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud— the most important bilateral engagement between the two countries. The article reports:

> King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and the Prime Minister of the Republic of Albania, Edi Rama, today witnessed the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding and two agreements between the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Government of the Republic of Albania… An agreement was also signed to avoid double taxation and prevent tax evasion with regard to taxes on income and capital. It was signed by the Saudi Minister of Finance Mohammed bin Abdullah Al-Jadaan, and by the Albanian Minister of Economy and Finance Anila Denaj... A cooperation agreement in the field of air services was signed by the Saudi Minister of Transport and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the General Authority of Civil Aviation, Nabil bin Mohammed Al-Amoudi, and the Albanian Ambassador to the Kingdom, Sami Shiba.









King Selman witnesses signing of two cooperation agreements with Albania
06/02/2019
https://www.alarabiya.net/saudi-today/2019/02/06/الملك-سلمان-يشهد-توقيع-اتفاقيتي-تعاون-مع-ألبانيا

Following this article, on February 26, 2019, Al Arabiya published a cultural report titled “In pictures: Donald Trump star of an art gallery in Albania”, sourced from AFP covering an exhibition by Albanian painter Avni Delvina. The article notes: “The Donald’

exhibition in Tirana includes about 50 drawings inspired by Trump, including one of U.S. First Lady Melania Trump sitting in a pose similar to the Mona Lisa," adding: "In much of Albania, pro-American sentiment is widespread, and American flags are commonplace… After Trump's victory in the 2016 US presidential election, a town in central Albania named a street in his honor". It is worth noting here that cultural news from Albania occupies very little space in Al Arabiya's coverage during the study period and is drawn mainly from AFP, often with a sensational angle, as in this case.



In pictures… Donald Trump star of an art gallery in Albania
26/02/2019
https://www.alarabiya.net/last-page/2019/02/26/بالصور-دونالد-ترمب-نجم-معرض-فني-في-ألبانيا-

MEK related coverage returned in July 2019 with the movement's high-profile annual conference in Tirana. Attended by American and European political elites, the event reinforced Albania's symbolic role in the opposition to the Iranian regime. The presence of figures such as Rudy Giuliani and Maryam Rajavi further amplified the narrative of Albania as a beacon of democratic resistance.

On 12 and 13 July 2019 Al Arabiya published three articles on the event: “Albania hosts MEK conference in the presence of Trump lawyers” (12/07/2019; 10:22 a.m.), “Albania… International figures support Iranians to topple regime” (12/07/2019; 09:24 p.m.), and “MEK calls for Iran to be restored from ‘Velayat-e faqih’” (13/07/2019).

In the 12 July 2019 article “International figures support Iranians to topple regime”, Al Arabiya reports: “International political and parliamentary figures participating in the annual conference of the Iranian opposition group Mujahedin-e Khalq (MEK), held in the Albanian capital, Tirana, on Friday, called for support for the Iranian people's movement demanding the overthrow of the regime”. The article then cites excerpts from speeches, starting with the most prominent speaker, Rudy Giuliani - lawyer for U.S. President Donald Trump and former Mayor of New York - who stated in his address to the conference that “the Iranian regime continues to oppress its people” and that “this oppressive theocratic regime has committed crimes at home and abroad, and we must help the Iranians transfer power”. The article continues: former U.S. Senator Joseph Lieberman said that the world must not allow the Iranian regime to continue its massacres, repression; Matthew Offord, a Conservative MP in the British Parliament, declared in his remarks that “the Iranian regime must be held accountable for its massacres and repression”, urging Britain to adopt a “decisive policy toward the Iranian regime”. The article also quotes Michèle Alliot-Marie, a member of the European Parliament and former French Minister of the Interior, who stated that “the Iranian people lead the change, but the international community wants to help them achieve freedom”; and General James Conway, the former commander of the U.S. Marines in Iraq, emphasized that the correct policy is one that shortens the regime's lifespan – a goal that, he argued, will be advanced by the current U.S. administration’s “maximum pressure policy against

the Iranian regime". The article also quotes Maryam Rajavi, MEK leader and NCRI president, asserting that "the regime is mired in a crisis of warmongering, terrorism, and international sanctions and is experiencing a period of collapse."



Albania… International figures support Iranians to topple regime
12/07/2019
https://www.alarabiya.net/iran/2019/07/12/ألبانيا-شخصيات-دولية-تدعم-الايرانيين-لاسقاط-النظام

In the article of 13 July 2019, "MEK calls for Iran to be restored from 'Velayat-e faqih'", Al Arabiya reports: "The Iranian opposition group, the Mujahedin-e Khalq (MEK), held the second day of its annual conference in the Albanian capital, Tirana, on Saturday. The conference was attended by political and parliamentary figures under the slogan 'We Will Reclaim Iran' from the control of the Velayat-e Faqih regime". The article proceeds to quote several speakers, including former Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper, who stated in his speech: "The Iranian regime has recently undertaken military actions in the Gulf. We must confront it with uncompromising force" adding that "there are no moderates in Iran". The article then highlights the participation of two Albanian political figures: Pandeli Majko, former Prime Minister of Albania, who said:

“All parties, both government and opposition, welcome the presence of the Mujahedin-e Khalq (MEK) on Albanian soil as guests”; and Fatmir Mehdiu, the head of Albanian Republican Party, who “addressed the conference, confirming that Albania expelled the Iranian ambassador last year due to his involvement in planning terrorist attacks against the MEK”. The article concludes with excerpts from the speech of Salman Al-Ansari, head of the Saudi-American Public Relations Committee, a nongovernmental organization based in Washington, D.C., who stated: “The voice of the Iranian people, with all their sects and ethnicities, cannot be silenced, as they are the most affected by the policies of the mullahs’ regime” and added “this regime has supported the most terrorist groups with money, weapons, and shelter, such as Al-Qaeda, the extremist Muslim Brotherhood, Hezbollah, the Houthis, dozens of armed militias, and tens of thousands of mercenaries and sleeper cells in most countries around the world”.



MEK calls for Iran to be restored from ‘Velayat-e faqih’
13/07/2019
https://www.alarabiya.net/iran/2019/07/13/مجاهدي-خلق-تدعو-لاستعادة-ايران-من-ولاية-الفقيه-

Four months later, the issue of the MEK and Iran appears again in Al Arabiya's headlines with an article dated October 23, 2019, titled "Albania thwarts planned terror operation devised in Iran", sourced from AFP, which reports: "Police Chief Ardi Veliu said on Wednesday that the external wing of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, known as the Quds Force, operated an 'active terrorist cell' targeting MEK members in Albania. He did not say what the plot involved or whether police had made any arrests" adding that "another attack planned by Iranian government agents targeting MEK in Albania was thwarted in March".



Albania thwarts planned terror operation devised in Iran
23/10/2019
. https://www.alarabiya.net/arab-and-world/2019/10/23/ألبانيا-تحبط-عملية-ارهابية-خطط-لها-في-ايران-

On the domestic front, Albania faced a series of natural and social challenges, including a significant earthquake in 2019 that displaced hundreds and tested emergency response capacities. Despite these hardships, the media portrayed the population as resilient, bolstered by international support and EU solidarity.



The outcome of the Albanian earthquake… 105 injured and 100 aftershocks

Many Albanians in the capital, Tirana, and the coastal city of Durrës have not returned to their homes after a 5.8-magnitude earthquake injured 105 people and destroyed hundreds of homes… Prime Minister Edi Rama also said he had received phone calls from his Italian, French, German, and other European counterparts offering assistance. Johannes Hahn, the EU's Budget and Administration Commissioner and former enlargement official, tweeted, "The EU immediately offered assistance".

22/09/2019

https://www.alarabiya.net/arab-and-world/2019/09/22/حصيلة-زلزال-ألبانيا-105-جرحى-و100-هزة-ارتدادية-

A bizarre but widely covered incident involving a restaurant owner attacking foreign tourists also sparked national debate around hospitality, reputation, and the rule of law, prompting apologies from the highest levels of government and reflecting the sensitivity of Albania’s international image.



Video story of the strangest fight between a restaurant owner and celebrity customers

There's not just one video, but more than 10 of them, found on YouTube and social media, in addition to what local and international media outlets broadcast on their websites, covering a strange incident between an Albanian restaurant owner and customers who were disappointed with his food and service, and left, refusing to pay. However, Mihal Kokëdhima, 51, defied them and took action that later reached a court, which held a special hearing to decide on the matter… Because of this, Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama himself took to the stage, along with another minister, to apologize to those who had entered the restaurant last Thursday for lunch overlooking a beach near the ancient fortress of Porto Palermo in the far south. Albanian, and inside and outside, what happened was what happened…

21/08/2019

https://www.alarabiya.net/social-media/2019/08/21/قصة-بالفيديو-لأغرب-خناقة-بين-صاحب-مطعم-وزبائن-مشاهير

In contrast, 2020 and 2021 witnessed a decline in reporting. Only a handful of articles appeared each year, with media attention shifting globally due to the *COVID-19 pandemic*. When Albania was mentioned, it was in relation to *Islamic affairs cooperation* or developments involving the *Iranian opposition* **(**Al Arabiya, 2020; 2021).

Questions of ethnic identity and nationalism resurfaced, notably through cultural flashpoints like Dua Lipa's "Greater Albania" post, which stirred debate across the Balkans. This moment captured how digital diasporas and celebrity influence can reignite sensitive historical tensions and amplify identity politics across borders.



A British singer ignites the Balkans with a Tweet and a map… "Proud of my ethnicity"
22/07/2020
https://www.alarabiya.net/social-media/2020/07/22/مغنية-بريطانية-تشعل-البلقان-بتغريدة-وخريطة-فخورة-بعرقي-

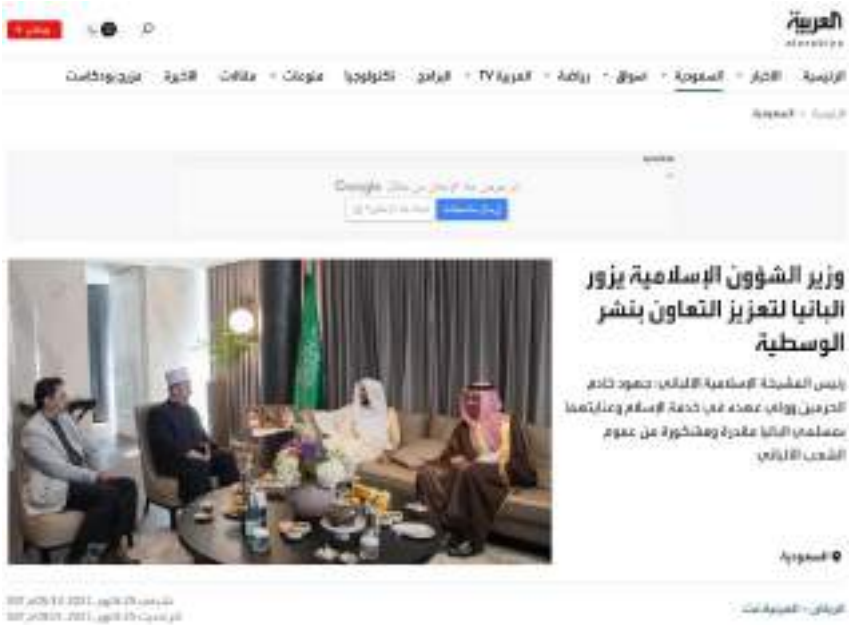
In those headline trends, we also find lesser-known stories—like the rise in demand for donkey milk as a natural remedy during COVID.



Donkey's milk… between corona prevention and cosmetics
18/12/2020
https://www.alarabiya.net/last-page/2020/12/18/اقبال-متزايد-على-حليب-الحمير-في-ألبانيا-في-ظلّ-الوباء-

In the article of October 25, 2021, titled "Minister of Islamic Affairs Visits Albania to Enhance Cooperation by Spreading Moderation", Al Arabiya reports:

The Minister of Islamic Affairs, Dawah and Guidance of Saudi Arabia, Dr. Abdullatif Al-Sheikh, stressed that his visit to the Republic of Albania comes in implementation of the directives of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques and His Highness the Crown Prince, who emphasize the importance of strengthening communication with scholars and workers in the fields of Islamic work to spread moderate Islam, pointing out that it comes as a culmination of strong relations with the Republic of Albania, which are based on the desire to strengthen partnership in cooperation in the field of serving Islam, spreading the approach of moderation and confronting extremism and extremism… The Head of the 'Muslim Community of Albania' praised the pioneering work undertaken by the Saudi government in serving Islam and Muslims everywhere, especially in Europe and among Muslim minorities. He extended his sincere thanks to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, and His Royal Highness the Crown Prince - may God protect them - for the great material and moral support provided by the Kingdom to Muslims in Albania through the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre and the Saudi Fund for Development. He asked God to place this in the balance of their good deeds and to continue the progress, advancement and prosperity of the Kingdom.



The Minister of Islamic Affairs Visits Albania to Enhance Cooperation by Spreading Moderation
25/10/2021
https://www.alarabiya.net/saudi-today/2021/10/25/وزير-الشؤون-الاسلامية-يزور-لألبانيا-لتعزيز-التعاون-في-نشر-الوسطية

By this time, Albania had become a key base for Iranian opposition movements, particularly the MEK, with events such as the Free Iran 2021 conference and the Hamid Nouri trial drawing international attention. These moments highlighted Albania's transformation into a hub for exiled political resistance and international legal advocacy—a shift that reflects deeper alignments with Western democratic actors and values.

Thus, in the July 11, 2021 article titled "Iranian opposition conference in Albania discusses regime survival crisis", Al Arabiya reports:

> The People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI/MEK) opened its annual general conference on Saturday with sharp criticism of Iranian President-elect Ebrahim Raisi", adding "The annual conference of the Iranian opposition continues in Albania on Sunday, with the participation of international political figures via video conference, most notably former US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo… Pompeo said in a video address that Raisi will play the role of Khamenei's "heir," reiterating the demand to hold him accountable for the "massacres" of 1988, adding that the regime is at its weakest point in decades… Pompeo warned Europe against negotiating with Raisi, saying that Any dealing with Raisi would be like dealing with a mass murderer." … Prominent speakers at the three-day conference include former British Parliament Speaker John Bercow, former Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper, and former French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner.



Iranian opposition conference in Albania discusses regime survival crisis
11/07/2021
https://www.alarabiya.net/iran/2021/07/11/مؤتمر-المعارضة-الايرانية-في-ألبانيا-يبحث-أزمة-بقاء-النظام

In the article dated 10 November 2021, titled “The massacre of 1988 in Iran... Nouri trial moved to Albania for two weeks”, Al Arabiya reports: “The trial of Hamid Nouri, one of the perpetrators of the 1988 massacre of prisoners in Iran, is scheduled to move to the city of Durrës, Albania, today, Wednesday, to hear witnesses from the Iranian ‘MEK’ (People’s Mujahedin Organization of Iran), for a period of two weeks”. Regarding the

1988 massacre, Al Arabiya reports: “During this massacre, 30,000 political prisoners, most of them members of the Mujahedin-e Khalq Organization (MEK), were executed based on a fatwa from then-Supreme Leader Ruhollah Khomeini”. Explaining the reason for relocating Nouri’s trial to Albania, Al Arabiya adds: “The Swedish court trying Nouri will hear the testimony of seven members of the MEK present at Camp Ashraf 3 in the Albanian town of Manza, as key witnesses to the massacre… These witnesses spent many years in various Iranian prisons, particularly ‘Gohardasht’ Prison, and witnessed Hamid Nouri’s crimes during the 1988 massacre.” It further notes: “The court trying Nouri explained that the move from Sweden to Albania was due to the special importance of the testimony of these seven individuals’ testimony.”



The massacre of 1988 in Iran… Nuri trial moved to Albania for two weeks
10/11/2021
https://www.alarabiya.net/iran/2021/11/10/مجزرة-1988-بإيران-نقل-محاكمة-نوري-الى-ألبانيا-لأسبوعين

The most pronounced surge in media attention occurred in 2022, with 20 *separate* articles published. This sharp increase was directly linked to a major *cyberattack attributed to Iran*, which targeted Albania’s national infrastructure and resulted in the

severing of diplomatic ties between the two countries (Al Arabiya, 2022). The incident garnered strong condemnation from the *United States*, *NATO*, and *several Gulf states*, including *Saudi Arabia*, and led to a wave of coverage related to *cybersecurity*, *regional security*, and *digital warfare*. Albania was portrayed as both a *victim of state-sponsored cyber aggression* and a *strategic partner* in Western-led efforts to counter Iranian influence.

Based on the articles published mainly between July-September 2022, the dominant narrative regarding Albania's geopolitical positioning centers around a sharp deterioration in its diplomatic relations with Iran, amidst a growing cyber-conflict. The cyberattack on July 15, attributed to Iranian state-sponsored actors, targeted Albanian government digital infrastructre with the aim of paralyzing public services and undermining national security. Following a comprehensive investigation supported by the U.S. and NATO, Prime Minister Edi Rama announced the severance of diplomatic ties with Tehran—a rare international precedent prompted solely by a cyberattack (Albania National News Agency, 2022). The government's swift decision was justified by what Rama described as unequivocal evidence of Iran's orchestration and sponsorship of the attack, aimed at disrupting a scheduled opposition group conference involving the Iranian dissident organization, Mujahedin-e-Khalq (MEK), based in Albania since 2013.

The cyber offensive triggered a wave of reactions. The United States imposed targeted sanctions on Iran’s Ministry of Intelligence and Security and its minister, Esmail Khatib, citing their role in "cyber espionage and ransomware attacks" (U.S. Treasury Department, 2022). NATO and the European Union issued statements in solidarity with Albania, condemning the attacks and pledging support for strengthening Albania’s cyber defence capabilities. The NATO Council even hinted at the potential invocation of Article

5, underscoring the severity with which the attack was perceived (NATO Council, 2022). Moreover, the case became a platform for broader critiques of Iran's international cyber behaviour. Microsoft and Mandiant reports detailed how the cyberattacks were part of Iran's longer-term campaign involving groups like "Phosphorus" and "Muddy Water," which have been engaged in global cyber operations since 2018. These groups employed ransomware and espionage tactics targeting not only Albania but also other Western institutions (Microsoft Threat Intelligence, 2022).

These developments, beginning in July 2022, were accompanied by dense Al Arabiya coverage, peaking between 7–12 September 2022 with twelve separate items. Given the significance of the episode—Albania's first break in diplomatic relations with another state since the fall of communism in 1990—the following section presents a timeline of articles related to these events from July to December 2022.



After an American warning… Albania cancels an Iranian opposition conference

The Albanian government has postponed the Free Iran conference, scheduled to be held in the capital on July 23 and 24, until further notice due to security concerns. The US Embassy in Albania warned members of the US Congress and some former ministers who had arrived in Tirana of a potential threat targeting the annual Iranian opposition conference… Furthermore, the Albanian Anti-Corruption and Organized Crime Agency raided the homes

of former MEK members residing in Albania last week on suspicion of espionage for Iran, following reports that they had been conducting espionage operations for the Iranian regime.

23/07/2022

https://www.alarabiya.net/iran/2022/07/23/بعد-تحذير-أميركي-ألبانيا-تمنع-عقد-مؤتمر-للمعارضة-الايرانية



US company suspects Iran involved in Albania cyber attack

A leading US cybersecurity firm revealed on Thursday that a cyberattack that temporarily shut down several Albanian government digital services and websites in mid-July was likely the work of pro-Iranian hackers seeking to disrupt a conference of an Iranian opposition group in Albania… In its report, 'Mandiant' expressed "reasonable confidence" that the perpetrators of the cyberattack carried out the attack in support of Tehran's anti-dissident efforts, based on several factors, including the timing, the content of the social media channel used to claim responsibility, and similarities in the malware's code to those long used to target Persian and Arabic speakers.

04/08/2022

https://www.alarabiya.net/iran/2022/08/04/شركة-أميركية-ترجح-ضلوع-ايران-في-هجوم-الكتروني-بألبانيا



After a cyber-attack… Albania severs ties with Iran

Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama announced on Wednesday that his country had decided to sever diplomatic relations with Tehran and ordered the departure of Iranian diplomats and embassy staff within 24 hours, following an investigation into a cyberattack last July… He also accused Tehran of being behind a "massive cyberattack against the Albanian government's digital infrastructure, aimed at destroying it" on July 15, adding that "a thorough investigation has provided us with unequivocal evidence" that the attacks were "planned and sponsored" by Tehran… It is noteworthy that since 2013, Albania has agreed to receive members of the Mujahedin-e Khalq (MEK) in exile, at the request of Washington and the United Nations, which Tehran considers a "terrorist" group.

07/09/2022

https://www.alarabiya.net/iran/2022/09/07/ألبانيا-تأمر-الدبلوماسيين-الايرانيين-بمغادرة-البلاد-خلال-24-ساعة



Albanian MP: We have evidence confirming Iran's involvement in the cyber attack

An Albanian MP confirmed to Al Arabiya on Wednesday that his country has evidence of Iran's involvement in the cyber-attack, confirming that Albanian security services have identified the Iranian groups that carried out the cyber-attack… He said that the Iranian cyber-attack was aimed at destroying Albania's digital infrastructure, adding that "the Iranian regime is disturbed by our country's positions against it," calling on Iran to change its behavior and support for terrorism worldwide… Meanwhile, Britain announced on Wednesday that its National Cyber Security Centre had identified elements linked to the Iranian state as "almost certainly" responsible for a cyber-attack targeting the Albanian government in July… British Foreign Secretary James Cleverly said in a statement, "Iran's reckless actions have shown a blatant disregard for the Albanian people and have severely restricted their access to essential public services. Britain supports our valued partner and NATO ally. We join Albania and other allies in exposing Iran's unacceptable actions."… Albania severed diplomatic ties with Iran on Wednesday and expelled its diplomats after a July cyberattack it blamed on Iran, a move supported by Washington, which vowed to retaliate for the attack on its NATO ally.

07/09/2022

https://www.alarabiya.net/iran/2022/09/07/نائب-ألباني-لدينا-أدلة-على-تورط-ايران-في-الهجوم-السيبراني



Iranian diplomats destroy documents before leaving Albania

Iranian diplomats burned documents early Thursday morning, hours before leaving Albania, after it severed diplomatic relations with Iran, accusing the Islamic Republic of launching a cyberattack in July… A Reuters witness saw a man inside the embassy throwing papers into a rusty barrel, as flames lit up the walls of the three-story embassy… Washington, Albania's closest ally, also blamed Iran for the attack and promised to "take further action to hold Iran accountable for actions that threaten the security of a U.S. ally."… National Security Council spokeswoman Adrienne Watson said in a statement that NATO allies would make their own sovereign decisions, including the possible invocation of Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty… Article 5 stipulates that any armed attack against one or more members of the alliance, whether in Europe or North America, is an attack against all.

08/09/2022

https://www.alarabiya.net/iran/2022/09/08/دبلوماسيون-ايرانيون-يحرقون-وثائق-قبل-ساعات-من-مغادرتهم-ألبانيا



After the Iranian cyber-attack… NATO supports Albania

NATO members on Thursday condemned the recent cyberattack targeting Albania, which the governments of Washington and Tirana blamed on Iran… The NATO Council, which includes representatives of the alliance's 30 member states, said in a statement, "We strongly condemn such malicious cyber activities aimed at destabilizing an ally, harming its security, and disrupting the daily lives of citizens."… He added, "NATO and its allies are supporting Albania in strengthening its cyber defense capabilities to resist and repel such malicious cyber activities in the future".

08/09/2022

https://www.alarabiya.net/iran/2022/09/08/بعد-الهجوم-الالكتروني-الايراني-الناتو-يدعم-ألبانيا



Senator Menendez: Iran must be punished for its attack on Albania

In light of the Iranian regime's widespread cyberattacks on Albania and the latter's severing of all ties with the Tehran regime, Democratic Senator Bob Menendez, chairman of the US House Foreign Affairs Committee, said, "Iran's cyberattacks against Albania must be viewed

in a broader context, not as isolated incidents."… He continued, "Iran is using this offensive tactic to support its patterns of coercion, pressure, and aggression. This is unacceptable and cannot go unchecked."

09/09/2022

https://www.alarabiya.net/arab-and-world/iraq-elections/2022/09/09/السيناتور-الديموقراطي-بوب-مينينديز-يجب-معاقبة-ايران-بسبب-هجومها-على-ألبانيا



Saudi Arabia condemns terrorist cyber-attacks against Albania

The Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed the Kingdom's condemnation on Friday of the "cyberterrorist attacks" that targeted Albania's digital infrastructure… In this context, Saudi Arabia stressed the importance of strengthening and coordinating international efforts to maintain peace in cyberspace, developing specialized capabilities to ensure continued efforts to counter cyber threats, and taking decisive action to combat these threats.

09/09/2022

https://www.alarabiya.net/saudi-today/2022/09/09/السعودية-تدين-الهجمات-السيبرانية-الارهابية-ضد-ألبانيا



U.S. imposes sanctions on Iran over cyberattack on Albania

The United States announced sanctions on Friday against Iran's Ministry of Intelligence and Security and its Minister, Esmail Khatib, for their connection to an unprecedented cyberattack targeting Albania and their involvement in cyber intrusion activities against the United States and its allies… US Deputy Treasury Secretary Brian Nelson stated, "Iran's cyberattack on Albania disregards the norms of responsible state behavior in peacetime cyberspace, which include refraining from harming critical infrastructure that provides services to the public."… In addition to targeting facilities and infrastructure, the hackers were responsible for leaking documents from the Tirana government and personal data on Albanian citizens… "We will not allow increasingly aggressive Iranian cyberattacks to target the United States, our allies, and our partners," Nelson said.

09/09/2022

. https://www.alarabiya.net/arab-and-world/american-elections-2016/2022/09/09/أميركا-تفرض-عقوبات-على-ايران-بسبب-هجوم-الكتروني-على-ألبانيا



Iran condemns US sanctions over cyberattack on Albania

Tehran condemned on Saturday the new sanctions imposed by the United States on the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS) for allegedly being behind a cyberattack on Albania in July… Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani expressed the ministry's "strong condemnation of the US Treasury Department's move to repeatedly impose sanctions on the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence and Security and its minister," Esmail Khatib… Kanaani said that the US's rush to take action against Iran "by resorting to the same false and unproven accusation clearly demonstrates that the architect of this scenario is not the Albanian government, but the US government."… Relations between Tehran and Tirana have been strained for years due to Albania's hosting of the Mujahedin-e Khalq (MEK), a group designated as a "terrorist organization" by the Islamic Republic, which it accuses of being behind numerous attacks and bombings.

10/09/2022

https://www.alarabiya.net/iran/2022/09/10/ايران-تدين-عقوبات-أميركية-على-خلفية-هجوم-الكتروني-استهدف-ألبانيا



Microsoft exposes the crimes of the Iranian hacking group "Phosphorus"

Following Iran's cyberattack on Albania, which cost Tehran its reputation by severing ties with Tirana and imposing new sanctions on the United States, attention has turned to Iran's cyberattack activities. In this context, Microsoft's Cyber Threat Team published a report on ransomware attacks or cyber extortion carried out by an Iranian-affiliated hacking group… In this context, Microsoft detected a ransomware attack known as "DEV-0270," which traces its origins to the Phosphorus hacking group, an Iranian-affiliated hacking group… DEV-0270 is a high-severity vulnerability that allows hackers to encrypt and control a victim's data using Windows BitLocker, a Windows feature that enables users to encrypt data on drives using 128- or 256-bit keys. Extortion Came from Karaj, West of Tehran… The hacking group known as Phosphorus is a branch of the Iranian regime-backed Advanced Persistent Threat (APT) group. Microsoft has previously reported on the malicious activities of this extortionist group several times… The group carried out similar attacks last year, collecting data from more than 900 servers in the United States, Europe, and Israel. To do this, they exploited the CVE-2018-13379 vulnerability in the Fortinet FortiOS SSL VPN product using BitLocker and encrypted it.

10/09/2022

https://www.alarabiya.net/iran/2022/09/10/مايكروسوفت-تكشف-جرائم-مجموعة-فوسفورس-الايرانية-للقرصنة



Albania announces second cyberattack from Iran

The Albanian Ministry of Interior announced on Saturday that one of its border systems had been subjected to a cyberattack by the same Iranian source that launched a previous attack that prompted the country to sever diplomatic relations with Iran… Prime Minister Edi Rama tweeted on Saturday, "Another cyberattack by the same aggressors, already detected and denounced by Albania's allies and friendly countries, was seen last night on the comprehensive information management system," adding that officials were coordinating defense action with allies.

10/09/2022

https://www.alarabiya.net/arab-and-world/2022/09/10/ألبانيا-تعلن-تعرضها-لهجوم-الكتروني-ثان-من-ايران



Senator Earnest: Biden administration did not impose deterrent sanctions against Iran

US Republican Senator Joni Ernst condemned the Iranian regime for its repeated cyberattacks on Albania. She tweeted, "I strongly condemn the Iranian cyberattack on our NATO ally,

Albania."… She continued, "The Biden administration's reluctance to impose tougher sanctions on Iran has done nothing to deter the regime from continuing to attack our partners and allies".

10/09/2022

https://www.alarabiya.net/iran/2022/09/10/السيناتور-أرنست-ادارة-بايدن-لم-تفرض-عقوبات-رادعة-ضد-ايران



Who are the IRGC cyber commanders? Exciting details

Following the cyberattack on Albania last July, Tirana severed diplomatic relations with Tehran, and the United States imposed sanctions on the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence and Security and its Minister, Esmail Khatib… It turns out that these attacks were carried out by four Iranian-backed hacker groups, some of which were operated outside Iran's borders, according to a report published by Microsoft… These groups also used access previously used by the "Eurobeam" hacker group affiliated with the Ministry of Intelligence and carried out several cyberattacks over a period of more than a year… According to Microsoft, Iran carried out the recent attacks in response to severe cyberattacks against it. On July 25, the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence announced increased cooperation with the IRGC's Intelligence Organization. Recent repeated cyberattacks appear to have led to this cooperation… Last year, a cyber group hacked Tirana Airport in a project called "Sayyad."…

12/09/2022

https://www.alarabiya.net/iran/2022/09/12/من-هم-القادة-السيبرانيين-للحرس-الثوري-الايراني؟-تفاصيل-مثيرة



Lapid: Iran poses a common threat to both Israel and Albania

Israeli Prime Minister's Yair Lapid spokesman, confirmed that Iran poses a "common threat" to both Israel and Albania, adding that Tel Aviv will provide all possible assistance in the effort against Tehran… Ofir Gendelman also announced via his Twitter account on Sunday that Lapid met with his Albanian counterpart, Edi Rama, and agreed to cooperate between the two countries in the cyberspace to confront Iranian cyberattacks… Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama arrived in Israel earlier on Sunday for an official visit that included a meeting with Israeli cyber defense officials, according to a statement from the Israeli Foreign Ministry.

23/10/2022

. https://www.alarabiya.net/arab-and-world/2022/10/23/لابيد-ايران-تشكل-تهديدا-مشتركا-لكل-من-اسرائيل-وألبانيا



10 years in prison for an Iranian convicted of "terrorism" in Albania

> Albania's Special Court for Combating Corruption and Organized Crime found Bijan Poladrag guilty of financing terrorism and membership in a terrorist organization… Poladrag denies the charges and has the right to appeal… He was arrested two years ago on suspicion of spying on members of the Mujahedin-e Khalq (MEK), the Iranian opposition group whose approximately 3,000 members live in exile in Albania.
>
> 15/12/2022
>
> https://www.alarabiya.net/iran/2022/12/15/السجن-10-سنوات-لايراني-أدين-بـ-الارهاب-في-ألبانيا

Reading the articles of Al Arabiya of this period, one may observe that Al Arabiya no longer cites statements from the NCRI or the MEK; in other words, the NCRI and MEK are no longer treated as primary sources. The reports carry only Al Arabiya's newsroom by-line or cite international news agencies such as AFP. Likewise, the articles no longer adopt an enthusiastic tone toward the MEK, which is no longer described as the Iranian opposition in exile; indeed, in some pieces—such as "After a cyber-attack. Albania severs ties with Iran Albanian"—it is stated that "it is noteworthy that since 2013, Albania has agreed to receive members of the Mujahedin-e Khalq (MEK) in exile, at the request of Washington and the United Nations, which Tehran considers a 'terrorist' group." Despite the prevailing scepticism toward Iran, with the advent of the Biden administration on 20 January 2021 efforts began to revive the JCPOA, and in particular to bring the United States back into the agreement. This may also explain why, at the MEK's annual conference in July 2021, the most prominent figure was former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, while there was no participation by any Democratic figure from U.S. politics or from the Biden administration. Similarly, in the U.S. Embassy's statement on the cancellation of the 2022 MEK annual conference, the protection of U.S. citizens' security is mentioned, but no details are given about the conference itself and no political statements are made. This suggests that by 2022 the MEK had already lost its significance as the Iranian opposition, as had the thesis of regime change in Iran; consequently, in Al Arabiya's coverage of Albania, calls for regime change in Iran disappear.

It is noteworthy that in the article "After an American warning… Albania cancels an Iranian opposition conference," Al Arabiya writes: "the Albanian Anti-Corruption and Organized Crime Agency raided the homes of former MEK members residing in Albania last week on suspicion of espionage for Iran, following reports that they had been conducting espionage operations for the Iranian regime." The fact that MEK members are accused of spying for Iran—even against the MEK in Albania—casts doubt on the organization's cohesion and thus on its credibility. This indicates that, as in the United States, Gulf Arab countries such as Saudi Arabia no longer support the MEK as the Iranian opposition or as an alternative for regime change in Iran—the organization is losing its relevance. Even though the United States did not rejoin the JCPOA and the cyberattack against Albania was followed by the reimposition of sanctions on Iran—now led by hard-liner President Ebrahim Raisi—calls for regime change in Iran diminished and nearly disappeared. One year later, in March 2023, Iran and Saudi Arabia agreed—through Chinese mediation—to restore diplomatic relations. From late 2022 onward, MEK- and Iran-related themes vanish entirely from Al Arabiya's coverage of Albania, while the principal themes become the development of Albania's relations with Middle Eastern countries, especially Saudi Arabia, or Albania's EU integration—a trend that continues through 2023–2024.

Indeed, Albania's relations with Middle Eastern states—which began to gain new momentum following Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama's meeting with Saudi Arabia's King Salman bin Abdulaziz—had, by mid-2022, started to translate into concrete projects and investments worth hundreds of millions of dollars. Thus, in an article of July 28, 2022, Al Arabiya reports:

> Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama said that the Saudi Public Investment Fund is exploring investment opportunities in Albania worth between $200 and $300 million… During an expanded meeting with Saudi Crown Prince and Deputy Prime Minister Mohammed bin

Salman bin Abdulaziz in the Greek capital, Athens, on Wednesday, he expressed his appreciation for the Kingdom's decision to provide $50 million in support to the Republic of Albania… During the meeting, the two sides reviewed the friendship and mutual respect between the two countries and brotherly peoples. They also discussed strengthening bilateral cooperation in various fields and ways to support and develop them. Regional and international developments and the efforts being made in this regard were also discussed, according to the Saudi Press Agency (SPA)… The meeting addressed ways to strengthen the economic partnership between the two brotherly countries, and intensifying cooperation between the Kingdom and Albania in the political sphere, increasing mutual investments, and bilateral coordination on regional and international issues of common interest.



Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund discusses 300 million investment opportunities in Albania

28/07/2022

https://www.alarabiya.net/aswaq/economy/2022/07/28/صندوق-الاستثمارات-العامة-السعودي-يبحث-فرص-استثمار-في-ألبانيا-بـ-300-مليون-دولار

The 2022 coverage also reflected a broader regional dynamic. The European Union sought to deepen its engagement with the Western Balkans, driven in part by concerns about Russian and Chinese influence and reinforced by the urgency instilled by the war in Ukraine. During the EU-Western Balkans summit in Tirana in December, Albania's strategic value as a secure and stable partner was highlighted (European Council, 2022).

Al Arabiya covered this event with an extended article, titled 'EU seeks closer ties with Balkans against Moscow', in which it reports:

European Union leaders affirmed their determination to revitalize relations with the Western Balkan countries on Tuesday in Tirana, which have become even more essential in light of the war in Ukraine, at a summit between the two groups in Tirana… "The future of our children will be more secure and prosperous with the accession of the Western Balkan countries to the European Union. We are working hard to achieve progress," European Council President Charles Michel said upon arriving at the summit, the first of its kind to be held in a country in the region... For her part, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen stressed that the process of accession of the Western Balkan countries to the European Union has recently gained "new momentum."... Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte said: "In the face of Russian aggression against Ukraine, we must stay together and work together."... Last July, the EU finally began accession negotiations with North Macedonia and Albania (candidates since 2005 and 2014, respectively). Similar talks have also been underway for years with Montenegro and Serbia.

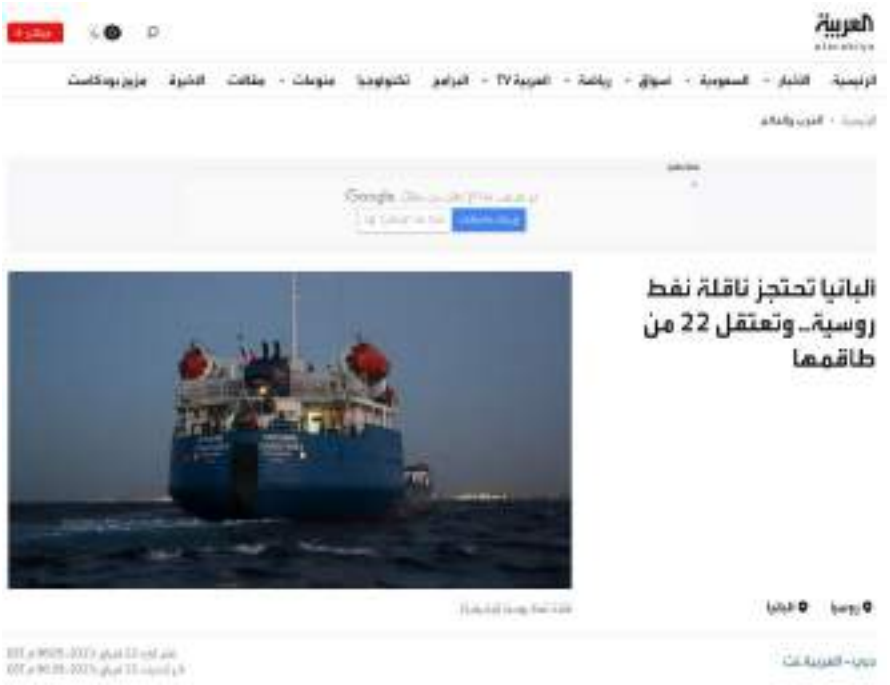


EU seeks closer ties with Balkans against Moscow
06/12/2022
https://www.alarabiya.net/arab-and-world/2022/12/06/الاتحاد-الأوروبي-يسعى-لتوثيق-العلاقات-مع-البلقان-بوجه-موسكو

In summary, 2022 marked a critical turning point for Albania's national security discourse. The convergence of cyber threats, espionage allegations, and regional diplomatic maneuvering positioned Albania not only as a frontline state in a new kind of asymmetric warfare but also as an increasingly important ally within Western strategic frameworks. The year's Al-Arabiya's narrative solidified Albania's commitment to digital sovereignty, Euro-Atlantic integration, and firm opposition to foreign malign influence.

In the period 2023–2024, there is a decline in the number of articles related to Albania in Al Arabiya, with only nine articles published (excluding sports news). The themes of these articles shifted away from security concerns and instead were focused on domestic energy achievements, bilateral relations with Middle Eastern countries, particularly Saudi Arabia, the growing interest in tourism investments, and similar issues. The main topics that Al Arabiya highlighted during this period were the economy, tourism, and foreign investments. The only article not connected to these topics concerned a maritime incident involving the seizure of a Russian oil tanker (Al Arabiya, 2023).

Below, I provide a timeline summary of these articles for the period 2023–2024.



Albania seizes Russian oil tanker. It arrests 22 of its crew

Albanian police have seized a tanker carrying 22,000 tons of oil, presumably from Russia, citing a European Union embargo, the Vechernje Novosti newspaper reported… Quoting Albanian police, the newspaper reported that the Liberian-flagged tanker was detained in the Albanian port of Durres and had left Azerbaijan loaded with oil from another tanker in the Greek port of Kalamata. Twenty-two crew members were arrested and an investigation was opened… The EU embargo on seaborne oil supplies from Russia came into effect on December 5, 2022, and the G7 countries, the EU, and Australia imposed a price cap on Russian oil supplied by sea at $60 per barrel.

22/02/2023

https://www.alarabiya.net/arab-and-world/2023/02/22/ألبانيا-تحتجز-ناقلة-نفط-روسية-وتعتقل-22-من-طاقمها



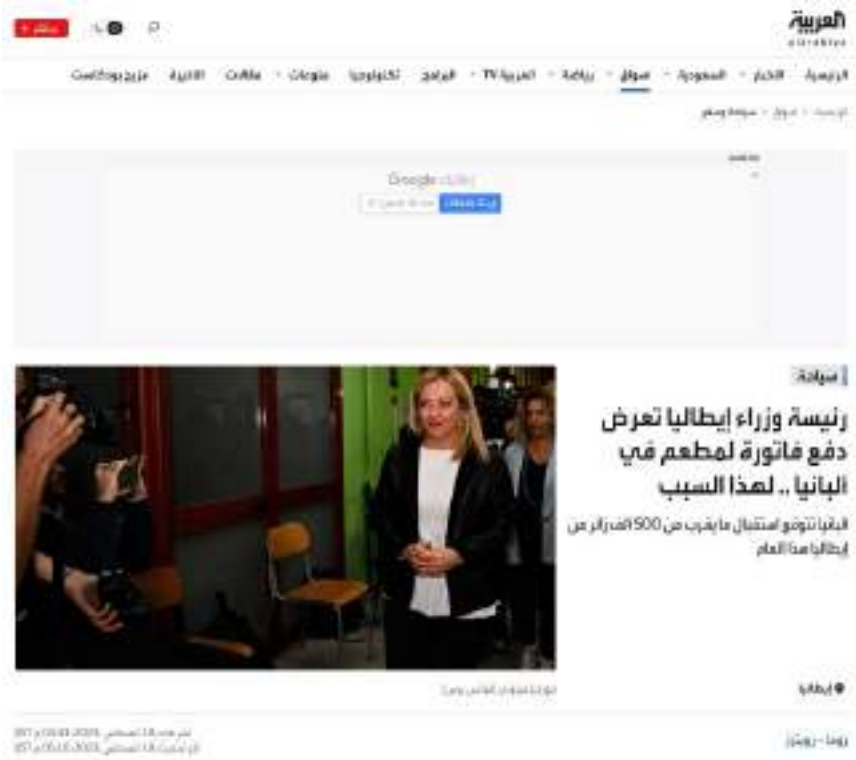
Balluku" for Al-Arabiya: Albania produces 100% of its energy through renewable sources

In an interview with the program "The Future of Energy"[3] the Minister of Infrastructure and Energy of the Republic of Albania, Belinda Baluku, said that Albania is a case study for all of Europe because it produces 100% of its energy from renewable energy sources, so we have not experienced any problems due to Russian gas... Baluku added that "despite our complete reliance on renewable energy, we have become exposed to global energy markets, forcing us to import about 20% of the country's needs... We have an ambitious goal: to increase our production capacity by about 4 terawatts by 2030... Renewable energy may seem like a popular approach, but we are pursuing it to achieve energy security in our country…" She explained that the key element for success is the harmony between public and private sector projects. A simple example of this is that in 2022, we secured 1.7 gigawatts of investment in renewable energy from the private sector, with an economic impact of €1.1 billion. We expect this investment to reach more than €20 billion by 2030.

02/03/2023

https://www.alarabiya.net/aswaq/special-stories/2023/03/02/-100-بالوكو-للعربية-ألبانيا-تنتج-من-طاقتها-عبر-مصادر-متجددة-%D8%9C

[3] "The Future of Energy" (arab.: 'مستقبل الطاقة'): an Al Arabiya program focused on "The Future of Energy" with featured discussions and reporting on Saudi Arabia's transition to clean energy, particularly under its Vision 2030 framework, highlighting investments in solar and wind power, green hydrogen production, and energy efficiency initiatives to reduce carbon emissions.

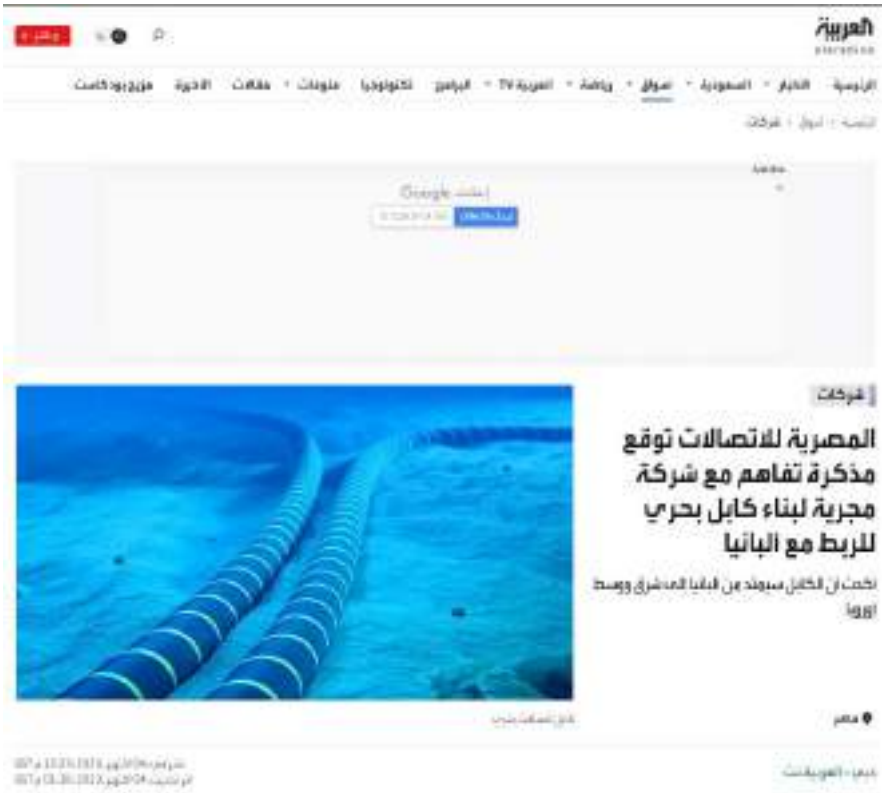


Italian Prime Minister Offers to Pay Restaurant Bill in Albania... Here's Why

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, who visited Albania for the summer vacation like many of her fellow citizens, confirmed that a local restaurant owner took his money after a group of Italians ran away without paying the bill… Meloni and her family spent a few days in Albania this week as guests of Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama, whose country is experiencing a tourism boom this summer as visitors flock to its white-sand beaches and take advantage of its lower prices compared to the rest of Europe… Rama told the Italian daily 'La Stampa' that when news spread that some Italians had run away without paying at a restaurant in the central city of Berat, Meloni stepped in to help… Rama quoted Meloni as telling the Italian ambassador to Albania, "Please go and pay the bill for these idiots"… Rama said in a television interview last week that Albania expects to receive nearly 500,000 visitors from Italy this year.

18/07/2023

https://www.alarabiya.net/aswaq/travel-and-tourism/2023/08/18/رئيسة-وزراء-ايطاليا-تعرض-دفع-فاتورة-لمطعم-في-ألبانيا-لهذا-السبب



Telecom Egypt signs a memorandum of understanding with a Hungarian company to build a submarine cable to connect with Albania.

The Egyptian Ministry of Communications and Information Technology said in a statement that the cable will extend from Albania to Eastern and Central Europe, with ready-made branches to connect other points along the route… The statement quoted Mohamed Nasr, Managing Director and CEO of Telecom Egypt, as saying that the move "paves the way for the addition of a new anchor point and gateway to Europe in Albania, adding flexibility and directing traffic from Africa and Asia to the main telecommunications hubs in Eastern and Central Europe," according to the Arab World News Agency.

04/10/2023

https://www.alarabiya.net/aswaq/companies/2023/10/04/المصرية-للاتصالات-توقع-مذكرة-تفاهم-مع-شركة-مجرية-لبناء-كابل-بحرى-بين-مصر-وألبانيا

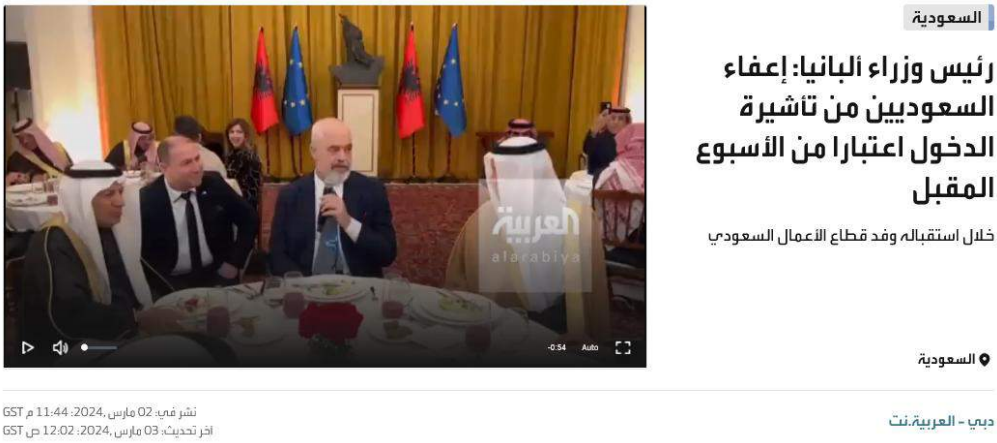


The President of Albania: I promise the Saudis to protect their investments in my country.

President of the Republic of Albania, Bayram Begaj, called on Saudi investors to invest in his country and take advantage of its incentives and investment laws. He promised to be the personal guardian and guarantor of their investments in Albania… This came during his meeting today in the capital, Tirana, with a delegation from the Federation of Saudi Chambers, headed by Hassan Al-Huwaizi, President of the Federation, and accompanied by a number of investors and representatives of several government and private entities… Furthermore, the volume of trade exchange between Riyadh and Tirana in 2022 reached approximately 62 million riyals (more than 14 million euro), with Saudi exports reaching approximately 4 million riyals, while imports to the Kingdom amounted to approximately 58 million riyals. Establishment of a Saudi-Albanian Business Council... Hassan Al-Huwaizi, Chairman of the Federation of Saudi Chambers, emphasized that Saudi Vision 2030 has propelled Riyadh to the forefront of the global economy while strengthening the Saudi private sector. He announced the establishment of a joint Saudi-Albanian Business Council...

02/03/2024

https://www.alarabiya.net/saudi-today/2024/03/02/الرئيس-الألباني-أعد-السعوديين-بحراسة-استثماراتهم-في-بلادي

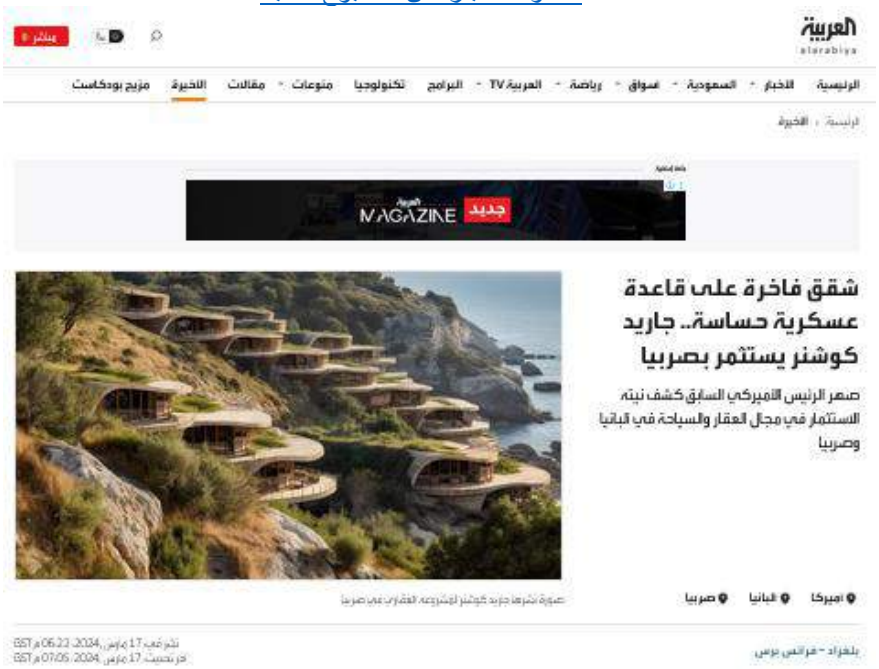


Albanian Prime Minister: Saudis will be exempt from entry visas starting next week

The Saudi-Albanian Business Forum was held yesterday in the Albanian capital, Tirana, with the participation of more than 250 officials, investors, and representatives of government and private entities from both countries. The forum witnessed the signing of an agreement between the Federation of Saudi Chambers and the Federation of Albanian Chambers of Commerce to establish a joint Saudi-Albanian Business Council, establishing a new economic partnership between the two countries… The forum was attended by the Saudi Ambassador to Albania, Faisal Hafzi, and the Albanian Ministers of Economy, Entrepreneurship, and Agriculture… The forum highlighted the investment opportunities and environment in the Kingdom, the Republic of Albania, and featured presentations on "Invest in Saudi Arabia" from the Ministry of Investment, "Made in Saudi Arabia" from the Saudi Export Development Authority, and a presentation on the services of the Saudi Export-Import Bank.

02/03/2024

https://www.alarabiya.net/aswaq/economy/2024/03/02/رئيس-وزراء-ألبانيا-اعفاء-السعوديين-من-تأشيرة-الدخول-اعتبارا-من-الأسبوع-المقبل



Luxury apartments on a sensitive military base... Jared Kushner invests in Serbia

Jared Kushner, former US President Donald Trump's son-in-law and White House advisor, confirmed on Saturday his intention to invest in luxury real estate in Serbia and Albania, after a Serbian MP revealed details of the project in Belgrade and following information reported

in an article in the New York Times… As for Albania, one of the projects includes transforming its island of Sazan into a luxury tourist destination… This island, located at the entrance to the Gulf of Vlora (southwest), was Albania's most secretive military base during the communist regime (1945-1990)… The Albanian Ministry of Tourism stated in a statement on Saturday that the investor expressed his interest in developing a "tourism project on Sazan Island" to the Investment and Development Agency.

17/03/2024

https://www.alarabiya.net/last-page/2024/03/17/شقق-فاخرة-على-قاعدة-عسكرية-حساسة-جاريد-كوشنر-يستثمر-بصربيا



Mohammed Alselini is in Albania to talk about the country's strange relationship with the former Soviet Union

This country was no less isolated than North Korea and Turkmenistan. We are talking about Albania, which went through severe phases of communism, socialism, and isolation. How were the people of this Mediterranean country with its warm climate forced into such a cold environment? What was its strange relationship with the former Soviet Union? How did it transition to a new phase of openness and tourism? Mohammed Al-Salini wanders through Tirana, the capital, and finds himself in its streets, among the pyramids and shelters, discovering their secrets. The details of the land and buildings here bear witness to the story. Mohammed Al-Salini navigates it, visits the popular market to buy some necessities, and then has a traditional dinner for a happy ending.

31/06/2024

https://www.alarabiya.net/programs/alrehla/2024/07/31/محمد-السليني-في-ألبانيا-للتحدث-عن-علاقة-البلاد-الغريبة-بالاتحاد-السوفييتي-سابق



Ivanka Trump dreams of luxury resorts on a secluded Albanian island

Benito Mussolini fell in love with it and built a house there. Enver Hoxha made it a military base cut off from the world. Today, Ivanka Trump wants to transform the Albanian island of Sazan into a fortress for millionaires, complete with luxurious villas and breathtaking views… It's a piece of history that the daughter of Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump is preparing to transform into a luxury resort with dozens of villas amidst the Sazan rocks, if the project sees the light of day with the blessing of the Albanian government, which has made tourism a cornerstone of the country's development… The daughter of the former US president and 2024 presidential candidate said: "Just bringing materials to the island is difficult, but we will do it with the help of the best architects."

09/08/2024

https://www.alarabiya.net/last-page/2024/08/09/ايفانكا-ترامب-تحلم-بمنتجع-فخم-في-جزيرة-ألبانية-معزولة

In summary, Al Arabiya's portrayal of Albania over the past decade has been event-driven and heavily shaped by external geopolitical dynamics. Albania's media presence intensified in response to *Iran-related incidents*, particularly those involving *cybersecurity threats*, *diplomatic tensions*, and the activities of the *Iranian opposition in exile*. Thus, Albania is framed as a *strategic node in the broader Middle Eastern security narrative*, primarily when its interests align with those of *Gulf states* and *Western powers*.

Over the course of a decade, Al Arabiya's coverage has crafted a multidimensional narrative about Albania, positioning it as a symbolic and strategic node in the broader Arab struggle against Iranian expansionism, while also highlighting its evolving identity

as a modern, Western-aligned, and economically open society. The articles balance security, ideology, and economic themes, weaving them into a cohesive story with deep resonance for Arab readers.

The economic dimension, while not dominant, complements the strategic narrative. Albania is portrayed as *open to Gulf tourists and investors***,** with *visa waivers, luxury travel interest, and shared markets***.** These elements paint a picture of a country that is not just geopolitically aligned, but also *economically accessible and culturally welcoming* to Arabs. It hints at a *future partnership potential* between Albania and the Gulf—not just politically, but *commercially and socially***.**

VI. PORTRAYAL OF ALBANIA IN THE ISRALI MEDIA - THE CASE OF YNET

This chapter examines how Ynet portrays Albania and asks what that portrayal reveals about the broader security and identity narratives circulating in mainstream Israeli media.

The chapter proceeds in three parts. *The first* part synthesizes the foreign policy of Israel. *The second* part outlines the bilateral relationship between Albania and Israel, including diplomatic milestones, legal frameworks, and growing cooperation in areas such as education, tourism, health, and cybersecurity—providing the relational context within which coverage is produced and consumed. *The third* part offers a year-by-year analysis of Ynet's coverage of Albania, cataloguing themes, headlines, and story types, and tracing how salience and tone shift across events. Taken together, these sections connect policy, relationship context, and media output, allowing a systematic assessment of how Ynet's portrayal of Albania both reflects and refracts mainstream Israeli foreign-policy narratives.

6.1 Foreign Policy of the State of Israel

Israel's foreign policy is heavily influenced by its national security concerns, driven by the need to maintain a strong military and intelligence services, and secure ties with a powerful ally, primarily the United States. This approach stems from a security dilemma unique to Israel, which has historically lacked substantial human resources (number wise) and formal regional alliances.

The "special relationship" with the United States is a cornerstone of Israeli foreign policy, often explained through the concept of "band wagoning" in structural realism, where states ally with stronger powers to optimize their position in an anarchic international system. A 10-year Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed in 2016

set a framework for assistance in Foreign Military Financing and for joint missile-defense program (White House, 2016; U.S. Department of State, 2016). This arrangement underwrites joint research, co-production, and layered air defense (e.g.: Iron Dome). The operational payoff of this integration was visible during Iran's first direct mass strike on Israel in April 2024, when Israel – assisted by the United States and regional partners – intercepted the vast majority of more than 300 projectiles (AP News, 2024; House of Commons Library, 2024). Beyond capabilities, the alliances offer diplomatic assurance and crisis management channels that help bound escalation while preserving Israel's freedom of action.

The issue of Palestine has been persistent in Israel domestic and foreign policy. However, due to its complex nature which requires a lot a space and because it has no influence on the relations of Israel with Albania, I haven't elaborated on the matter.

Containing Iran's regional power projection, proxy arming, and nuclear advances remains Israel's defining challenge. On the nuclear file, Israel doctrine continues to treat hostile weaponization as unacceptable. The country's policy of nuclear opacity persists alongside estimates by independent researchers of a small but credible deterrent (Carnegie Endowment, 2020). The conflict between the two states is still and detailing it is not the scope of the dissertation, however, it is clear, that Israel would support or express sympathy with any country that is in conflict with Iran. Thus, it is expected that with the breaking of diplomatic relations of Albanian with Iran, Israel would take the side of Albania.

In addition to the relations with U.S.A, Iran and Palestine, which indeed occupy the greatest part when the foreign policy of Israel is discussed, Israel has attempted to increase the number of its allies, even within the region of Middle East and Asia. In the

last few years, Israel has sought to address the problem of the lack of regional alliances. The Abraham Accords (2020) between Israel and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain, and Morocco (with Sudan signing but not ratifying) reframed parts of the Arab-Israel agenda from categorical rejection to conditional engagement. The Accords Declaration stresses maintaining and strengthening peace, mutual respect, and cooperation across economic and technological fields (U.S. Department of State, 2020). On the economic track, Israel's first comprehensive free trade agreement with an Arab state – the UAE-Israel CEPA (Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement) – was signed in 2022 and entered into force on April 1, 2023, reducing tariffs and easing market access (UAE Ministry of Economy, 2023). This agreement institutionalizes a commercial foundation resilient enough to weather political turbulence. The 2023-2025 Isarel-Hamas war complicated normalization's optics, raising public diplomacy costs for Arab partners. Yet most kept channels open, calibrating criticism of Israel conduct, while preserving economic, technological, and selective security cooperation. Analysts note that when tensions spike, the pace of high-visibility gestures slow, but sectoral projects tend to continue where they align with national interests in diversification, technology, and defense.

Israel's post-1990 pivot to Asia has become a durable pillar of its foreign policy, aimed at diversifying great-power ties, unlocking markets for its innovation economy, and supplementing U.S. security backing with broader economic-technological partnerships. Evron (2024) argues that Jerusalem's Asia outreach now mirrors the region's power hierarchy and is organized around three concentric "circles". At the core are China and India, which are simultaneously pivotal markets, technology partners, and – particularly in India's case – major defense clients; engagement here blends trade, dual-

use tech cooperation, and security links but also demands careful U.S. alliance management, especially regarding China's political risk and Washington's scrutiny of sensitive sectors. A Second tier includes Japan, South Korea (and deterrence concerns shaped by North Korea), and Singapore – advanced economies that are natural partners for high-tech collaboration, supply – chain resilience, and green/critical infrastructure. A third tier comprises earlier, largely transactional relationships with smaller Southeast and South Asian states that once dominated Israel's Asian diplomacy but now rank lower. To knit these layers together, Israel has paired bilateral deals (for example, deep trade liberalization with Gulf partners that connect Asia – Middle East flows) with mini-lateral platforms such as the I2U2 grouping with India, the United Arab Emirates, and the United States, which targets food corridors, clean energy, and logistics as growth multipliers for Israeli tech and investment. The economic strategy across Assia is thus to prioritize partners that can absorb Israeli innovation at scale (Agri-tech, health-tech, cyber, AI, water), co-produce defense and dual-use systems where appropriate, and anchor supply chains that reduce vulnerability to geopolitical shocks. In short, Israel's Asia policy couples market-seeking and capital-seeking economic statecraft with minilateralism and tailored security ties, while managing U.S.-China rivalry risk so that commercial and innovation linkages – especially with India, Japan, Korea, Singapore, and Gulf "bridges" to Asia – can continue to drive growth and strategic depth (Evron, 2024; Hudson Institute, 2024; Reuters, 2022).

6.2 Relations Between the Republic of Albania and the State of Israel

Diplomatic relations between Albania and Israel have a complex history that began shortly after the establishment of the State of Israel. Albania was among the early nations to recognize Israel, doing so on April 16, 1949 (Ministry of Europe and Foreign Relations,

2024; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Israel). However, the geopolitical climate of the Cold War led to a severance of these ties, which lasted for over four decades. It was not until August 19, 1991, following the collapse of communism in Albania, that diplomatic relations were re-established. This marked a new chapter in the bilateral relationship, with both countries committed to strengthening their partnership across various domains.

The re-establishment of diplomatic ties in 1991 paved the way for increased cooperation. In 1998, Albania opened its embassy in Tel Aviv, followed by Israel inaugurating its embassy in Tirana in 2012 (Embassy of Israel Tirana, 2025). Since then, the relationship between the two nations has flourished, characterized by deepening collaboration in areas such as economics, culture, agriculture, and cybersecurity.

One of the most profound aspects of Albania–Israel relations is the historical bond rooted in the events of World War II. During the Holocaust, Albania stood out as a beacon of hope for Jews fleeing Nazi persecution. Remarkably, Albania was the only European country where the Jewish population actually increased after the war, as Albanians provided refuge to both local Jews and those from other nations (Ministry of Europe and Foreign Relations, 2024; Yad Vashem, n.d.). A crucial element in this humanitarian effort was “Besa,” the Albanian code of honor that mandates offering shelter and protection to those in need (Yad Vashem, n.d.). This legacy of solidarity has been a cornerstone of the bilateral relationship, reinforcing a unique bond between the two countries.

The diplomatic relationship between Albania and Israel is sustained by a robust legal framework that facilitates cooperation across multiple sectors. The first formal agreement, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the establishment of diplomatic relations, was signed in 1991. This was followed by a series of additional agreements in the 1990s and 2000s, which established the foundation for cooperation in culture,

education, science, agriculture, and trade (Embassy of Israel Tirana, 2024). Notably, the Memorandum of Understanding on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations (1991) re-established diplomatic channels after a lengthy period of severed relations. Soon after, in 1993, an Agreement on Cooperation in the Fields of Culture, Education, and Science was concluded, reflecting an early recognition of the importance of soft diplomacy. By prioritizing cultural and educational exchange, both nations aimed to foster mutual understanding and build a partnership grounded in shared values and intellectual collaboration.

The 1996 Agreement for the Promotion and Reciprocal Protection of Investments was a significant milestone in bolstering economic ties, as it offered a secure framework for mutual investments. This agreement was vital for creating a conducive environment for Israeli investors in Albania, ensuring legal protections and instilling greater confidence in the Albanian business landscape. Recognizing the importance of agriculture and food security, a 2001 series of agreements expanded cooperation into specialized fields, such as veterinary medicine, agriculture, and plant quarantine, leveraging Israel's technological expertise to benefit Albania. The Agreement on Trade and Economic Cooperation (also from 2001) complemented these sector-specific pacts, broadening economic exchanges and creating new possibilities for trade.

Subsequent agreements, including the 2006 Memorandum of Understanding for the Establishment of Bilateral Consultations and the Air Service Agreement and Visa Exemption Agreement for Diplomatic, Service, and National Passport Holders (2007), reflect the development of a multifaceted Albania–Israel partnership. These arrangements facilitated the movement of people and goods between the two countries and

institutionalized regular diplomatic consultations, enabling both sides to address common challenges and explore emerging opportunities within a structured dialogue.

Over the following years, cooperation advanced into strategic areas such as health, security, and academia. For instance, the 2015 Agreement on Cooperation in the Field of Health and Medicine and the MoU with Yad Vashem underscored mutual efforts in healthcare and Holocaust education, further reinforcing the historical and moral ties between Albania and Israel. In 2016, a Memorandum of Understanding between the Diplomatic Academy of Albania and the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies of Israel highlighted both countries' interest in sharing expertise and strategies related to foreign policy and security studies.

More recent accords showcase the ongoing commitment to modernizing and expanding bilateral ties. The 2021 Convention on the Avoidance of Double Taxation, the 2022–2025 Program of Educational, Scientific, Cultural, Youth, and Sports Cooperation, and the 2024 MoU in Cybersecurity exemplify a forward-looking partnership that addresses contemporary challenges such as digital threats and the promotion of innovation through collaborative research. Meanwhile, the 2024 Memorandum of Cooperation in Tourism capitalizes on Albania's emerging tourism sector to attract Israeli visitors, further integrating economic and cultural exchanges.

In sum, the overarching framework of agreements between Albania and Israel reveals a dynamic and evolving relationship that has broadened from initial diplomatic exchanges to a complex partnership encompassing economic, cultural, educational, and security cooperation. This progression reflects both countries' dedication to forging a resilient bilateral relationship capable of addressing present and future challenges.

On the international stage, Albania and Israel share multiple converging interests, particularly in matters of regional security and global diplomacy. Both countries are active participants in several international organizations, often coordinating on issues of mutual concern. Albania's tenure as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council for the 2022–2023 term has brought additional focus to security matters (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021). Albania's stance on this issue, shaped by its broader commitment to conflict resolution through dialogue and international law, has remained balanced, yet it continues to support Israel in various multilateral forums, highlighting a broader alignment in foreign policy objectives.

Albania's role as an observer country to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) and its adoption of the IHRA's definition of anti-Semitism further demonstrate its pledge to combat anti-Semitism and foster tolerance. The organization of the First Balkan Forum against Anti-Semitism in Tirana in 2020, held under the auspices of the Albanian Parliament, exemplified Albania's proactive leadership in this sphere (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020). Through such initiatives, Albania not only underscores its commitment to preserving Holocaust memory but also reinforces its solidarity with Israel on issues of historical importance and contemporary relevance.

In sum, Albania–Israel relations rest upon a solid historical foundation and continue to evolve through a broadening, multifaceted partnership.

6.3 Portrayal of Albania in Ynet

The analysis of Israeli media discourse on Albania is based on materials published in Ynet, examined in its original Hebrew-language edition. Hebrew is the official and most widely used language in Israel; therefore, the Israeli public opinion is primarily shaped by information and media content produced in Hebrew. All English-language versions of

the most popular Israeli newspapers are only partial selections of the original Hebrew sources and serve mainly an English-speaking audience abroad, or non-Hebrew-speaking foreigners residing in Israel, who constitute a relatively small group.

Ynet (an abbreviation for *Yedioth-Net*) is one of the most well-known news portals in Israel. *Ynet* was launched in June 2000 as the online platform of the newspaper *Yedioth Ahronoth* (in Hebrew: ידיעות אחרונות – *Latest News*), a national daily published in Tel Aviv, Israel. The newspaper was founded in 1939 in what was then *British Mandatory Palestine*, thus before the establishment of the State of Israel. It is considered the largest paid newspaper in Israel by sales and circulation — one of the most traditional and stable media institutions in terms of readership, quality of information, and influence on public opinion. *Yedioth Ahronoth* continues to rank among the two leading newspapers in the country, alongside *Israel Hayom*, and maintains a significant gap in readership compared with other well-known newspapers such as *Haaretz* and *Maariv*.

Considering that the time frame analyzed for this media outlet is 2005–2024, it is worth noting that in 2010 — and for several decades before — *Yedioth Ahronoth* was the newspaper with the highest circulation in Israel. Likewise, *Ynet*, for a full decade after its launch in 2000, was the leading news portal in the country, and it continues to remain among the most visited news platforms, particularly in the informational sphere.

In addition, during the process of collecting and analyzing articles, it became evident that *Ynet* contains the highest number of news items and reports related to Albania within the studied period (up to 2024), with approximately 63 distinct articles, excluding sports coverage, which was not part of the research focus. By comparison, *Israel Hayom*, launched in 2007, features a considerably smaller number of articles about Albania, both

in temporal scope and in intensity — around 20 articles published between 2016 and 2024, again excluding sports content.

It should be clarified that, due to accessibility considerations, this research refers exclusively to online materials, such as news portals and news agencies. Within this framework, as far as Israel is concerned, *Ynet* proved to have the most extensive and dense informational coverage related to Albania.

For all these reasons, *Ynet* was selected as the primary source for examining Israeli media discourse, representing the most comprehensive and continuous portrayal of Albania within the Israeli media landscape.

As mentioned in Section 6.2, "Relations Between the Republic of Albania and the State of Israel," the decade 2000–2010 marks a significant strengthening of relations between the Republic of Albania and the State of Israel. Following the signing of several key agreements—such as The Agreement on Trade and Economic Cooperation (2001) or the Memorandum of Understanding for the Establishment of Bilateral Consultations (2006)—in 2007 the two countries signed the Air Service Agreement and the Visa Exemption Agreement for Holders of Diplomatic, Service, and National Passports. This made Israel the first, and within the timeframe covered by this study, the only country in the Middle East to which Albanian citizens could travel without a visa.

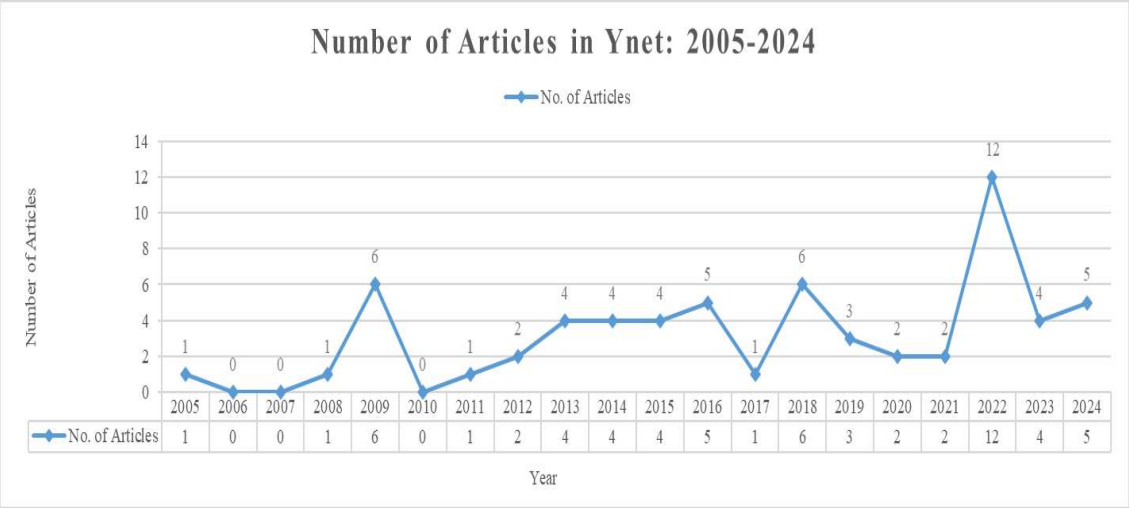
These developments were accompanied by an increasing media coverage of Albania in Ynet, with a growing number of feature articles introducing Albania through cultural, literary, touristic, and traditional perspectives. This trend indicates a gradual broadening of Albania's visibility and representation in the Israeli media landscape, corresponding to the overall deepening of bilateral relations during this period.

For this reason, I found it appropriate that the time span of Ynet's media coverage on Albania analyzed in this study be broader than that of the other two media outlets included in the research — Al Arabiya and IRNA — extending over the period 2005–2024.

This study is based on a comprehensive, purposive total sampling of all relevant articles published about Albania in Ynet between 2005 and 2024. Given the relatively low volume of coverage, a total of 63 articles were identified and analyzed, ensuring the inclusion of every available instance in which Albania was mentioned in a substantive, newsworthy, or symbolic contexts. Rather than selecting a representative sample, this approach embraces the entire population of relevant texts, allowing for a nuanced diachronic analysis of shifting framings, thematic continuities, and narrative ruptures. This total sampling strategy offers a high level of reliability in capturing the full spectrum of representations, from cultural and geopolitical frames to tourism, security, and symbolic diplomacy. It also enables the identification of subtle shifts in tone, emphasis, and discursive function over the nearly two-decade span of coverage.

Below is a chart that shows the distribution of articles over the years:

Figure 2: Distribution of Articles on Albania in Ynet: 2005-2024



Ynet have portrayed Albania through a diverse array of lenses: cultural dignity, historical morality, a post-communist country navigating its way towards EU integration, aligned with Western countries and a tourism frontier. What follows is a chronological reading of these representations. During the period taken into analysis 2005-2024, the

coverage of Albania has been un-even reaching its peak in 2022 with 12 articles, due to the cyberattack - which is common for all the three media taken in analysis in this research – and with fewer articles in the other years ranging between 1-6 articles per year. Below is a detailed media framing of Albania in Ynet.

The timeline in 2005 begins with an article about the visit of an IMF team in Albania titled "Albania should continue its economic reforms". The article portrays Albania through a technocratic and supervisory lens. Albania is presented as a transitional economy still seeking entry into Western political and financial institutions, particularly NATO and the EU. Albania's achievements in reducing debt and increasing GDP are acknowledged, but only cautiously, and always accompanied by caveats about potential backsliding. The article foregrounds the need for strict fiscal discipline, especially in the lead-up to the July 2005 elections, warning against populist tendencies. The use of terms like "budget ceiling" and "macroeconomic stability" depoliticizes economic discourse, portraying Albanian governance as an apolitical arena of reform metrics and compliance.


כלכלה economy

"על אלבניה להמשיך ברפורמות הכלכליות"

אלבניה

"Albania should continue its economic reforms"
17.05.2005
https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3086797,00.html

During 2006 and 2007 there are no articles on Albania.

In 2008, in an interview with the famous Albanian writer Ismail Kadare, published in Ynet on May 25, titled 'To catch the unimaginable', the renowned Israeli journalist Merav Yudilovic brings us a complex profile of the famous writer. In her comment on Kadare's profile, she says:

> Kadare's writings, smuggled to the West in the 1980s and providing a glimpse beyond the mountains of darkness of the Iron Curtain, are astonishing, mainly because they scream out a disappeared and silenced existence. His works have been translated into dozens of languages and have been published in more than forty countries… Like many Israeli writers, Kadare hopes that the resonance his books receive will arouse curiosity about the Balkans beyond the conflicts, civil wars and ethnic frictions. Or as he said at the time, upon the announcement of his winning the prestigious British prize: "I am a writer from the fringes of the Balkans, a part of Europe that for a long time was notorious only for news of human wickedness. My hope is that European and world public opinion will realize that this region can also provide a different kind of news and be home to other achievements".



Ismail Kadare, winner of the prize 'Booker' and 'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres', speaks in a personal and unusual interview about the writing process, about the work of art under a dictatorial regime, and about the next generation.



Ismail Kadare. Literature is fueled by the act of rebellion (Photo: Vadim Mikhailov)

To catch the unimaginable
28.05.2008
https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3548561,00.html#google_vignette

By 2009, Ynet representations of Albania had diversified further, combining cultural admiration, geopolitical alignment, and latent security anxiety. This year's

coverage spans six distinct articles, each contributing to a fragmented but revealing image of Albania.

The article titled “NATO Expands into the Balkans: Albania and Croatia Joined” positions Albania within a triumphalist narrative of Western expansion and post-communist modernization. NATO is depicted as a civilizational actor, and Albania’s accession is framed as a reward for institutional reform.



ynet

world בעולם

נאט"ו מתרחבת לבלקן: אלבניה וקרואטיה צורפו

Croatia and Albania became the two new members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) on Wednesday, after all the alliance countries ratified the accession of the new members.

“This is very encouraging news,” said NATO spokesman James Appathurai. “Albania and Croatia have worked very hard to meet the Alliance’s requirements regarding the military and governance reforms they have introduced.”

NATO expands into the Balkans: Albania and Croatia joined
01.04.2009
https://www.ynet.co.il/article/3695862#google_vignette

Conversely, the article “Return Mother Teresa's body to us” engages in symbolic diplomacy. Albania’s appeal is depicted as emotionally resonant but diplomatically weak, juxtaposed against India’s firm national claim. This episode illustrates Albania’s pursuit of soft power through association with globally recognized figures, though the framing hints at Balkan regional competition over symbolic capital, with Macedonia also making claims to Mother Teresa’s legacy.



אלבניה להודו: החזירו לנו את גופת אמא תרזה

"By blood, I am Albanian. By citizenship, I am Indian. By faith, I am a Catholic nun. By vocation, I belong to the world." These are the words Mother Teresa chose to describe herself when she was alive. However, they are unlikely to help resolve the diplomatic dispute over her burial place.

The Albanian government wants to return her body to the country - before her 100th birthday next year. Albanian Prime Minister Sali Berisha has said he intends to establish a museum in honor of Mother Teresa and hold ceremonies to commemorate her work.

Albania to India: Return Mother Teresa's body to us

12 years after her death, the Albanian government is asking to return the body of the Nobel Peace Prize-winning nun who died where she worked - Calcutta. India refuses the request

17.10.2009

https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3791214,00.html

Cultural coverage returns with “Ismail Kadare Wins the Prince of Asturias Prize”, reiterating Kadare’s role as a cultural emissary for Albania. The article expands on his resistance to Enver Hoxha’s regime and emphasizes his international standing, particularly through translations and his resonance with Israeli audiences. This narrative reinforces Albania’s moral and intellectual credibility in the eyes of Israeli media audiences, framing the country as historically burdened but culturally rich.



The exiled Albanian writer, poet, and essayist Ismail Kadare is the winner of the 2009 'Prince of Asturias Prize'. The prestigious prize, worth 50,000 euros, was awarded to him for his entire body of work, and according to the prize committee, "for the beauty and deep commitment of his literary works."

Ismail Kadare Wins the 'Prince of Asturias Prize'
05.07.2009
https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3741586,00.html#google_vignette

The travel piece "The Hidden Cities of Albania" introduces a poetic and orientalist aesthetic. Cities such as Gjirokastra and Berat are depicted as remnants of another era, and the communist past is rendered through nostalgic imagery—bunkers, empty squares, and echoes of lost grandeur – "cities that seem to have frozen in place, and perhaps that is where their charm lies".



The Italian writer Italo Calvino has an excellent book called "The Hidden Cities" in which he deals, among other things, with the way in which a new city grows out of an ancient city - but not in the usual way of new neighborhoods outside the walls, but in a kind of "yeast swelling" - the city is blown out, carrying the walls with it… There are probably very few places where you can still see cities that seem to have frozen in place, and perhaps that is where their charm lies. I can think of many cities that fit Calvino's descriptions, but for some reason it is the Byzantine-Turkish cities of Albania that come to mind, as representing such cities, just before the process of modern swelling begins in them.

The hidden cities of Albania
13.05.2009
https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3884899,00.html

This romanticization is also evident in “A Journey to Albania: Muslims Who Love Jews”, which opens with an orientalist trope of unexpected philo-Semitism in a Muslim-majority country. Kadare again appears, this time as a guide to Albania’s pluralistic ethos. Yet the portrayal remains depoliticized and personal.



In the summer of 2006, at the end of the Second Lebanon War, I was traveling with my family in northern Greece. One day we found ourselves not far from the border with Albania. In a telephone check with the country, we were warned not to cross the border into Albania: "This is a Muslim country!" we were told with concern. "It is better not to enter there on such days"… Two years later, I set out to tour Albania and study the terrain, as a preparatory trip for the 2009 “Queen of the Desert expedition” in the Balkans. I “plowed” the country, length and breadth, in an attempt to locate the most interesting and exciting route for “the new queens” and realized how wrong I had been two years earlier. Albania is one of the most sympathetic and friendly countries to Israel that I have visited.

A Journey to Albania: Muslims Who Love Jews
18.02.2009
https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3672632,00.html

Finally, the article “Iran Purchased Missiles from Ukraine with the Help of Albania” represents a sharp pivot into securitized discourse. Albania is portrayed as a potential enabler of Iranian missile procurement through illicit trafficking routes. While the article is cautious in tone, its detailed narrative activates Cold War imagery, casting Albania as a porous and ambiguous actor in global security networks. The inclusion of Mossad, Hezbollah, and former Soviet states frames Albania as a liminal zone where dangerous actors can operate with impunity.



חדשות news

"איראן רכשה טילים מאוקראינה בעזרת אלבניה"

"Iran purchased missiles from Ukraine with the help of Albania"

Did Hezbollah, Iran, and Islamic Jihad purchase weapons systems from Ukraine via Albania? According to a report in the Albanian newspaper "Gazeta Tema", the terrorist organizations purchased weapons systems from Ukraine, under the auspices of the Ayatollah regime in Tehran… According to the reports, which were also quoted in Lebanese media outlets and whose reliability is unclear, the Albanian government was also involved in the process. They claim that the country turned a blind eye to part of the weapons shipment, while it also purchased other weapons from Ukraine and helped smuggle them for Iran... According to the report in the Albanian newspaper, these are SA-16 and SA-18 anti-aircraft missile systems, which the Albanians bought from Ukraine. The weapons were transferred to Iran, Hezbollah, and Islamic Jihad by sea, without the transactions being registered with the Albanian customs offices. It was also reported that the purchase was made through a Lebanese company.

14.12.2009

https://www.ynet.co.il/article/3819650#google_vignette

In 2010, coverage of Albania declines markedly, appearing mainly as brief sports items. Because this study focuses on media, international relations, and politics, such reports are excluded from analysis unless they intersect with political or security issues—for example, the two Albania–Israel matches discussed later.

In 2011, Ynet continued to frame Albania primarily through romanticized and orientalist narratives in the article *"Albania: Local Pride, Villages and Rivers"* by Ronen Hasson, that exemplifies this trend, deploying travel writing as a medium through which

Albania is rendered picturesque and temporally “other.” The narrative positions Albania as a land suspended between post-communist transformation and cultural stasis. This duality is reflected in descriptions of “self-sustaining villages,” untouched rivers, and smiling locals “despite hardships,” invoking classic orientalist tropes of simplicity and authenticity. Albania’s transitional status is emphasized through contrasting imagery of modern tourism and outdated infrastructure, suggesting a liminal space caught between the past and Western modernity.


חופשvacation

אלבניה: גאווה מקומית, כפרים ונהרות

A journey through the country on the Adriatic coast reveals the remains of the communist past and the "romance" with China, villages that seem to have frozen in time, and warm and hospitable residents. A travel diary on the rivers of time… Landing in Tirana throws you into a city built in a structure befitting its communist past: wide boulevards, neglected railway buildings, and the city square for proletarian rallies. However, in independent and democratic Albania, a country that is still trying to regain the respect it deserves, the city's buildings have been painted in cheerful colors.

Albania: Local Pride, Villages and Rivers
27.04.2011
https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4054687,00.html

The 2012 media coverage introduced a more political dimension to Albania’s portrayal, focusing on themes of nationalism, regional tension, national identity and national pride.

Thus, in the 29 July 2012 article titled ‘Without a country and without an anthem, but on the path to fulfilling a dream’, Ynet presented to the Israeli public the story of Majlinda Kelmendi, the Kosovar judoka representing Albania at the London Olympics. The International Olympic Committee prevented Majlinda Kelmendi, a medal contender

in judo, from competing under her homeland Kosovo's flag; she therefore competed for Albania.

The article begins with a brief background on Kosovo, stating: 'War-torn Kosovo declared independence about four years ago. Thousands were killed in the Kosovo War in the late 1990s, a war that ended with the region being cut off from the former Yugoslavia. But despite the separation, only 76 countries recognize it as an independent state'. In the article, Kosovar Albanians are portrayed as strong and resilient people, both physically and spiritually:

> Kelmendi comes from the town of Peja, located north of the Albanian Alps and close to the border with Montenegro. Peja is known for its traditionally high-quality judo team, even though the town, with its narrow streets, was almost entirely burned down during the war. Another person who grew up there is Driton Kuka, Kelmendi's coach, who was himself a talented judoka and a medal winner... Kuka was supposed to compete in the Barcelona Olympics in 1992, but instead, like most men in the region, he was drafted into the Kosovo Liberation Army. 'If Majlinda wins a medal, half of it will be for me', says Kuka, who fought on the front lines of the war in the Balkans.

For the purpose of this study, it is noteworthy that Israel recognized Kosovo's independence in 2021, becoming the 117th country to do so. Saudi Arabia recognized Kosovo's independence on April 22, 2009, one year after its declaration of independence. By contrast, Iran, along with several other countries in the Middle East, still does not recognize Kosovo's independence.



More than any other sporting event, the Olympics are where the individual athlete feels national pride. The country cares, the people give a push back, the flag is high above the head and head, and the dream is always to hear the anthem. But in London 2012 there is an athlete whose flag is not hers. Neither is the anthem. And her medal will go down in history for another country.

Without a state and without an anthem, but on the path to fulfilling a dream
29.07.2012
https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4261499,00.html

Meanwhile, a 28 November 2012 article title “100 years of Albania: 18 tons of cake and amnesty for sheep’, Ynet reported:

> Amid diplomatic incidents with Greece and Macedonia, the country celebrated 100 years since gaining independence from the Ottoman Empire. Tens of thousands of Albanians came on foot or on horseback from all over the Balkans, but the prime minister's plan to publicly slaughter 2,000 sheep was abandoned this time... The Albanian celebrations were somewhat overshadowed by diplomatic incidents with two of its four neighboring Balkan countries, Greece and Macedonia, whose official representatives canceled their attendance at the ceremonies. Albanian Prime Minister Sali Berisha spoke yesterday of ‘Albanian lands’ stretching from Preveza in Greece to Presevo in Serbia, and from the Macedonian capital Skopje to the Montenegrin capital Podgorica.

It is worth noting that this report was sourced from Associated Press (AP).



Thousands of people of ethnic Albanian origin arrived on foot or on horseback from neighboring Kosovo, Macedonia and Montenegro for the 100th Independence Day celebrations, which opened in Viora. An 18-ton cake was unveiled in Tirana's main square, Skanderbeg Square, followed by a military parade... The original celebration program of Berisha also included the mass slaughter of 2,000 sheep, which were then supposed to be publicly roasted on Independence Day, but the event was canceled due to protests by animal rights groups.

100 years of Albania: 18 tons of cake and amnesty for sheep
28.11.2012
https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4313069,00.html

The 2013 portrayal of Albania marks a shift toward a narrative of international responsibility, exemplified by the 16 November 16 2013 article ‘Despite Albania's refusal, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons will remove the weapons from Syrian territory’. However, the article is very brief and merely cites the Associated Press, offering no commentary – despite Ynet’s usual reputation in the Israeli Media for extensive analysis and in-depth reporting. Moreover, the article makes no reference to the protests that erupted in Albania against the dismantling of Syria’s

chemical weapons on Albanian territory—protests that made headlines in numerous international outlets, including the other two media under examination in this study, Al Arabiya and IRNA.



The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons said it was still confident it could destroy Syria's chemical weapons stockpile by mid-2014, despite Albania's refusal to destroy the weapons on its territory.

The organization has already drawn up a plan to destroy 1,000 tons of dangerous materials, but a senior official at the organization declined to say in which countries the weapons would be destroyed. "By the end of 2013, the most dangerous materials will be transferred from Syria," the official said.

Despite Albania's refusal, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons will remove the weapons from Syrian territory

16.11.2013

https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4453992,00.html

In contrast, the article on the Lazarat cannabis fields crisis (*"700 Workers Hospitalized"*) presents a sensationalized image of domestic collapse. The village is described as a criminal enclave, with militarized resistance to state authority. Here, Albania is portrayed as a "lawless frontier" struggling to reassert governance. The narrative celebrates the Socialist government's crackdown, positioning it as a turning point from political corruption to reform. Yet, the focus on violence and disorder reinforces a pathologized view of Albanian society, where internal fragility is emphasized over structural context.


ynet

חדשות news

אלבניה: 700 עובדים בשדות קנאביס אושפזו

The workers from the village of Lazarat were hospitalized in the southern city of Gjirokaster as a result of the effects of planting, harvesting, compressing and packaging the plant from which marijuana and hashish are produced. "In the last two months, seven or eight people have come to the emergency department every day with disorders caused by hashish. Many came earlier," a doctor at the hospital told a local television channel.

Albania: 700 workers in cannabis fields hospitalized
02.11.2013
https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4448396,00.html

The binary framing of Albania continues in 2014. The article *"Europe's marijuana capital in a battle for survival"* continues the focus on Lazarat, painting a vivid picture of chaos, heavy weaponry, and criminal enterprise. Despite acknowledgments of government reform efforts, the coverage largely obscures structural causes, reducing Albania to a case of Balkan lawlessness impeding its EU aspirations. This representation aligns with longstanding orientalist and post-Balkanist stereotypes that portray Albania as a poor and politically unstable country.



Albania had established itself as the continent's No. 1 marijuana producer, until the new government declared war on drug traffickers who were stalling its accession to the European Union. This is how a pastoral village became a battlefield between the police and local growers.

Officially, Albania is the fourth poorest country in Europe, but secretly its residents were rolling in billions - until the government got fed up. Until a decade ago, the village of Lazaret in southern Albania was just another farming community, one of many in the country. But today, the tiny settlement is the source of most of the marijuana distributed in Europe, and its residents earn billions of euros every year from growing the seedlings in full view, in open fields and in their backyards.

Europe's marijuana capital in a battle for survival
08.06.2014
https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4531632,00.html

Conversely, Albania's inclusion in a NATO meeting of female defence ministers (*"History in the Men's Bastion: 5 NATO female ministers"*) offers a progressive symbolic moment.



היסטוריה במעוז הגברים: 5 שרות בנאט"ו

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has recorded several historical milestones in its history, such as its participation in the first Gulf War in 1991, in the Balkan wars in the 1990s, in the war in Afghanistan in 2001, in the second Gulf War in 2003, and in the attack on Libya in 2011. And today (Wednesday), the military alliance made further history when its meeting in Brussels recorded a record number of defense ministers - five in number - from Germany, Italy, Norway, the Netherlands, and Albania.

From left: Minister of Defense of Albania (Mimi Kodheli), Netherlands (Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert), Germany (Ursula von der Leyen), Norway (Inna Marie Eriksen Soreida) and Italy (Roberta Pinotti) (photo: EPA)

History in the Men's Bastion: 5 NATO femail Ministers
27.02.2014
https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4493155,00.html

Meanwhile, articles on Albania's gold medal in the European Weightlifting Championships and Hamdi Salihi's football transfer to Hapoel Akko offer more neutral, even celebratory, narratives. These moments reflect Albania's soft integration into international sporting and cultural life, suggesting that its athletes and performers gain recognition within normalized frameworks of international representation.



In the men's 77 kg weight class, Arkand Kerimi won with a total of 349 kg (155 in the clean and jerk and 194 in the clean and jerk), which is an upgrade for him from what he has won so far after in 2009, he managed to get the silver medal. Albanian Daniel Godeli lifted 157 kg and bench pressing 192 kg, which gave him a total of 349 kg. Third was Russian Razmik Unianen with a total of 344 kg.

Weightlifting: Gold for Russia and Albania
09.04.2014
https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4508313,00.html



Hapoel Acre strengthened its squad over the weekend with a new striker - Hamdi Salihi, 30, who played in China for the past year. Salihi, who signed for a year and a half in Acre, will be coach Yuval Naim's third signing of the transfer window, after Yossi Assayag and Alon Ziv, who already trained last Friday in their new team's media.

Akko: Albania national team striker signed for the team
01.02.2014
https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4483481,00.html

In 2015, Ynet's coverage of Albania begins with two articles dedicated to the awarding of the 'Jerusalem Prize' to the renowned Albanian writer Ismail Kadare. The first article, titled 'Ismail Kadare is the winner of the Jerusalem Prize', is an informative news piece stating: "Albanian writer Ismail Kadare is the winner of the Jerusalem Prize

for 2015. The award ceremony will open the 27th International Book Fair to be held in Jerusalem from February 8–12... Kadare will honor with his presence the ceremony, which will be held at the YMCA Hall in the presence of the President of the State of Israel, Reuven Rivlin. Past winners of this prestigious award include Bertrand Russell (the first winner), Nobel Prize laureate Mario Vargas Llosa, Milan Kundera, Simone de Beauvoir, Susan Sontag, Arthur Miller, Haruki Murakami, Ian McEwan, and others".

It is worth underscoring that the Jerusalem Prize, established in 1963 and awarded biennially, recognizes authors whose work explores the theme of human freedom in society. Ynet's choice to report on the announcement of this event reflects the special recognition and respect that Kadare enjoys among the Israeli public—an appreciation further strengthened by the availability of Hebrew translations of his major works and by the article's reference to former laureates counted among the most distinguished writers of the twentieth century.



The first Jerusalem International Book Fair to be held in February will open with a ceremony in which the 2015 Jerusalem Prize will be awarded to Albanian writer Ismail Kadare, for "exposing unresolved questions and unforgivable crimes whose meaning and importance are undoubtedly universal".

Ismail Kadare is the winner of the 'Jerusalem Prize'
14.01.2015
https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4614995,00.html#google_vignette

The second article, dated February 8, 2015, titled 'Let's read: The International Book Fair opens', Ynet reports: "The International Book Fair opened tonight in Jerusalem with the awarding of the Jerusalem Prize to Albanian author Ismail Kadare in a ceremony

attended by President Reuven Rivlin, who said: Kadare is not only a gifted writer but also writes with great courage about the modern existence of all of us.… The power of a word is not measured by the volume of description, but by its sincerity, by its uncompromising contact with humanity… Kadare's writing is boundary-breaking, subversive, and uncompromising. When I read Kadare's books, even though he writes about his country Albania, I feel as though I am reading about what is happening in my own reality – in the reality of us all".







The International Book Fair opened tonight in Jerusalem with the awarding of the Jerusalem Prize to Albanian author Ismail Kadare in a ceremony attended by President Reuven Rivlin, who said: "Kadare is not only a gifted writer but also writes with great courage about the modern existence of all of us".

Ismail Kadare, born in 1936, managed to become a national writer while writing increasingly critically in Albania, which was among the most totalitarian countries in the world. His books have been translated into over thirty languages in about forty countries. Among his books translated into Hebrew are: 'The General of the Dead Army', 'The Black Year', 'The Wedding', 'The Successor', 'Broken April', 'The Pyramid', 'The Accident'…

The jury for the Jerusalem Prize stated: "Kadare is an ironic and fascinating storyteller who brilliantly invites implicit and indirect writing. Kadare writes about collective guilt and, above all, about the impenetrability of truth. He seeks to reveal, while hiding his traces in layers of myth and metaphor, unresolved questions and unpardonable crimes. Although the subjects of his writing and his heroes are mostly local, their meaning and importance are undoubtedly universal".

Let's read: The International Book Fair opens
08.02.2015
https://www.yediot.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4624297,00.html#google_vignette

Another article casting Albanians in highly positive terms, highlighting their values, is that of 19 May 2015, titled '*We Were Refugees: The President of Albania Was Moved to Tears, I Felt Ashamed*'. In this article, the author, Igal Harmelin-Moriah, an American-Israeli, contrasts the hospitality Albanians extended to Jews during the Second World War with the treatment of Eritrean refugees in Israel—invoking Albania's Holocaust-era rescue of Jews to critique Israeli policies toward Eritrean asylum seekers. The article draws on Albania's historical memory, rooted in the Besa code, as a moral mirror to expose what are presented as Israeli 'ethical failings toward Eritrean refugees.' This unusual reversal—in which an American-Israeli looks to Albania as an ethical model—underscores the power of cultural memory in shaping contemporary political discourse.

The author builds his argument by citing a speech delivered by The President of Albania Bujar Nishani at the B'nai Jeshurun synagogue in New York, during a meeting with members of the Jewish community and students of Holocaust studies at Queens College—an event the author attended in person.



Something happened to the sacred principle, which appears in the Mishnah as "Whoever sustains one soul" and in later editions became "Whoever sustains one soul from Israel" – as if saving the life of a Jew is a commandment, but the life of a refugee from Eritrea – not. Albania, most of whose residents are Muslims - saved all its Jews during the years of the Nazi occupation… Respect - for the fact that during the Holocaust, not one of the thousands of Jews who were in Albania at the time was sent to the concentration camps. You read that right: not one. In 1939, Albania was under Italian occupation, and when the Nazis occupied the Balkan countries around it, many Jews received visas from the authorities and fled there… The "Bnei Yeshurun" synagogue, which has existed in New York for almost 200 years, has a long history of bringing lecturers from different circles and cultures to lecture before the community. Dr. Chaim Weizmann lectured there, as did Eleanor Roosevelt, the wife of the American president; Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, and the Rev. Martin Luther King. As a mark of respect for the religions prevalent in Albania, a Muslim imam and a Greek Orthodox priest were also invited to the Shabbat reception to which the President of Albania was invited - and students studying the Holocaust at Queens University also came.

We Were Refugees: The President of Albania was was deeply moved, I felt ashamed
19.05.2015
https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4659276,00.html

Yet, this moral elevation is counterbalanced by portrayals of Albania as a source of regional instability. The article on Edi Rama's statements about unification with Kosovo (*"We Will Unite with Kosovo"*) casts Albania as dangerously provocative, reigniting fears

of Balkan fragmentation. The Israeli media frames Serbia as the rational actor, while Albania is characterized as nationalistic and belligerent.



Tensions in the Balkans: Albania's Prime Minister Says Unification with the Albanian-Majority Province That Unilaterally Seceded from Serbia Is Inevitable. Belgrade Warns: You're Beating War Drums…

"The unification of the Albanians of Albania and Kosovo is inevitable and not a question," Rama said in an interview with the Kosovar channel Clan Kosovo. "The question is how it will happen – will it happen within the framework of the European Union as a natural process understood by everyone or will it happen as a reaction to the blindness and laziness of the European Union."

Albania: We will unite with Kosovo. Serbia: War Drums
07.04.2015
https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4645054,00.html

In 2016, Albania's portrayal shifts toward security partnerships and symbolic politics. The article *"Mossad Thwarts ISIS Plot in Albania"* underscores Israel's intelligence prowess while framing Albania as a vulnerable but cooperative partner. The coverage positions Albania as a critical node in the global fight against terrorism, aligning with Israeli and Western interests. At the same time, this framing reinforces Albania's subordinate status in security hierarchies, reliant on external expertise for protection.

Simultaneously, the article on Edi Rama's alleged payment for a photo with Barack Obama (*"$80,000 for a Selfie"*) exemplifies "vanity politics".

In contrast, the article covering Euro 2016 fans (*"Look at the best football fans at the Euros"*) offers a moment of national pride, depicting Albanian supporters as passionate, disciplined, and joyful.

The 2016 coverage begins with the article of June 20, titled 'Look at the best football fans in the Euro', where Albania is presented in an explicitly positive light, celebrating its football fans during Euro 2016. In this context, Albania appeared as a nation of passionate and dignified supporters, asserting its symbolic presence on the European stage. The national diaspora was reframed as a source of cultural soft power, counterbalancing earlier narratives of security vulnerability.



40,000 Albanians who came to Lyon's stadium completely silenced the Romanians and provided an unforgettable display of encouragement. We can only be jealous.

"We showed Europe who we are. No one will ask who Albania is anymore! The country is in ecstasy and our hearts are bursting with love. I will remember this game for the rest of my life."

Look at the best football fans in the Euro
20.06.2016
https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4818071,00.html#google_vignette

The next article, dated 5 July 2016, concerns a political controversy involving Prime Minister Edi Rama ("Did a Prime Minister Donate $80,000 to Obama?"), which reinforced perceptions of Albania as susceptible to informality and political vanity. The piece—framed around Rama's alleged payment for a photo with Barack Obama

("$80,000 for a Selfie")—illustrates what might be called "vanity politics." Importantly, the article presents this as an opposition claim, not an established fact, stating:

> "The opposition claims that Prime Minister Edi Rama transferred money to the U.S. president's 2012 election campaign so that he could take a picture with him… Last week, Bilal Shehu, a 48-year-old American citizen of Albanian descent, pleaded guilty in a federal court in New Jersey to making donations to Obama's campaign. Rama denied paying for tickets to the event, but acknowledged meeting Shehu there."



Scandal in Albania: Opposition claims that Prime Minister Edi Rama transferred money to the US President's 2012 election campaign so he could take a picture with him.

Did a Prime Minister donate 80 thousand to Obama just to take a photo?
05.07.2016
https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4824116,00.html

Shifting to cultural and social anthropology, on August 3, 2016, Ynet published an interesting article titled 'Living as a man and gaining freedom: The sworn virgins', dedicated to a specific Albanian-Balkan phenomenon, the so-called 'sworn virgins,' known in Albanian as 'Burrnesha'—a remnant of the past in the Albanian Alps that has previously drawn the attention of global outlets such as The New York Times. Sourced from AFP and built around the testimony of 84-year-old Shkurta Hasanpapaj, the piece emphasizes the phenomenon's near disappearance, noting: "Today, there are fewer than ten sworn virgins left in Albania."



Ancient Albanian culture allowed a girl to escape forced marriage only if she became a "sworn virgin."… Today, there are fewer than ten sworn virgins left in Albania. "I chose to live with men," says one of them… The unusual custom began in the Albanian 'Kanun' culture of the Middle Ages. In this ancient culture, there were two ways to become a sworn virgin. One way was when all the men in the family have passed away, and then a girl takes the oath in order to fulfil the duties and rights of a man in a patriarchal society. The other way, as in Shkurta's case, is to avoid forced marriage.

Living as a man and gaining freedom. The sworn virgins
03.08.16
https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4836998,00.html

In October 2016, a series of articles on Mossad's intervention to foil an ISIS plot cast Albania as a cooperative actor within an international security architecture. The narrative spotlighted Israeli intelligence capabilities and portrayed Albania chiefly as a host nation requiring protection. The reporting focused on the prevention of a planned terrorist attack targeting the Albania–Israel football match, originally scheduled for Shkodër but relocated to Elbasan for security reasons, "following the arrest of terror suspects who planned to bring explosives into the stadium, apparently in an attempt to harm the Israeli players."

In the following I am presenting a timeline summary of these articles:



Travel Warning: ISIS Planned to Attack the Israeli National Team

After the Saturday (21:45) match with Albania in the World Cup qualifiers was moved from the city of Shkoder to Elbasan following the arrest of four people of Muslim origin who planned to bring explosives into the stadium, the Counter-Terrorism Headquarters announced: "Do not attend, there is still a significant threat of terrorist attacks"… "In recent days, elements affiliated with the 'Islamic State' organization have been arrested in the Balkans. In recent weeks, the detainees and other elements associated with them have planned to carry out terrorist attacks against a variety of targets in the Balkans, including international soccer matches, including the match expected to take place between the Albania-Israel national teams".

08.11.2016

https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4876066,00.html



The mastermind behind the attempted terrorist attack on the Israeli national team

"Abu Abdullah of Kosovo", a Muslim from the Balkans who fought in the ranks of Jabhat al-Nusra before joining ISIS, is currently commanding the organization's fighters from the region. He planned a combined terrorist attack, including on the national team's match in Albania… This is the man who is apparently behind the terrorist organization that sought to harm, among others, the Israeli national soccer team players in Albania on Saturday: Lavdrim Muhaxheri, known as "Abu Abdullah of Kosovo," is a member of the "Islamic State" who in recent years has operated in Syria and Iraq in various Islamic terrorist frameworks, and has recently planned a series of attacks in the Balkan countries… According to Albanian security forces, four people of Muslim origin were arrested in the city of Shkoder following a report by the Mossad about their intention to carry out some kind of atack at the stadium during the game.

11.11.2016

https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4877560,00.html



The Mossad intercepted a Skype call that led to the capture of the squad

Albania claims that the Israeli intelligence service gave the tip that led to the capture of the ISIS members. Their intention was to carry out an attack similar to the one in Paris during the friendly match between France and Germany. The local police decided to secure the buildings around the stadium for fear of shots from the windows… In addition to dozens of Israeli security personnel, Albanian special forces soldiers will also arrive… The one who tried to calm the atmosphere is the Head of the Muslim community in Albania, Skënder Bruçaj, who sent a message of peace; "The Albanian Muslims protected thousands of Jews during World War II, and thus Albania became the only country in Europe with more Jews after the war than before. Athletes and guests from Israel are invited to be calm and safe on Albanian soil".

12.11.2016

https://www.ynet.co.il/article/4877798#google_vignette

Collectively, the year's coverage reinforced Albania's external dependency—on Mossad, FIFA, or transnational recognition—while simultaneously constructing a national image marked by enthusiasm, pride, and contested legitimacy.

In 2017, Ynet shifted focus to Albania's association with consumptions of narcotics, primarily through a sensationalized treatment of a UN report on cocaine consumption. The article *"Israel Is Also on the List: Leading Countries in Cocaine Consumption"* highlighted Albania's ranking with disproportionate alarm, portraying the country as a statistical anomaly and moral outlier. While other high-ranking nations were

contextualized with minimal commentary, Albania's position at the top of the list was framed as "surprising" and implicitly disgraceful.



A comprehensive study was conducted in preparation for the release of a documentary film on addictions, including the issue of cocaine use. Albania leads the list, with 2.5% of its population having used the dangerous drug. The countries of the British Isles also star. And where is Israel?

Israel is also on the list: the leading countries in cocaine consumption
20.10.2017
https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-5031360,00.html

In 2018, Ynet marked a bifurcation in Albania's portrayal. On one hand, travel journalism enthusiastically framed Albania as an affordable and picturesque emerging destination. Articles like "*The Hidden Balkanian: 10 Reasons Why You Really Need a Vacation in Albania*", "Albania Style: The New Destination of the Season" and *"Where to Sleep in Albania?"* marketed the country as a scenic, secular, and surprisingly modern tourist location—targeting Israeli middle-class travelers with reassurances about hospitality, cuisine, and safety. These narratives domesticated Albania through comparisons to familiar Mediterranean experiences, projecting it as an exotic but manageable location, aligned with Western leisure expectations.

The article of April 25, 2018, titled 'The Hidden Balkan Country: 10 Reasons Why You Really Need a Vacation in Albania', concisely yet accurately outlines ten reasons why Albania would be a favorable destination for Israeli tourists.



כתבות ועדכונים

הבלקנית הנסתרת: 10 סיבות למה אתם ממש חייבים חופשה באלבניה

The food is amazing, the nature is green, the hotels are new, the shopping is cheap, and Israeli tourists haven't discovered it yet. Albania is shaping up to be the hottest destination of the summer of 2018.

Western Europe is one of the most favorite tourist destinations for Israelis, and today it is almost impossible to find hidden gems on the classic continent that are not crowded with tourists. So, get to know Albania - a pristine and gorgeous country, which until recently was under a closed and rigid regime. But all of that belongs to the past, and in recent years, small Albania, whose area is similar to that of Israel, has begun to open up to the West and catch up with its tourist neighbours; Greece, Macedonia, and Montenegro.

"So why a vacation in Albania?"

- For the first time – direct flight;
- For the pristine nature;
- For the amazing beaches;
- For Tirana;
- There is so much to see;
- For the Albanian people;
- For the food;
- For the shopping;
- For the night life;
- For the hotels.

The Hidden Balkanian: 10 Reasons Why You Really Need a Vacation in Albania
06.06.2018
https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-5240653,00.html



חופש vacation

אלבניה סטייל: היעד החדש של העונה

A three-hour flight separates you from the surprising destination of the year - Albania. After years of being under a closed and rigid regime, under the controll of a paranoid leader, Albania has broken free from its shackles, raised its head, put religion aside and become an intriguing tourist attraction. How come I didn't visit you before?

So here are some interesting facts about Albania: "The Land of Eagles" is located on the globe in the beautiful Balkan region, in southeastern Europe. It borders Montenegro to the north, Kosovo to the northeast, Macedonia to the east, and Greece to the south. To the west of the country lies the Adriatic Sea, from which its impressive beaches spread out.

Albania is now considered one of the most beautiful countries, mainly thanks to its spectacular landscapes that combine wild strips of nature, evergreen forests, valleys, rivers and endless spaces.

The capital of Albania is the city of Tirana, which is different in every parameter from the villages in the country. The modern city, which is about 110 meters above sea level, maintains a cafe scene that can also teach Tel Aviv a thing or two. The price of a cup of coffee ranges from 2-3 shekels…

Albania Style: The New Destination of the Season
06.06.2018
https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-5278567,00.html



Starting last weekend, two direct flights from Israel to Albania began operating on Friday and Monday. In honour of the event and the new route, we have compiled a number of recommended hotels for you in the new destination of the season.

Forget about communist Albania, the one where it was forbidden to eat chocolate in the past, for example. It is now slowly aligning with the modern world, and is developing as a tourist destination that is now relatively cheap to travel to. Here you can indulge in five-star hotels in the capital without feeling guilty, be exposed to a culture that has been much less accessible to us over the years with hospitable locals who are just waiting for tourists.

Where to sleep in Albania?
02.07.2018
https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-5297588,00.html#google_vignette

In contrast, the truffle trade was portrayed as emblematic of lawlessness and desperation, with reports of poisoning and violence in rural areas (*"A story about a mushroom and murder: There is war in the forest"*). These depictions evoked frontier imagery and reinforced a post-colonial trope of natural resource exploitation in weak states.



חדשות news

סיפור על פטרייה ורצח: בתוך היער יש מלחמה

In poor Albania, people earn less than 400 euros a month, and picking truffles can yield 50 euros a day. Deep in the forests, where there are no laws, fights are waged between pickers - with threats, felling and the murder of dogs…

Threats, poisoned dogs and felled trees: Albania's forests are an arena where a war is being waged over truffles, the precious mushrooms in this poor European country known as "black gold"...

The lack of regulations on mushroom picking in Albania also puts its trees, and therefore the truffles themselves, at risk: careless mushroom pickers hit the ground with hoes and spades, damaging the roots of the trees on which the mushrooms grow…

A story about fungus and murder: there is a war inside the forest
07.08.2018
https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-5324437,00.html

Simultaneously, more investigative reporting painted a darker picture. Albania's sweeping gambling ban was framed as a response to a "national epidemic" of addiction and social decay. This narrative brought in the article titled "*The country addicted to gambling promises to quit*", highlighted widespread poverty, domestic violence, and suicide, positioning the state as both a victim and an enforcer.



In Albania, one of the poorest countries in Europe, gambling addiction is a major problem that brings crime and violence. It promises that on January 1st everything will change.

Albania's great love for gambling is creating a host of social problems for the country, which is one of the poorest in Europe: from domestic violence, through poverty to organized crime. The Balkan country has promised itself that as early as next week, with the beginning of 2019, it will cut its waist and try to quit, hoping to put an end to the suffering that is draining the strength of so many families.

A law will come into force on January 1st, ordering the closure of 4,300 gambling dens, which can now be found on almost every street corner.

The country that is addicted to gambling promises to quit
28.12.2018
https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-5434696,00.html

A geopolitical subplot emerged in Albania's expulsion of Iranian diplomats following a Mossad-coordinated intelligence operation. In the article: "*Albania expels Iranian ambassador after conversation with Israel*", Albania was celebrated as a reliable partner in the Israeli-Western security nexus. Its actions were praised by Israeli and U.S. officials.



The Balkan country expelled the ambassador and another Iranian diplomat, after discussing the issue with several countries, including Israel. Local media reported that the two were involved in planning an attack during an Israeli national team match about two years ago. The US welcomed: "A signal to Iran that its support for terrorism is intolerable".

The US Secretary of State also praised the decision: "I welcome the expulsion of two Iranian agents who plotted terrorist attacks in Albania. The world must stand together to impose sanctions on the Iranian regime until it changes its destructive behavior".

Albania expels Iranian ambassador after conversation with Israel
20.12.2018
https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-5429569,00.html

In 2019, Albania appeared primarily in two contrasting narratives: one emphasizing humanitarian crisis and international solidarity, the other spotlighting symbolic exclusion in global spaces. The earthquake of November 2019 generated widespread coverage in Ynet, with two extended articles, "*Earthquake in Albania: 14 dead and 600 injured*" and *"Dozens Killed in Albania, Israel Helps with Rescue"*, which emphasized both the tragedy's human cost and the swift Israeli response. While the articles featured emotionally charged survivor accounts and emphasized Albania's mourning, the narrative foregrounded Israel's moral authority as a humanitarian actor.



A 6.4-magnitude earthquake shook Tirana and nearby cities early this morning – the strongest earthquake there in decades. At least 14 were killed, including a man who jumped from his house to escape. In the capital, residents fled into the streets with babies in their arms: "My daughter is trapped inside." Rescue forces are searching through the rubble.

Earthquake in Albania: 14 dead and 600 injured
26.11.2019
https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-5631926,00.html



The search for survivors of the powerful earthquake that struck the country yesterday continues in Albania this evening (Wednesday). The official death toll has already climbed to 26, and another 20 people are listed as missing. About 650 were injured. Israel sent a rescue team from the foothills of Mount Hermon to Albania to assist in the efforts, and it joined rescuers in Albania's second-largest city, Durres, which suffered the heaviest damage… In addition to the Israeli team, rescue teams from Italy, France, Romania, Turkey, Greece, Croatia, Montenegro, Kosovo and Serbia have also arrived to assist Albania. As part of the search, the rescue teams are using heavy mechanical equipment, drones and dogs.

Dozens killed in Albania; Israel helps with rescue
27.11.2019
https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-5632805,00.html

In an article dated September 7, 2019, titled ‘Scandal: Wrong anthem was played, players refused to play’, Ynet depicts Albanians as a proud people. The report recounts the reaction of the Albanian team to the playing of the Andorran national anthem instead

of Albania's prior to a Euro qualifier – it's players' refusal to continue until the correct anthem was played became an assertion of national dignity in th efface of symbolic erasure.



A huge disappointment for the French team. The world champion did beat Albania 4:1 in the Euro qualifiers, but apparently no one will talk about the game itself.

While the anthems were being played, the stunned Albanians discovered that the French accidentally played the Andorran anthem. In response, Albania refused to come on to play and the game started seven minutes late. And, if that wasn't enough, the French announcer apologized to the Albanian people for the mistake.

The Albanians continued to warm up on the pitch while the world champion players seemed very amused by the situation. In the end, the Albanians got what they wanted and their anthem was played properly.

Scandal: Wrong anthem was played, players refused to play
07.09.2019
https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-5583744,00.html

Between 2020 and 2022, Ynet discourse on Albania evolved along two principal trajectories: one foregrounding Albania's symbolic value as a pro-Western and Israel-aligned ally in global security frameworks, and the other reinforcing longstanding tropes of fragility, post-socialist dysfunction, and Balkan cultural otherness. These parallel narratives were constructed across diverse genres—ranging from hard news and investigative reporting to cultural commentary and symbolic diplomacy—revealing the multifaceted and often ambivalent positioning of Albania within Israeli journalistic depiction.

The article of May 18, 2020, titled ‘Albania destroys the national theatre, dozens arrested’, depicts a political and democratic strain emerging in the reporting on the demolition of Tirana’s National Theatre in May 2020. The article highlighted Prime Minister Edi Rama’s contested urban renewal project as a symbolic clash between modernization and democratic accountability. Protesters accused the government of pursuing elite-driven privatization under the guise of cultural development, a charge further amplified by the timing of the demolition during the COVID-19 lockdowns.



Actors and opposition activists confronted police who came to secure the demolition work in Tirana. They accuse Prime Minister Rama of destroying a 1939 heritage site for his own personal interests. He promised: "A new theatre will be built, so that we will have a modern European city".

Violent clashes broke out in Tirana, the capital of Albania, yesterday (Sunday) between police and protesters, including opposition supporters, angry at the decision to demolish the National Theatre. 37 people were arrested in the riots.

The protest against Socialist Prime Minister Edi Rama's plan to demolish the building and build a new theatre in its place has been going on for two years. The project is divisive among Albanians, and many are angry that Rama has decided to carry out the demolition took place during the Corona lockdown.

Albania destroyed the National Theatre, dozens arrested
18.05.2020
https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-5732904,00.html

The coverage in 2020 marked also a re-engagement with Albania’s recent past, casting the country as emblematic of post-communist instability. A retrospective article titled “The pyramids game that almost destroyed Albania” revisited the 1997 financial collapse through the sensational frame of corruption, civil unrest, and societal collapse.



A massive scam in the 1990s that got out of control caused violent chaos in the streets that escalated into a bloody civil war that claimed the lives of thousands of people. Thus, the dream of getting rich quick nearly wiped out an entire country.

The pyramid games that almost destroyed Albania
24.06.2020
https://www.ynet.co.il/economy/article/5751711

In 2021, Ynet coverage shifted to themes of soft diplomacy and infrastructural fragility. The tragic deaths of four Russian tourists in a luxury Albanian resort sauna were framed through a crime-and-mystery lens.



Four Russian tourists were found dead in a sauna at a resort in western Albania, local police said over the weekend. The four, a couple aged 60 and 59, their 31-year-old daughter and her 37-year-old partner, died as a result of suffocation. The circumstances leading to the disaster are still unclear.

Local police are investigating the circumstances of the deaths of four family members who died as a result of suffocation. "I shouted several times that the drinks and fruit they ordered were ready, but no one answered," said the employee who found their bodies.

Albania: 4 Russian tourists found dead in sauna at luxury resort
17.10.2021
https://www.ynet.co.il/vacation/flights/article/syjn6ykhk

On the other hand, another article celebrating the awarding of the Skanderbeg Order to Avital Leibovich, an Israeli diplomat and former IDF officer, cast Albania in a much more brighter light. This moment of symbolic diplomacy was framed, in the article "*The*

first Israeli that is given the Albanian Order of Honour: Lt. Col. Avital Leibowitz", as both a gesture of cross-cultural respect and a reaffirmation of Albania's role as a Muslim-majority country exceptionally aligned with Israel and the West. The narrative echoed earlier media framings that presented Albania as a rare instance of pro-Israeli sentiment within the Islamic world, highlighting shared historical memory (particularly Holocaust rescue narratives) and strategic values.


ynet

הישראלית הראשונה במסדר הכבוד האלבני:

Lt. Col. (Res.) Avital Leibovich, Director General of the American Jewish Committee (AJC) in Israel, was knighted yesterday (Wednesday) by the President of Albania, Ilir Meta. This is the second most important decoration of honor in Albania. The decoration is given to people who have contributed to the security and development of Albania. This is a unique event, as Albania is a Muslim country, which chooses to award a high degree to an Israeli, Jewish woman, for her activities.

As part of her role, Leibovich held dozens of meetings and connections between Albanian, Israeli and American officials, promoted agreements and cooperation in a variety of fields (from academia and culture to business) and worked to bring the Albanian and Jewish communities closer together… AJC is a 115-year-old non-governmental organization that works to advance the interests of the Jewish people through government relations and diplomacy.

The First Israeli to receive the Albanian Order of Honor
16.06.2021
https://www.ynet.co.il/activism/article/SJ8PBvdjd

The most significant shift occurred in 2022. The country's severance of diplomatic ties with Iran following a cyberattack was widely reported in Israeli media as a bold and principled stance, aligning Albania with Israel and broader Western interests in the

domain of cybersecurity and counterterrorism. In the aftermath of this event, Ynet published chronologically five articles, namely: "*Due to cyber-attack: Albania cuts relations with Iran*", "*Albania in a sharp letter to the UN: "Iran endangered civilians and tried to paralyze us*", "*Iran attacks with cyberattacks, Israel will help: Albanian Prime Minister to arrive in Israel today*", "*Lapid and Albanian Prime Minister Agree on Cyber Cooperation Against Attacks from Iran*". Albania was cast as a small but courageous actor standing against Iranian aggression. High-level bilateral meetings between Prime Ministers Edi Rama and Yair Lapid reinforced this narrative, positioning Albania as a junior yet reliable partner in the expanding network of Israeli digital and intelligence alliances. Given the significance of this event and the intensity of its coverage in Ynet, a concise chronological overview of these articles is presented below.



Iranian dissidents have cancelled a two-day summit, which was to include senior officials from the United States and other countries, due to warnings of "potential threats." The purpose of the gathering was to "call on Biden to adopt a firm policy against the Iranian regime." The Albanian authorities refused to comment on the cancellation of the summit and the terrorist threats. However, the US embassy warned its citizens that it was "aware of a potential threat aimed at the summit," and called on them to "refrain from attending this event." In the announcement of the postponement of the conference, the summit organizers cited the attack that the Mossad reportedly thwarted in June 2018 in France, when Iranian intelligence officer Asadollah Asadi planned to damage a conference of the opposition organization "National Council of Resistance of Iran."

Conference of Iranian Exiles in Albania Cancelled Due to "Terror Threats"
23.07.2022
https://www.ynet.co.il/news/article/s1gtwgkh5#google_vignette



בגלל מתקפת סייבר: אלבניה מנתקת את היחסים עם איראן

אלבניה מנתקת את יחסיה הדיפלומטיים עם איראן והורתה לדיפלומטים שלה להסתלק בתוך 24 שעות, בתגובה למתקפת סייבר מחודש יולי: "צעד קיצוני, שתואם לחומרת המתקפה שאיימה לחולל כאוס בארצנו". לדברי ר"מ אלבניה, במתקפה היו מעורבים האקרים שביצעו מתקפות סייבר גם בישראל ובסעודיה

Albania is severing diplomatic relations with Iran and ordering its diplomats to leave within 24 hours, in response to a cyberattack in July: "An extreme step, commensurate with the severity of the attack that threatened to wreak chaos in our country." According to the Albanian PM, the attack involved hackers who have also carried out cyber-attacks in Israel and Saudi Arabia… Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama explained that this was a response to a severe cyber-attack that Albania experienced last July - an attack that he said was carried out by hackers who had also previously carried out cyber-attacks in Israel. In the attack, which took place on July 15, a series of government websites in Albania and the digital services provided through them were temporarily disabled… He noted that to carry it out, Iran had contacted four different groups of hackers, some of whom were behind cyberattacks in Israel, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and Cyprus… In what appears to be a coordinated move, the US today strongly condemned Iran's cyber-attack against Albania, noting the fact that it is a NATO member. A statement issued by the White House at noon said that Washington "will take additional steps" to ensure that Iran is held accountable for the cyber-attack.

Because of cyberattack: Albania cuts off relations with Iran
07.09.2022
https://www.ynet.co.il/news/article/bkh9xzlxj#google_vignette



אלבניה במכתב חריף לאו"ם: "איראן סיכנה אזרחים וניסתה לשתק אותנו"

After Tirana decided to sever diplomatic ties with Tehran in response to an Iranian cyberattack in July, Albania's ambassador to the UN sent a complaint to the Security Council: "They tried to delete government systems." Israeli ambassador to the UN Gilad Erdan, who previously hosted his Albanian counterpart in Israel: "The international community must wake up".

Albania in a sharp letter to the UN: Iran endangered citizens and attempted to silence us
09.09.2022
https://www.ynet.co.il/news/article/s1lroyoes



After his country severed diplomatic ties with Tehran in response to a cyber-attack, Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama will arrive in Israel on a state visit and will meet with Prime Minister Lapid, among others. The purpose of the visit is to receive assistance to strengthen Tirana's cyber system, which claimed that the hackers who attacked it had also carried out cyber-attacks against Israel in the past.

Another topic that is expected to come up in the talks is promoting the holding of a first-of-its-kind conference in Israel with the participation of the heads of government of the Balkan region, in order to strengthen their ties with Israel in the fields of energy, agriculture, cyber, and more.

Iran launched a cyberattack, Israel will help: the Prime Minister of Albania will arrive in Israel today
23.10.2022
www.ynet.co.il/news/article/b1b5jiges#google_vignette



Prime Minister Yair Lapid met with Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama and agreed on cyber cooperation against Iranian attacks. Lapid said that "Iran poses a common threat to Israel and Albania. We saw this in the Iranian cyber-attacks against Albania just recently. Israel will assist as much as possible in the effort against Iran." During the discussion, the leaders also discussed expanding cooperation between the countries and common challenges for the two countries, and agreed on the importance of combating anti-Semitism.

Lapid and Albanian Prime Minister agree on cyber cooperation against attacks from Iran
23.10.2022
https://www.ynet.co.il/news/article/ryuyatgei#google_vignette

In addition to these developments, Ynet's coverage of Albania in 2022 features a number of articles on diverse topics, ranging from the election of Albania's new president or a report on the Albanian royal family, to Russia's intervention in Balkan politics, and even a socio-historical phenomenon such as the 'blood feuds.' The media coverage for 2022 starts with the article of May 18, 2022, titled 'Farthest from Buckingham: Royal Houses You Didn't Know', which provides a retrospective-historical account of the Albanian royal family, focusing on the figure of Prince Leka II.



הכי רחוק מבקינגהאם: בתי מלוכה שלא הכרתם

Unlike Queen Elizabeth and her descendants, who star in gossip columns and are famous all over the world, Leka II, Prince of Albania, does not live in a palace, was forced to live in exile until he was 20, and his name is not particularly well-known outside his country. Karl von Habsburg could have been the leader of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, if only it still existed. Instead, he was content with a brief term in the European Parliament. In an era when kings no longer rule Europe, what is the role of the royal houses on the continent? And what is the deep popular need that justifies the existence of noble families even today?

Farthest from Buckingham: Royal Houses You Didn't Know
18.05.2022
https://www.ynet.co.il/news/article/hjs11nn0lc

Two weeks later, on June 4, 2022, Ynet published an article titled 'Albania: Chief of Staff, Bajram Begaj, Elected President by Parliament', in which the election of the Albanian President was reported in neutral tones, with emphasis placed on the symbolic rather than strategic nature of the office, while also noting the absence of consensus from the parliamentary opposition.



Albania's army chief Bajram Begaj has been elected president by parliament. The country's left-wing coalition decided to nominate Begaj after failing to reach a consensus with the opposition on a candidate. He was elected by a majority of 78 to four, after most opposition representatives boycotted the vote or voted against the nomination. The presidency in Albania is largely symbolic, although the president has limited powers over the military and the judiciary.

Albania: Chief of Staff, Bajram Begaj, Elected President by Parliament
04.06.2022
https://www.ynet.co.il/news/article/rjburxyo5#google_vignette

During a UEFA Nations League match, in June 2022, Albanian fans booed the Israeli national anthem. In the article titled "*Shameful: Albania fans booed during the anthem*", the incident was interpreted as a shameful event, in contrast to the friendly official relations between the two states.



A shameful event. During the Israeli national team anthem tonight (Friday), many of the Albanian fans booed. All this in contrast to the Israeli flags that were placed throughout the city in recent days and actually welcomed the team in a positive way.

In the end, the Israeli team was able to overcome the boos and record a great second half, in which they turned a deficit into a 1:2 victory thanks to a great double by Manor Solomon.

Disgraceful: Albanian fans shouted contempt during the anthem
10.06.2022
https://www.ynet.co.il/sport/article/one412485#google_vignette

However, this event was reported in a very short news report, taken from the local Israeli network "One". In contrast, the return match in Bloomfield Stadium in Tel Aviv, the match itself was described in details, with very enthusiastic tones for the Israeli victory

in the extended article titled: "*The Israeli national team advanced to the first tier of the Nations League after a dramatic 2:1 win over Albania*". The incident with the Israeli national anthem in the previous match is not mentioned at all.



Wow. The Israeli national team achieved one of its most important victories in recent years this evening (Saturday) and did it in the most dramatic way possible. Alon Hazan's team defeated Albania 1-2 and secured first place in Group 2 of the Nations League, after leading and conceding an equalizer right near the end – but managed to score the winning goal two minutes into added time. This means that Israel has moved up to the first tier of the tournament and will compete against the top teams on the continent, but has also moved significantly closer to a historic appearance at the European Championship.

Albania fans march to Bloomfield ahead of the match against Israel

The Israeli national team was promoted to the first tier of the Nations League after a dramatic 2:1 victory over Albania
24.09.2022
https://www.ynet.co.il/sport/israelisoccer/article/hybk7d2bj#google_vignette

On 18 October 2022, in a feature article on the "blood feud, titled "*The blood feuds behind the magical landscapes: A grim journey in the Alps of northern Albania*", the author Limor Zadok presented remote northern areas in Albania as culturally and legally suspended in time. Drawing on literary and emotional tropes, the piece constructed a contrast between the idyllic natural landscape and an underlying narrative of cultural backwardness.The use of blood feuds as a narrative device reproduced familiar orientalist

themes of Albania as semi-European and semi-tribal, where, in some remote regions, modern legal systems remain ineffective and cultural codes supersede formal governance.



During a jeep trip in the Balkans, Limor stayed with a village woman named Fran, who told her the story of her difficult life, intertwined with the story of the country she had never left. The brothers who were murdered, the father who plunged into his own silence, and the sister who declared one morning that she had become a man. "When it comes to blood feuds, the current situation in Albania is more difficult than in the Middle Ages".

The tradition of blood feud terrified the mountain people, wiping out entire families from the Albanian Alps and building watchtowers in their place that will remain here forever. This is a custom according to which a relative has the right and even the obligation to avenge the blood of a person who was killed or murdered, by killing the killer or murderer, or by killing a member of his family. The tradition of blood feud dominated northern Albania for centuries. It was stopped about 70 years ago following the rise of communism after World War II. It was revived with the fall of communism in Albania in 1992.

The blood feuds behind the enchanting landscapes:
a gloomy journey through the Alps in northern Albania
18.11.2022
https://www.ynet.co.il/vacation/worldtrips/article/hkggvu9bj#google_vignette

It is worth noting that 2022 was the year with the densest media coverage of Albania in Ynet, with around twelve articles. In 2023, this coverage declined significantly, with only three articles (excluding sports news), namely: ‘Diplomatic Embarrassment: Albania

Backtracks on Intention to Appoint Nicole Raidman as Honorary Consul'; 'Italy paid the bill of tourists who ran away from a restaurant abroad'; and 'Lakes, Treks, and Tasty Cheap Food: We Visited a Surprising Country in Europe'.

The first article, dated 26 june 2023, is about the honorary consul, Nicole Raidman, controversy. The media coverage frames the incident as a "diplomatic embarrassment," critiquing Albania's erratic diplomacy and image management. The decision to retract Raidman's appointment after initial confirmation is presented as evidence of institutional fragility or elite indecision.



The Albanian government has informed the Israeli Foreign Ministry that it is revoking its intention to appoint Nicole Raidman as Albania's honorary consul to Israel…
As we recall, about two months ago, at the beginning of May, it was announced that Raidman had been appointed to the honorary position, but now it has been learned that the Foreign Ministry, which at the time received a letter of appointment, also received the letter of revocation.

It should be noted that the announcement of the withdrawal of the appointment of an honorary consul is very unusual, especially since the Albanians formally contacted the Foreign Ministry with a request to approve Raidman's appointment to the position, and she even visited the Prime Minister's Office and the Foreign Minister's office to coordinate the appointment.

Diplomatic Embarrassment: Albania Backtracks on Intention to Appoint Nicole Raidman as Honorary Consul
27.06.2023
https://pplus.ynet.co.il/rechilut/article/hjrz5uou2

The second article, dated August 19, 2023, reports on an event that made headlines in numerous international media outlets. It states: 'Four Italian tourists fled a restaurant

in Albania without paying for their meal—creating a diplomatic incident. The Albanian Prime Minister raised the issue with Giorgia Meloni, and the Italian Prime Minister demanded that the embassy pay the bill'.



A security camera outside the restaurant in the city of Berat recorded the four Italian tourists fleeing the scene. The footage was uploaded to social media and went viral, and the incident caused a stir in both countries. Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama raised the issue this week, in a conversation with Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, who, like many Italians, had also arrived for a family vacation in Albania on the Adriatic coast… Meloni promised to address the issue, and contacted the Italian embassy in the Balkan country. "She ordered the embassy to "pay the bill of these idiots", the Albanian prime minister quoted Meloni as saying. He added that Meloni said that Italy "cannot lose its honour in this way".

Italy paid the bill of tourists who ran away from a restaurant abroad: 'They are idiots'
19.08.2023
https://www.ynet.co.il/news/article/s1akng033

In October 2023, Albania is prominently featured in Israeli travel journalism as a "surprising" and "authentic" destination, marketed to middle-class Israeli tourists seeking affordable leisure. The article "Lakes, Treks, and Tasty Cheap Food" employs a familiar orientalist discourse, constructing Albania as an unspoiled, temporally dislocated landscape, highlighting scenic beauty, local hospitality, and budget-friendly experiences.


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אגמים, טרקים ואוכל טעים וזול: ביקרנו במדינה מפתיעה באירופה

Hotels that sit on the shores of a large lake, a trek that leads to a blue pool and lots of locals who are only too happy to host and help. Yariv Katz travelled to Albania and discovered a particularly surprising area. And when the flight ticket costs $370, a hotel - €30 and a steak €11, the magic only grows.

In Albania, which is only slightly larger than Israel, there are over a thousand lakes. Most of the lakes are artificial and are used to generate hydroelectric power, which means that these are not lakes the size of the Hexagonal Pool but huge reservoirs of water that serve as sailing routes, resorts and tourist attractions. We are traveling to one such lake in northern Albania - Lake Komani.

Most trips to the north of the country begin in the city of Shkodra - the capital of the north and the fourth largest city in Albania, from which buses and taxis also depart for trips to the north of the country, which is why it is also called the "gateway to the Albanian Alps." We decided to save a day and booked a taxi driver to take us straight from the airport in the capital Tirana, for 150 euros for a trip of about three hours.

Lakes, Treks, and Tasty Cheap Food: We Visited a Surprising Country in Europe"
04.10.2023
https://www.ynet.co.il/vacation/worldtrips/article/hkhlqtdj6

This exoticizing tone is dramatically contrasted in the March 2024 report about the detainment of two Israeli nationals in Albania over medical cannabis. The article frames the young Israelis as idealistic, naive kibbutzniks caught in an overly rigid Albanian legal system. The narrative constructs a binary opposition: liberal Western norms versus Balkan legal inflexibility. Albania's enforcement of its drug laws is depicted as out of step with contemporary global attitudes toward medical cannabis.


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שני ישראלים עצורים באלבניה כבר חצי שנה בגלל קנאביס רפואי

Two 22-year-old kibbutz members from the southern region have been detained in Albania for six months after being caught with cannabis for medical use. Their trial has not yet begun…The two, excellent students, arrived in Albania from Italy. They spent a week on the country's coast and then wanted to continue to Greece, but were arrested at Kakavijë border crossing. Each of them was found to be in possession of approximately 90 grams of cannabis. Both had medical certificates proving that they were consuming medical cannabis due to their health conditions, and they did not hide the cannabis but kept it in an obvious place because they believed there was no problem… While in Western countries the attitude towards the issue is generally more inclusive, in many places in the world there is no tolerance for the possession of cannabis.

Two Israelis have been detained in Albania for six months over medical cannabis
13.03.2024
https://www.ynet.co.il/news/article/yokra13838580

Another article, with a different topic, from August 2024, covers Jared Kushner's billion-dollar redevelopment project in Albania and Serbia. Here, Albania is depicted not as an autonomous actor but as a site of elite foreign investment and symbolic transformation—where "former battle sites" or Cold War bases are transformed in economic opportunities.



Jared Kushner, son-in-law of former US President Donald Trump, is planning to turn former battle sites in Albania and Serbia into luxury resorts. Bloomberg reported that Kushner intends to spend more than $1 billion to build luxury hotels and homes in these areas, with the aim of attracting the world's wealthy. This would be the largest investment to date from his private equity fund, Affinity Partners.

One of the projects will be on the island of Sazan in Albania, which served as a military base during the Cold War and has remained abandoned for the past few decades. Another project is planned in Belgrade, the capital of Serbia, where two towers that served as the headquarters of the Yugoslav Ministry of Defense and were bombed by NATO in 1999 will be converted into hotels.

With an investment of about a billion dollars:
Jared Kushner will turn European battlefields into vacation resorts
07.08.2024
https://www.ynet.co.il/economy/article/h1bo83eca

The most notable article in 2024 is related to the coverage of President Herzog's diplomatic visit to the Balkans in September, which frames Albania as a strategic ally in Israeli security diplomacy. The article emphasizes Albania's exceptional status as a Muslim-majority state aligned with Israel against Iran. References to the "Wing of Zion" aircraft[4] and visits to Holocaust memorials construct a narrative of historical moral continuity and soft power success.

[4] Wing of Zion is the principal government transport aircraft of the State of Israel, tasked with transporting the President and Prime Minister overseas during international visits.



President of the State Yitzhak Herzog will fly tomorrow (Wednesday) for the first time on the "Wing of Zion" plane, when he will depart for a state visit to Serbia and Albania - a Muslim country that stands by Israel against the Iranian axis. The purpose of the important visit is to strengthen security, strategic and political partnerships in times of war, and to promote vital security deals. In addition, the visit to Albania will be the first ever by an Israeli leader.

For the first time in "Wing of Zion", Herzog will promote Security deals in Serbia and Albania

10.09.2024

https://www.ynet.co.il/news/article/hyscora3a

As part of its coverage of the visit, the 'Israel Hayom' portal published a detailed report on President Herzog's meeting with Prime Minister Edi Rama, accompanied by a video of their joint statement. The subsequent section provides a summary of this report.



For the first time in history, an Israeli leader has paid an official visit to Albania. President Isaac Herzog met today (Wednesday) with Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama in a meeting that focused on the issue of Israeli prisoners, strengthening relations between the countries, and promoting economic cooperation. Albania, despite being a country with a Muslim majority, demonstrates resolute support for Israel in its fight against terrorist organizations.

During the meeting between the two, Herzog emphasized the difficult situation of Israeli citizens held in Gaza, while emphasizing the urgent need for international action to return them. He said: "Still, even at this time, the kidnapped men and women are being held in cruel captivity in Gaza, in flagrant violation of every humanitarian and ethical norm. The entire international community must do everything in its power to return them home".

Rama emphasized the necessity of remembering the tragic events: "I completely agree with the need for the world to understand that the horrors we are witnessing, as well as the many unnecessary victims of this war, in which so many innocent people are losing their lives because of the need to uproot this devil from the depths of the earth, did not start from nowhere, but began with a horror that no one in today's world could have imagined seeing in our lifetime. The images of that day, that dark day, not only for Israel, but for the entire world, are images that must not be forgotten, and anyone who talks about moving forward must start from these images, otherwise history may repeat itself."

Albanian Prime Minister to Herzog: We will open a Chamber of Commerce in Jerusalem
Israel Hayom: 12.09.2024
https://www.israelhayom.co.il/news/geopolitics/article/16434076?heyday_src=heyday_search

The October headline "*In controversial agreement: Italy sends asylum seekers to Albania, on their way to deportation*", concerning Italy's outsourcing of asylum seekers to Albania, frames the latter as a geographic and political buffer zone for EU migration control. Described as a "controversial agreement," the article highlights Albania's subordinate role within European power hierarchies.


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בהסכם שנוי במחלוקת: איטליה שולחת מבקשי מקלט לאלבניה, בדרך לגירוש

ממשלת הימין של מלוני רוצה להרתיע מהגרים לא חוקיים, והחלה לשלוח לאלבניה מבקשי מקלט כדי לטפל אצלה – מתוך לעבוטות האיחוד האירופי – בבקשות שלהם. ארגוני זכויות אדם חושטים מהיחס שיקבלו המהגרים במתקנים שהוקמו באלבניה

The right-wing government of Meloni wants to deter illegal immigrants, and has started sending asylum seekers to Albania to process their applications there - outside the borders of the European Union. Human rights organizations are concerned about the treatment of migrants in the facilities set up in Albania.

The right-wing government of Giorgia Meloni has set up two facilities in Albania intended for asylum seekers - the first is intended for registration, and the second for residence and processing of their asylum applications. This is the first agreement of its kind in which a country that is a member of the European Union sends migrants to a country that is not a member of the Union.

A residence facility set up by the Italians in Albania

In a controversial agreement, Italy sends asylum seekers to Albania, on their way to deportation

14.10.2024

https://www.ynet.co.il/news/article/rkjwstqkjx

Finally, the November 2024 indictment of Erald Alimehmeti, an American-Albanian ISIS supporter, introduces a securitized and transnational frame that indirectly implicates Albania through biographical proximity and familial networks. The article "*Indictment against ISIS supporter in the US: He helped a terrorist organization - and called for harming Israelis*" constructs Alimehmeti's identity as hybrid and threatening, invoking civilizational discourse through references to Jewish and Christian beheadings, anti-Israel incitement, and ISIS symbology. Though Albania itself is not the primary focus, the inclusion of familial and national background situates it within a broader geography of radicalization, subtly reaffirming longstanding associations between the Balkans and security risk.


כתב אישום נגד תומך דאעש בארה"ב: "סייע לארגון טרור - וקרא לפגוע בישראלים"

Erald Alimehmeti, a 33-year-old American-Albanian citizen, is charged with two serious counts: aiding ISIS and disseminating information about the production of explosives for violent purposes. According to the indictment, he and his brother posted anti-Israel content, including a suggestion of attacking the Israeli consulate in New York. In addition, he was interested in "sniper" attacks - and searched for bulletproof vests and knives.

Regarding his brother, Sajmir, court documents state that in October 2015, he posted a photo of himself in front of the Israeli Consulate in New York, performing the ISIS-related marking. According to investigators, that photo, like other photos that have been posted, reflected Sajmir's desire to encourage violence against Israelis and act in a manner inspired by ISIS.

Indictment against ISIS supporter in the US: "He aided a terrorist organization - and called for harming Israelis"
23.11.2024
https://www.ynet.co.il/news/article/hja4cp0fje

In summery, over nearly two decades, Ynet's coverage of Albania constructs a coherent yet multifaceted image that interweaves four primary interpretive frames: Europeanization and reform, cultural and moral recognition, security partnership, and touristic otherness. Through these lenses, Albania appears to Israeli readers as a *modernizing European aspirant*, *a site of moral admiration*, *a strategic ally*, and *an accessible exotic destination*.

The Europeanization frame consistently evaluates Albania through the vocabulary of international institutions—IMF, NATO, and the EU—positioning it as a *state* under supervision and measurement.

The cultural-moral frame, cantered on figures like the well-known Albanian writer Ismail Kadare and historical narratives of *Besa* and Holocaust rescue, introduces a

humanistic dimension. Albania is portrayed as possessing *moral capital*—a Muslim-majority country that protected Jews during the Holocaust and produces literature of global resonance.

The security frame dominates in moments of regional or global tension. Ynet portrays Albania as a *junior yet reliable partner* in a Western and Israeli-aligned security network. The country is positioned within a shared struggle against terrorism and Iranian aggression, reaffirming Israel's regional centrality and Albania's loyalty.

Parallel to these, the travel and lifestyle frame transforms Albania into an *exotic yet safe country*. Especially from 2011 onward, Ynet's travel journalism markets Albania's landscapes, hospitality, and affordability while preserving orientalist undertones of timelessness and simplicity. Even when addressing social issues—blood feuds, narcotics, or economic fragility—these are aestheticized as local colour rather than systemic critique.

Throughout, the coverage remains *Israeli-centric*: Albania's significance lies in its reflection of Israeli concerns—European modernity, moral exemplarity, counterterrorism cooperation, and affordable tourism. Temporal shifts in emphasis correspond to real geopolitical events (EU integration milestones, MEK relocation, cyber incidents) but do not disrupt the overarching narrative.

In conclusion, Ynet's Albania is a *mirror and microcosm* through which Israeli readers encounter familiar themes: the ethics of memory, the metrics of modernization, the cartography of allies and adversaries, and the allure of proximate difference. Across changing contexts, these frames collectively sustain a stable interpretive template—a small European Muslim country aligned with Western values, morally upright, strategically useful, and pleasantly discoverable.

VII. PORTRAYAL OF ALBANIA IN THE IRANIAN MEDIA - THE CASE OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC NEWS AGENCY (IRNA)

This chapter examines how the Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) portrays Albania and asks what that portrayal reveals about the foreign-policy narratives Tehran projects at home and abroad. As Iran's state news agency, IRNA functions not merely as a chronicler of events but as an instrument of official framing—indexing coverage to the priorities of the political-security establishment and situating developments within Tehran's preferred strategic lexicon.

The chapter proceeds in three parts. *The first* part synthesizes the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran. *The second* part outlines the bilateral relationship between Albania and Iran—from the establishment of diplomatic ties to episodes of tension, including expulsions, cyber incidents, and the 2022 break in relations—providing the relational context against which media narratives are produced and received. *The third* part presents a year-by-year analysis of IRNA's coverage of Albania, cataloguing themes, headlines, and story types, and tracing how salience and tone shift across events. Together, these sections connect policy, relationship context, and media output, enabling a systematic assessment of how IRNA's portrayal both reflects and projects Tehran's foreign-policy narratives.

7.1 Foreign Policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran

Since 1979 the Islamic Republic has been a central pole in Middle Eastern politics. Scholarship diverges on how to understand this role. One strand emphasizes Iran as a "default regional power" whose prominence often reflects exogenous shocks rather than a coherent grand strategy (Molavi & Goode, 2008; Juneau & Razavi, 2013). Chubin (2009) similarly characterizes Tehran's regional rise as "transitory and precarious,"

enabled by permissive environments, the consolidation of hard-line politics in the Ahmadinejad era, and high oil rents rather than durable structural advantages. Other analyses counter that Iran has nonetheless exercised significant geopolitical agency through calibrated interventions and durable relationships with armed non-state partners (Moonakal, 2024). These perspectives are not mutually exclusive: the Islamic Republic has repeatedly converted external ruptures into influence, but it has done so through a repertoire—proxy ties, asymmetric deterrence, and institutionalized decision-making—that both magnifies opportunities and exposes vulnerabilities.

A distinctive feature of Iran's regional statecraft is its alliance network—the *mehvar-e moqavemat* (Axis of Resistance)—linking Tehran to Lebanese Hezbollah, Iraqi militias, the Houthis in Yemen, and Palestinian groups, among others. These ties provide reach, resilience, and plausible deniability; they also complicate escalation management and invite counter-pressure. Open-source forensic and UN expert reporting have documented Iranian systems and components in Houthi and Hezbollah arsenals and traced logistic channels across land, air, and sea (Davar, 2022, February 14; USIP The Iran Primer/Houthi Explainer: Timeline of U.S. Seizures & Timeline: Iran and Hezbollah). Western governments have repeatedly sanctioned IRGC-Quds Force nodes and associated fronts for this role. The empirical record thus supports the view that Iran's influence is mediated through partners that can act semi-autonomously, sometimes in ways that raise Tehran's costs even as they advance shared aims (USIP, The Iran Primer/Iran Deal: The IRGC is the Final Hurdle).

Foreign policy is produced by a hybrid architecture. Constitutionally, the Supreme Leader sets the "general policies" (سیاست کلی) and arbitrates major disputes; the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) coordinates and decides on national security and

foreign policy within the Leader's guidelines; and the executive—headed by the president and foreign ministry—implements policy (Ramazani, 2013; Ehteshami, 2009; 2014). In practice, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and its Quds Force have accumulated expansive influence across external security portfolios, from Iraq and Syria to maritime signalling in the Gulf. Analyses of Iranian politics under President Ebrahim Raisi (2021–2024) highlighted increased centralization, securitization, and a diminished role for classical diplomacy relative to the SNSC/IRGC **(**Supreme National Security Council and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps), axis (Azizi, 2024)—trends diminished after the Raisi's death in May 2024. The constitutional hierarchy and IRGC weight also circumscribe the scope for presidential course corrections: the election of Masoud Pezeshkian in July 2024 raised expectations for tactical de-escalation and pragmatic engagement, but informed assessments stressed the structural limits on rapid change. (USIP Iran Primer, 2023, June 28; USIP Iran Primer, September 5; Reuters, 2024).

Iran's geopolitical position—straddling the Gulf, the Levantine corridor, and Central/South Asia—has long fostered both opportunity and threat perception. Historical experiences of foreign intervention and partition shape a persistent quest for *esteqlāl* (independence) and *khod-kafā'i* (self-sufficiency) that runs from Pahlavi modernization to the revolutionary republic (Ghods, 1989; Fuller, 1991; Ehteshami, 2014). The post-1979 polity fused republican institutions with a Shia-Islamic narrative of justice and resistance. Early efforts to "export the revolution" strained ties with Arab monarchies; over time, ideological ambition was layered onto transactional regional policy, not replaced by it (Adib-Moghaddam, 2007; Keddie & Matthee, 2002; Takeyh, 2009). The net effect is a strategic culture that prizes autonomy, uses asymmetric capabilities to offset

conventional weaknesses, and defines security in regime-centric terms—patterns visible across three decades of crisis management from the Tanker War (part of the larger Iran–Iraq War) to the Syrian conflict.

Hydrocarbons remain both enabler and constraint. Under the Shah, oil rents financed militarized modernization and an activist regional role. The Islamic Republic sought to reduce vulnerability to external pressure, yet the economy's structure has kept oil central to fiscal capacity and foreign exchange. After the U.S. exit from the JCPOA in 2018, Iranian exports plunged; by 2023–2024, shipments had recovered substantially—largely to China—through a "dark fleet," document obfuscation, and ship-to-ship transfers. Industry trackers and U.S. officials estimate 2024 crude exports in the 1.6–1.8 million bpd range, even as Washington insists no sanctions have been lifted and periodically tightens enforcement against facilitators (EIA, 2024). This revenue stream sustains macro-stability and regional activities but leaves Tehran exposed to enforcement cycles and demand shocks.

The nuclear file remains the single most consequential driver of Iran's global relations. After previously undeclared facilities were exposed in 2002–2003, Tehran negotiated with the EU-3 (*European Troika*) and then the P5+1 (*China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States plus Germany*), culminating in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in July 2015 (EU/External Action/Nuclear Agreement – JCPOA). The JCPOA imposed stringent, time-bound limits on enrichment and intrusive monitoring in exchange for phased sanctions relief (Patrikarakos, 2012; Fitzpatrick, 2013). The U.S. withdrawal in 2018 and subsequent Iranian steps away from constraints—including enrichment expansion and the Iranian 'Fordow' Uranium Enrichment Plant activity—re-inserted the program into a sanctions–countersanctions

spiral. While periodic backchannel talks have explored partial de-escalation, the technical baseline has shifted since 2019, raising the costs of re-entry for all parties (VOA, 2019, November 7; Nephew, 2025, June 17.)

Much of Iran's post-2001 regional positioning reflects the unintended consequences of U.S. regime change. The removal of the Taliban and Saddam eliminated proximate adversaries and opened corridors for influence among Shia parties and militias—opportunities Tehran exploited while calibrating against the risk of U.S. encirclement (Ehteshami, 2014). The 2011 Arab uprisings underscored the limits of Iran's soft power. Support for allied regimes (notably Syria) and for armed clients cost reputationally across Sunni constituencies, even as Iran and Hezbollah framed the conflict through anti-terrorism and anti-Western prisms. The uprisings thus intensified sectarian polarization, recast Iran's deterrence relationships, and entrenched the logic of proxy war (Farmanfarmaian, 2011; Jones, 2019; Chubin, 2012).

Rapprochement and realignments: Saudi Arabia, China, and "Look East": A major inflection came with the Saudi–Iran rapprochement brokered by Beijing in March 2023. The joint trilateral statement and subsequent ministerial contacts reopened embassies and lowered the ceiling on overt bilateral confrontation, even as Yemen and the Levant remained contested spaces. The deal simultaneously showcased China's convening power, validated Tehran's "Look East" hedging, and complicated U.S.–Gulf coordination on Iran policy (Jash, 2023, June 23). In parallel, Iran deepened institutional anchoring in non-Western fora: it became a full member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (July 2023) and joined BRICS effective January 2024. Both moves serve signalling and networking functions—mitigating isolation, easing sanctions evasion, and tying Iran

closer to Chinese and Russian economic ecosystems. (Iran International, 2024, January 2; Reuters 2024; USIP, 2023, August 24.)

Russia's war in Ukraine and defence-industrial linkages: Tehran's growing defence-industrial ties with Moscow—most visibly through provision of Shahed-series UAVs (*unmanned aerial vehicles*) and associated technology—have had significant diplomatic repercussions, prompting EU/UK/U.S. sanctions and widening Iran's confrontation with the West. Open-source weapons forensics (e.g., Conflict Armament Research) have traced engines and warheads in systems used in Ukraine to Iranian producers, while Western intelligence has alleged cooperation on drone production inside Russia. These linkages both monetize Iran's UAV portfolio and embed it more deeply in great-power rivalry. (Euronews, 2022, December 12.)

Continuities and constraints: The through-lines of Iranian foreign policy thus combine enduring ideas (independence, deterrence, anti-hegemony) with learned tactics (proxy management, layered coercion) and adaptive alignments (SCO/BRICS, China-brokered détente). Internally, factional competition persists, but the decision core—Supreme Leader primacy, SNSC coordination, and IRGC operationalization—creates strong path dependence. Raisi's death and Pezeshkian's election in 2024 introduced new stylistic possibilities—especially for crisis management and tactical de-escalation—but observers across the spectrum underline that strategic direction will continue to be set by the Leader and security institutions. In that sense, Azizi's (2024) diagnosis of centralization and militarization remains a useful guide to near-term trajectories—even with modest diplomatic openings (ME Council; Reuters, July 2024).

Three propositions help reconcile the literature with the empirical record. First, much of Tehran's regional footprint is indeed opportunistic, riding exogenous crises from

2001 onward (Juneau & Razavi, 2013; Chubin, 2009). Second, agency matters: Iran has invested in organizational capabilities—the Quds Force's partner management, an expansive sanction–evasion toolkit, a rapidly maturing drone/missile complex — that convert shocks into influence at relatively low cost (Ehteshami, 2014; USIP/CFR primers). Third, this model is brittle. It depends on oil revenue vulnerable to enforcement cycles (EIA; Reuters, 2024), partners that can over-escalate, and a domestic economy and polity under sustained stress from sanctions and social contention (Mafinezam & Mehrabi, 2008). Rapprochement with Riyadh and institutional eastward anchoring mitigate isolation but do not resolve the central bargaining problem with Western powers over the nuclear program and regional posture. On balance, the Islamic Republic is neither a passing flare nor an uncontested hegemon. It is a resilient, security-centric state whose regional influence is real but contingent—amplified by networks and asymmetries, constrained by resources, legitimacy, and the reactions it provokes.

7.2 Relations Between the Republic of Albania and the Islamic Republic of Iran

Albania and Iran officially established diplomatic relations in 1999, a move that capped a decade of post-Cold War realignments. In that year, Iran opened an embassy in Tirana (Bino & Likmeta, 2023; Hunter, 2010), reflecting Albania's strategy of breaking out of its post-communist isolation and Iran's broader outreach to Eastern Europe after the Iran–Iraq War. The groundwork for ties had actually begun earlier in the 1990s, though efforts to formalize relations were fraught. Vickers and Pettifer (1997) note that Iran sought to open a mission in Tirana, but "full diplomatic relations had not been established at the time of writing, largely due to US pressure on [President] Berisha. But a trade and economic aid office does exist" (p. 225).

From the outset, the nascent relationship was tested by divergent strategic alignments. In March 1999, the same year formal ties were established, NATO launched an air campaign in Kosovo to halt Belgrade's persecution of Kosovar Albanians. Albania fully supported NATO's intervention and aligned itself with its Western partners. Iran, however, condemned NATO's involvement, decrying the bombing campaign as an illegal act of Western unilateralism that violated state sovereignty (Samii, 1999; Clawson, 1999). Iranian officials criticized the airstrikes as a breach of international law (Clawson, 24 May 1999). At the same time, Tehran tried to balance its stance by urging the Yugoslav government to respect the rights of Kosovo's Muslim Albanian population – an acknowledgment of humanitarian concerns despite Iran's opposition to NATO's use of force (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 1999). These conflicting positions introduced early strains in Albania–Iran relations and reflected fundamentally different threat perceptions and alliances: Albania was rapidly integrating into Euro-Atlantic institutions (joining NATO in 2009), whereas Iran's foreign policy was defined in opposition to Western influence. This asymmetry in alignment and worldview would resurface in later crises between Tirana and Tehran.

Despite the early friction, the late 2000s brought tentative efforts at renewed engagement. In 2009, Iran appointed a new ambassador to Albania, signaling interest in strengthening economic, cultural, and political ties in the Balkans. Albania appeared receptive at first, hoping to diversify its international partnerships and attract investments. This uptick in diplomacy suggested a modest warming in relations, as both sides explored areas of mutual benefit. However, the warming did not last. Albania's firm orientation toward the U.S. and European Union, coupled with Iran's growing tensions with the West

over issues like its nuclear program, meant that deeper cooperation never materialized. The relationship remained cordial but limited until a new flashpoint emerged in the 2010s.

A pivotal turning point came with the issue of the People's Mujahedin Organization of Iran (MEK) – an exiled Iranian dissident group. Formed in 1965 to oppose the Shah and later the Islamic Republic, the MEK had fought alongside Saddam Hussein in the Iran–Iraq War and was long based in Iraq. Tehran regards the MEK as a terrorist organization and blames it for various attacks inside Iran. Notably, Western views of the MEK evolved over time; the United States removed the MEK from its Foreign Terrorist Organizations list in 2012, following lobbying and the group's claims of renouncing violence (Council on Foreign Relations, n.d.). In 2013 Albania agreed to resettle a group of MEK members who were being evacuated from Iraq's camp systems. An initial contingent of 210 MEK members arrived in Albania in 2013 (Balkan Insight, 2013, May 17). Over the next few years, that number swelled dramatically – by 2016–2017, the total had reached several thousand MEK exiles resettled on Albanian soil (Congressional Research Service, 2025, February 2025). Western governments praised Albania's humanitarian gesture and its willingness to protect vulnerable Iranian dissidents. Even though Tehran was concerned about this, at the outset this event didn't influence the relations between the two states. Diplomatic meetings both in Tirana and Tehran were held (as we shall see at part 7.3) aiming to strengthen the cooperation in the fields of economy, culture and security.

However, the diplomatic relations became strained in 2018 when, in December, Albania expelled Iran's ambassador along with another Iranian diplomat, accusing them of plotting terrorist attacks on MEK members in Albania. Prime Minister Edi Rama's government cited national security concerns, claiming to have foiled attacks allegedly

orchestrated by Iranian operatives targeting the MEK community. The expulsions were carried out with strong backing from the United States: Washington applauded Albania's actions as a robust stand against Iranian terrorism on European soil (BBC News, 2018). Tehran, for its part, denied that its diplomats were involved in any wrongdoing and dismissed the expulsions as the result of American and Israeli pressure on Albania. The episode marked a serious deterioration in relations, and it foreshadowed further measures. Indeed, in January 2020, Albania expelled two more Iranian diplomats, again citing activities incompatible with their diplomatic status. These expulsions (in early 2020) were likewise justified by Albania on security grounds (Voice of America [VOA] News, 2020). By this point, Albania had firmly demonstrated that it would side with its Western partners' assessments of the Iranian threat. Each expulsion deepened the rift with Iran, which continued to protest its innocence and accused Albania of acting under Washington's direction.

In mid-July 2022, Albania's government digital infrastructure was hit by a major cyberattack that snarled public services and government websites. The attack was highly disruptive, temporarily knocking out online portals for everything from Albanian state services to airport systems, and was widely perceived – both in Tirana and internationally – as retaliation for Albania's hosting of the MEK (EURACTIV, 2022). The cyberattack was attributed to Iranian state actors or proxies. The hacking operation was linked to a shadowy entity calling itself "Homeland Justice," which posted antigovernment messages apparently seeking revenge against Albania for the MEK's presence. Public–private forensics tied the intrusion to contractors working on behalf of Iran's intelligence services; subsequently, the U.S. Treasury Department imposed sanctions on several Tehran-based individuals and companies affiliated with Iran's Ministry of Intelligence

and Security (MOIS) for their role in the cyber campaign (USIP/The Iranian Primer, 2022, September 9). In parallel, cybersecurity firms like Microsoft and Mandiant released detailed analyses of the malware and techniques used, conclusively pointing to Iranian origins (Microsoft, 2022). The cyberattack in Albania drew swift international condemnation. NATO denounced the attack on a member state's critical infrastructure and expressed full solidarity with Albania, underscoring the broader security implications of state-sponsored cyber aggression (NATO, 2022). A smaller follow-up attack in September 2022, involving a ransomware-style threat against Albanian data, further reinforced the sense of urgency and violation.

In response to this unprecedented cyber aggression, Albania took the extraordinary step of severing diplomatic relations with Iran. On September 7, 2022, Prime Minister Rama announced that Albania was cutting all formal ties and ordered Iranian diplomatic staff to leave the country within 24 hours. This was a historic move – possibly the first time a nation state had broken diplomatic relations solely over a cyberattack. Albania's decision was vocally supported by its allies. The United States welcomed the move and pledged support to Albania in bolstering its cyber defense, while NATO issued statements highlighting that such malicious cyber activities could have triggered collective concern under Article 5 if they had threatened critical infrastructure (NATO, 2022, September 21; White House 2022, September 7). Within the alliance, Albania's firm response was seen as setting a benchmark for dealing with state-sponsored cyber threats. Iran's reaction was one of defiance and denial: Tehran denied any involvement in the cyberattacks and blasted Albania's actions as being based on unfounded claims. Iranian officials argued that the allegations were a western-orchestrated conspiracy aimed at further isolating Iran, and they lamented the severing of ties as an overreaction (Al Jazeera, 2022). With that,

by late 2022, Albania–Iran relations had hit their lowest point in history – diplomatic ties were completely ruptured.

Since the 2022 break, formal relations remain frozen, and the ensuing period has been marked by mutual recriminations and sporadic incidents.

Internal developments in Albania regarding the MEK also gained attention. In June 2023, Albanian police raided the MEK's Ashraf-3 compound (a camp outside Tirana where thousands of MEK members reside) on suspicion that the group had violated agreements and domestic laws – reportedly related to cybersecurity rules and illegal political activities inside Albania. The Albanian authorities suspended the MEK's activities and seized dozens of the group's computers for investigation. The government articulated a legal rationale for the raid, emphasizing that Albania must enforce its laws equally (Tirana Times, 2023).

In January and February 2024, Albania's National Statistics Institute (INSTAT) was hit by another cyber intrusion that crippled its databases. Albanian security agencies quickly attributed the attack to the same Iranian-linked actors behind the 2022 incidents, publicly naming elements associated with "Homeland Justice" as responsible (Euronews Albania, 2024). These continued cyber incidents highlighted that even with diplomatic relations cut, Iran and Albania remained locked in a low-grade conflict in the cyber realm. For Albania, support from NATO partners in cyber defense has been crucial, and each incident has been cited as evidence of the long-term risks posed by Iranian cyber aggression.

As of 2025, the diplomatic breach between Albania and Iran shows no sign of mending. Albania's foreign policy remains tightly aligned with its Euro-Atlantic commitments – its partnership with the U.S. and membership in NATO have essentially

set the parameters of how it deals with Iran. With embassies closed and no direct dialogue, bilateral engagement is now minimal, confined to exchanges in international fora (such as the United Nations) when absolutely necessary. In the following part 7.3, I have explored and analyzed how these relations are portrayed by IRNA.

6.3 Portrayal of Albania in IRNA

Iran's media environment is dominated by state-owned or state-aligned outlets operating under strict censorship and political control. A handful of major news agencies shape information dissemination, each with ties to specific power centres in the Islamic Republic. The most prominent agencies include:

- *Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA; Persian:* خبرگزاری جمهوری اسلامی*) – Official state agency*. Founded in 1934 (as Pars News Agency) and restructured after the 1979 Revolution, IRNA is Iran's oldest news service. It is government-funded, managed by the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, and consistently reflects the official government line.
- *Fars News Agency* (*Persian*: خبرگزاری فارس) – Established in 2003, it is widely described as "close to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)" and serves as a hard-line outlet aligned with the regime's conservative camp.
- *Tasnim News Agency (Persian:* خبرگزاری تسنیم*)* - Launched in 2012 amid the regional upheavals of the Arab Spring, Tasnim was created to *"defend [Iran] against negative media propaganda"* and has close ties to the IRGC.
    - Mehr News Agency (MNA; Persian: خبرگزاری مهر) – *State-linked, religious establishment*. Founded in 2003, Mehr News Agency is owned by the Islamic Development Organization (linked to the Supreme Leader) and thus propagates the regime's ideological views.

- Other media agencies, with less outreach to audiences are Iranian Students' News Agency (ISNA) and Iranian Labour News Agency (ILNA)

Overall, Iran's news media are either official state organs or closely monitored entities. This tightly controlled landscape means that to understand the Iranian state's perspective on foreign affairs, one should examine the outlets that explicitly speak for the regime – chiefly, IRNA. IRNA stands out as the official news agency of Iran and the primary conduit for the regime's narratives. Several characteristics make IRNA the ideal platform for gauging Iran's official perspective:

▪ *Government Control and Line-Toeing:* IRNA is government-run and adheres to the official line on domestic and international issues.

▪ *Wide Reach in Persian:* As Iran's official agency, IRNA maintains an extensive infrastructure to broadcast the state's message. It has 60 bureaus domestically and about 30 offices abroad.

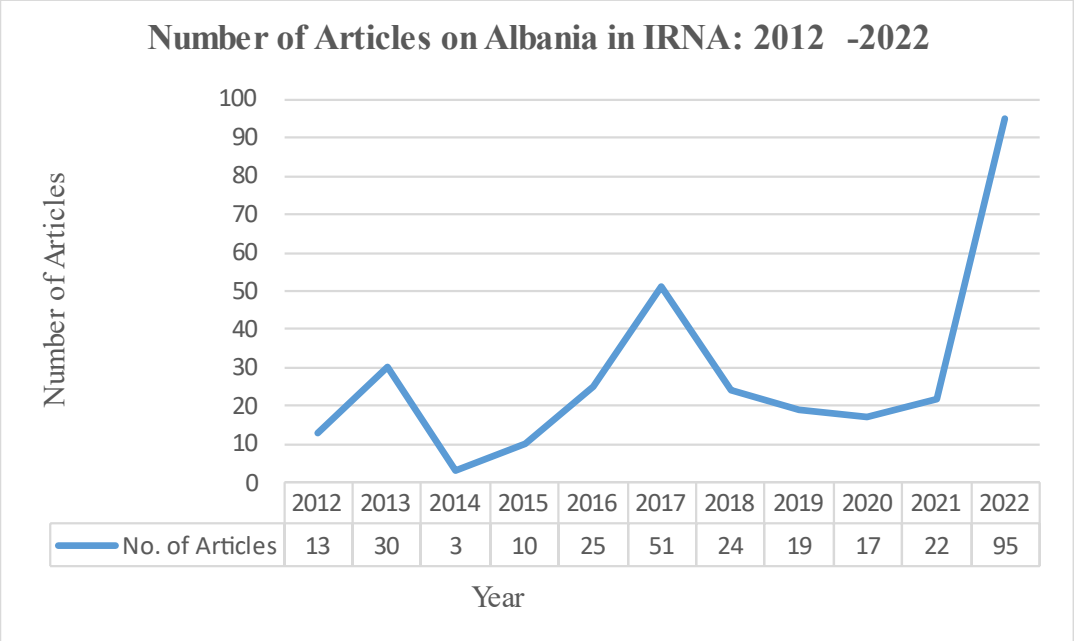
▪ *Agenda-Setting Role:* In Iran's hierarchical media system, IRNA often sets the agenda that other outlets follow. Smaller agencies and newspapers frequently republish IRNA stories, and state broadcasters take cues from IRNA's reporting. Thus, examining IRNA gives a representative sense of the state-sanctioned framing that will permeate much of the Iranian media. The choice of IRNA ensures we are capturing the narratives that Tehran's institutions themselves propagate, rather than outsider commentary.

The timeframe 2012–2022 has been selected because it encapsulates a full decade of evolving Iran–Albania relations, characterized by two main events: MEK's relocation from Iraq, which started in 2012 and the diplomatic break in 2022. It is important to emphasize that Albania barely figured in Iranian news discourse prior to 2012, thus it is not pertinent to collect data before that time. Similarly, after the diplomatic break in 2022,

there is a sharp decrease with sporadic articles of sport nature on Albania, thus making it irrelevant for the scope of the dissertation to go beyond September 2022. Stopping at 2022 therefore captures the full escalation cycle.

Thus, the 2012–2022 window provides a coherent period in which to observe how Iran's official media narrative about Albania evolved in response to real-world developments. During this period, a total of 309 articles on Albania appear in IRNA in the Persian language. The articles are not distributed equally along the years. The following graph illustrates the distribution of articles during this period:

Figure 3: Distribution of Articles on Albania in IRNA



The series of articles has four distinct phases: 1) a low-salience baseline with a brief uptick in 2013; 2) a JCPOA-era build-up that peaks in 2017; 3) a plateau of securitized coverage (2018-2021); and 4) a crisis spike in 2022. The year 2022 dominates, accounting for 30.7% of all articles (95/309). The next highest year is 2017 (16.5%). The year with the lowest number of articles is 2014 (1% of articles). Both the highs and the lows as well as radical changes are important to identify.

The rise from 13 articles in 2012 to 30 in 2013 is tied with the acceptance from Albania of the first group of MEK evacuees from Iraq (a development with high salience in Tehran's security discourse). There is a steep fall in 2014 to 3 articles, which recovers in 2015 (10 articles) and 2016 (25 articles), then peaks in 2017 (51 articles). This period maps onto the JCPA "opening," when Iranian foreign-policy messaging broadened beyond the nuclear file and IRNA amplified visits, cultural diplomacy, and agency-to-agency cooperation, including the IRNA-ATSH (Albanian Telegraphic Agency) content-sharing agreement. The 2017 high point signals the maximum breadth of themes (culture, economy, diplomacy), not yet overridden by confrontation.

From 2018-2019 the series settles into a mid-range band with the content mix shifting from toward security. Two events anchor this turn: the U.S. exit from JCPOA (May 2018) and Albania's expulsion of Iran's ambassador and a second diplomat (December 2018). In 2020 Albania declares two more Iranian diplomats "persona non grata". IRNA's tone hardens. However, the volume does not explode in these years. Ninety-five articles in 2022 constitute a clear structural break in agenda-setting. The July cyberattacks on Albanian government systems – attributed by Western investigations to Iranian actors – and Tirana's severing of diplomatic relations on 7 September generate a wave of IRNA content. Nearly one-third of all decade-long coverage is concentrated in this single crisis year, consistent with IRNA's role as the government's first-line platform for narrating high-salience disputes to domestic audiences. **Thus, the graph shows that the series are event-responsive and frame-consistent: Albania coverage rises in IRNA when it intersects with Tehran's core security narratives**.

Below I continue with a year-by-year analysis of the media portrayal of Albania in IRNA. As mentioned above, at the analysis of the graph of articles distribution in IRNA,

the yearly years (2012-2014) might be considered as a cautious start through culture and diplomacy. The coverage of Albania was characterized by a relatively neutral and measured tone. This period was defined by two parallel trends: a focus on soft-power cultural engagement, and diplomatic monitoring of Albania's domestic and regional positioning.

Iran's cultural diplomacy in Albania during this time featured prominently in IRNA's reports. Events such as the Photo Exhibition of Iran in Tirana (IRNA, 2012, January 26) and the Ashura Commemoration Ceremony in Albania (IRNA, 2012, November 26) were given detailed coverage. These cultural and religious events served a dual function. On one level, they showcased Iranian heritage and traditions to an Albanian audience, including the Shiite community in Albania, which Iran often identifies as a cultural-religious bridge. On another level, these events provided Tehran an opportunity to assert its presence in a region traditionally under the influence of Western and Turkish soft power. The Ashura ceremony, for instance, held in Tirana and reported on 26 November 2012, was portrayed not only as a religious observance but also as an opportunity to reaffirm the Islamic Republic's cultural identity abroad. Similarly, art exhibitions and poetry readings helped cultivate a more benign and intellectually oriented image of Iran—one that emphasized shared civilizational values rather than political rivalry.

Alongside these cultural narratives, IRNA also paid close attention to Albania's domestic political developments and its foreign relations, albeit with limited ideological coloring. For example, the report on Albanian Prime Minister reshuffling his cabinet in June 2012 (IRNA, 2012, June 24) presented this internal development with little editorializing, focusing instead on procedural aspects of governance. Such reporting

reflected IRNA's interest in maintaining a steady informational gaze on Albania. At the regional level, Iran's state media also reported on broader Balkan developments with implications for Albania, such as Serbia's protests against Hillary Clinton's visit to Belgrade (IRNA, 2012, October 31) or the U.S. navy docking at Albania's Durrës port in July 2012 (IRNA, 2012, July 14). While these articles mentioned Albania, the primary narrative centered on NATO's presence and U.S. influence in the region. The tone remained largely analytical, signaling awareness of the West's strategic use of Albania without presenting it as a direct threat to Iran.

While the bulk of the coverage in this period remained cultural or diplomatic, a subtle but significant shift occurred in 2013 with IRNA's first reporting on the transfer of members of the Mojahedin-e-Khalq (MKO/MEK- refered by IRNA as the 'Hypocrites'-منافقین) from Iraq to Albania. The article dated 22 June 2013, titled "*Third group of Hypocrites (MEKs) transferred from Iraq to Albania*" (IRNA 22/06/2013), noted the relocation of the third group of MEK members to Albania. At that time, the tone was relatively subdued, simply reporting the development as part of a broader regional reconfiguration of the MEK's logistics after their evacuation from Camp Ashraf in Iraq.

Third group of Hypocrites (MEKs) transferred from Iraq to Albania

… The UN announced in a statement that it had accepted a third group of 71 people for resettlement in the country, following an offer from the Albanian government to accept 210 people… Britain removed the MEK, which had been on its and other countries' terrorist lists for many years, from the list in 2008, and the European Union did the same in 2009 and the United States in 2012… The second group of MEK members was transferred to a camp in Albania on June 29, 2013… In 2011, the Iraqi government established contacts with the United Nations to expel the MEK from the country… In an agreement signed between Baghdad and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, about 3,400 MEK members must leave Iraq.

22/06/2013

https://irna.ir/xj22NQ

Following the article on the transfer of the third group of MEK members (22 June 2013), IRNA displayed a particular interest in Albanian politics, initiating extensive coverage of political developments in Albania, especially the parliamentary elections of

23 June 2013. Between 21 and 27 June 2013, it published approximately eleven distinct articles.

Below is a timeline of articles related to the 2013 parliamentary electoral process.



A look at Albania's parliamentary elections based on the new structure of the country's parliament

...The Albanian Election Commission announced that about 3,000 observers from inside and outside the country will monitor the integrity of the voting process in polling stations nationwide... *"Catherine Ashton,"* the European Union's High Representative for Foreign Affairs, and *"Štefan Füle,"* the EU Commissioner for Enlargement, recently warned that Albania's political leaders must ensure the conditions for democratic elections so that all parties and citizens can accept the election results...

21/06/2013

https://irna.ir/xj22gG



Albania's parliamentary elections begin - will the political deadlock end?

According to IRNA news sources in the Balkans, about 3.3 million eligible voters in Albania can vote at the polls to elect 140 representatives, and this is the eighth parliamentary election since 1990, the year communism fell in the country… Edi Rama, leader of the Socialist Party and former mayor of Tirana, who has no doubt about his victory in the parliamentary elections, warned of the possibility of irregularities and fraud by the conservatives… He expressed hope that this round of parliamentary elections would be conducted in accordance with European Union standards and without any violations… Sali Berisha, leader of the

Democratic Party and current Prime Minister of Albania—who has regarded himself as the guardian of democracy since the fall of communism in the country—has promised in his election campaign a six-percent increase in salaries and pensions… He has also pledged that, if victorious, he will bring Albania into membership of the European Union.

23/06/2013

https://irna.ir/xj235D



Shooting between election rivals in northern Albania has left one dead and three injured

According to IRNA from Balkan news sources, Tofiq Soleimani, spokesman for the Albanian Police Department, told reporters in Tirana that Gjon Gjoni, an activist of the left-wing opposition party, was killed in a shooting with the ruling Democratic Party's candidate in the parliamentary elections that began this morning.

23/06/2013

https://irna.ir/xj23c7



The ruling coalition and the Opposition of Albania each called themselves the victory of the elections

Albania's ruling coalition's current prime minister, Sali Berisha, and opposition Socialist Party leader Edi Rama each declared victory in the parliamentary elections about an hour after the vote ended.

24/06/2013

https://irna.ir/xj23vd



The opposition Socialist Party's leading in the Albania elections

Preliminary results from Albania's weekend elections on Monday indicated that the opposition Socialist Party was leading, and Edi Rama, the party's leader, firmly called on Sali Berisha, the outgoing Prime Minister, to acknowledge defeat… According to Agence France-Presse (AFP) from Tirana, Rama told reporters: "I have a message for our rivals, and it is that there always comes a moment when one must accept defeat"… The Albanian Election Commission, after counting 24 percent of the votes, announced that the opposition bloc was leading in several areas, including the capital, Tirana… According to projections by the Socialist Party, the opposition alliance could secure 84 out of 140 seats in the parliament.

24/06/2013

https://irna.ir/xj23H3



Albania's Socialist Party calls on prime minister to accept defeat in elections

Rama, the leader of Albania's Socialists, told reporters on Monday that it was clear that the Socialists were leading in most cities, noting that the vote count was still ongoing.

24/06/2013

https://irna.ir/xj23Hj

Parliamentary elections and Albania's European destiny

The parliamentary elections in Albania, the final results and the ruling party's approaches to accepting a possible victory of the opposition could directly affect the future of this country's accession to the European Union. According to the latest news from the counting of votes in Albania's parliamentary elections, opposition parties have managed to win nearly 80 of the

140 parliamentary seats, surpassing the coalition supporting current Prime Minister Sali Berisha.

25/06/2013

https://irna.ir/xj244W



Albanian Prime Minister Admits Defeat in Parliamentary Elections

According to IRNA, citing news sources, Sali Berisha admitted the defeat of the ruling coalition in the parliamentary elections and added: "We accept the results of the parliamentary elections and I wish success to my electoral opponent." Berisha, who was waiting for the final counting of the ballot papers, appeared with his supporters in the center of Tirana on Wednesday night and, accepting full responsibility for the defeat in the elections, resigned from the Democratic Party, which he was the leader of, and said that he would continue his political activity as a member of parliament.

27/06/2013

https://irna.ir/xj25d3

I will not dwell on the analysis of these articles, due to their large number, but I wish to emphasize that such an output—eight articles and an extended commentary—represents an unusually intense coverage of the parliamentary electoral process for a small country like Albania. This is particularly striking when we take into account the level of coverage of these elections in Arab media, such as Al-Arabiya, or in the Israeli Ynet, where electoral processes generally receive very limited attention compared to other news, and are most often confined to reporting only the election results.

I also note that some of these articles are highly extended, including commentary, statistical details, and presentations of smaller, non-contending parties, exceeding sometimes 1,300 words; as in the case of the article “Parliamentary Elections and Albania’s European Destiny.”

At the same time, there is a clear tendency to portray the opposition as the favorite to win the elections and as a source of hope for fundamental changes in the country's development along the path of European integration. It seems that, during this period, Iran was anxiously awaiting possible political changes in Albania, considering that the agreement for the transfer of MEK members from "Camp Ashraf in Iraq" to Albania had been signed by the Berisha government and came immediately after Hillary Clinton's visit to Albania in November 2012. The protests in Serbia on the occasion of Clinton's visit on 31 October 2012 ("Serbians rally against Clinton's visit to Belgrade," 31/10/2012), in which Albania was also mentioned, may also be viewed in this context.

It appears that Iran anticipated that, with the coming to power of the left-wing PS–LSI coalition, it would develop closer relations with the Albanian government and state. The main reason for this expectation was precisely the presence in Albania of MEK members, who would soon come to be regarded abroad as the "Iranian opposition in exile", while IRNA would consistently refer to them as the "Terrorist Group of Hypocrites" (گروهک تروریستی منافقین – *Geruhake Terroristiye Monafikin*), and later as the "terrorists residing in Albania" (تروریست‌های آلبانی نشین – *terorist'haye Albani nashin*)—and not as the "People's Mujahedin of Iran Organization" (Sazemane Moxhahedine Khalke Iran, سازمان مجاهدین خلق ایران), the name by which the organization refered to itself and was internationally recognized.

Another indicator of the importance IRNA attributed to these elections and political developments in Albania is the fact that almost all of these articles contain images related to the events—something that was not commonly seen in its coverage of news from Albania in the preceding period. Within the framework of media framing and the impact

of images in this context, I have chosen, for a significant number of the articles selected for analysis from 2013 onwards, to also present the corresponding images.

Notably, the selection of visuals evolves from neutral depictions—such as the Albanian flag or a ballot paper—to more evocative images that convey electoral tensions while foregrounding the most prominent Albanian political figures: those with whom Iran hoped to build more fruitful ties—the outgoing and the incoming prime ministers.

This tendency - reflecting an effort to deepen cooperation and intensify relations between the two countries, is also evident in the subsequent news reports, continuing up until the formation of the new government, as follows:



Dr. Jahangiri's congratulatory message to the Prime Minister of Albania

Mr. Edi Rama
Prime Minister of the Republic of Albania
I would like to express my sincere satisfaction and congratulations on the occasion of your appointment as the Prime Minister of Albania. The Islamic Republic of Iran, taking into account the existing capacities in the two countries, has always welcomed the strengthening and expansion of relations and I hope that in the new period, we will witness increasing development and greater mobility in bilateral relations in all political, economic and cultural fields. I pray to God Almighty for your health and success and the prosperity and pride of the Albanian government and people.
Eshaq Jahangiri
First Vice President of the Islamic Republic of Iran
04/09/2013
https://irna.ir/xjzKQH

This article contains an image of the logo of the "Press Office of the Presidency of the Islamic Republic of Iran and conveys the congratulations of the Vice President of the

Islamic Republic—i.e., not the President himself— which may be interpreted as a cautious stance by Iran, pending the new Albanian government's position on issues such as the MEK and the nuclear agreement. Two months later, on the occasion of Albania's Independence Day, the newly elected Iranian president himself sent a message of congratulations to the President of Albania.

In the same vein, IRNA published two separate articles on the formation of the new government in Albania: the first concerning the decree of the President authorizing the leader of the Socialist Party, Edi Rama, to form the new government; and the second reporting the Albanian parliament's vote of confidence in the Rama cabinet.



The President of Albania appointed the leader of the Socialist Party to form a government

According to IRNA, Balkan news sources, the Socialist Party and the Socialist Movement for Integration won 83 seats out of 140 in the parliament in the eighth parliamentary election in Albania since 1990, when communism collapsed, in June of this year... The leader of the Movement for Integration, Ilir Meta, was elected as the new speaker of the Albanian House of Representatives by the other coalition party.

10/09/2013

https://irna.ir/xj2T5h



Albania's parliament gave the vote of confidence to the country's new prime minister

According to IRNA from foreign sources, while explaining the government program and introducing the ministers of his cabinet, Edi Rama, the socialist leader and new prime minister of Albania, pledged to accelerate the stages of European integration and improve the country's economic situation… Referring to the establishment of democratic reforms in the country, he called the new government's priority to strengthen the rule of law and fight financial corruption in the country.

15/09/2013

https://irna.ir/xj2WRy

In another article, in October 2013, IRNA reports on a meeting of the Iranian Ambassador to Albania with the Mayor of Tirana, Mr. Lulzim Basha, who had just been elected leader of the Democratic Party in July 2013. IRNA covered this event with a statement from the Iranian Ambassador in Tirana, but without providing images from the meeting. The only image shown depicts the Iranian Ambassador in Tirana.



The interaction between the people makes the foundations of Iran's and Albania's friendship stronger

The Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Albania on Wednesday met with Lulzim Basha, Mayor of Tirana, and pointed out the significant cultural, linguistic, and religious commonalities between Tehran and Tirana, saying: Strengthening interaction between people

> will increase the understanding between citizens of the two countries and strengthen the foundations of friendship between the two nations... In this meeting, Tirana Mayor Lulzim Basha also welcomed the strengthening of interaction between the capitals of the two countries, referring to the role of Iranian culture and civilization in the Balkan region, which has historical roots.
>
> 02/10/2013
> https://irna.ir/xj39vY

In 2013, alongside its pronounced interest in political developments, IRNA's coverage of Albania also addressed several domestic and bilateral issues: the fight against narcotics; protests over the proposed dismantling of Syria's chemical weapons in Albania; and diplomatic items such as President Rouhani's congratulatory message on Albania's National Day and the Iranian ambassador's meeting with Foreign Minister Ditmir Bushati. Selected examples include:

In its 16 November 2013 article, "Albania opposes the destruction of Syria's chemical weapons in the country," IRNA reports: "The Albanian government on Friday rejected a U.S. request to destroy Syria's chemical weapons in the country," framing the decision as "resistance by the Albanian government to the U.S. administration's request," whereas in fact the move followed intense domestic public opposition. Albania is depicted as a small, impoverished state: "The unexpected opposition of this small, impoverished country in the Balkans has cast doubt on the ability of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to transfer about 1,300 tons of Syrian chemicals, including mustard gas and sarin, out of the country." IRNA also characterizes the stance of NATO-member Albania as a diplomatically "unexpected surprise," stressing that it came in response to a U.S. appeal: "Few diplomats expected the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) member to oppose the destruction of Syria's chemical weapons, which Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama said was at the direct request of the United States."



Albania opposes the destruction of Syria's chemical weapons in the country
16/11/2013
https://irna.ir/xj3HN4

On 28 November 2013, in an article titled “President’s congratulatory message on Albania’s National Day,” IRNA published a message from Iran’s President, Hassan Rouhani, addressed to the President of the Republic of Albania, Bujar Nishani, on the occasion of Albania’s national holiday. Among other things, it stated: “I hope that, given the historical ties between the two nations and the commencement of the activities of the new governments in the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Albania, we will witness the growing development of bilateral relations in all political, economic, and cultural fields, as well as the promotion of international cooperation.”

It is worth noting that Hassan Rouhani was elected President of Iran in June 2013 and served until 2021. In foreign policy, he is known for paving the way toward the signing of the JCPOA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action), negotiations for which had already begun with the involvement of the P5+1 (the five permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany).



President's congratulatory message on Albania's National Day
28/11/2013
https://irna.ir/xjzLJJ

In fact, in IRNA's articles from this period, the issue of negotiations to resolve "Iran's nuclear question" receives particular priority and is presented as an opportunity to lift the sanctions imposed in 2006 and thereafter by the UN Security Council, following Iran's refusal to halt its uranium-enrichment program. After publishing President Rouhani's congratulatory message on Albania's national holiday, IRNA followed up in December 2013 with two articles on Iran's efforts in this regard and the possible impact of these efforts on bilateral relations.

On December 2, 2013, IRNA published an article titled "Iran's ambassador to Albania: Iran is not looking for a nuclear weapon", which states: "The Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Albania said in an interview with a reporter from the Albanian newspaper "Gazeta Shqiptare" (Albanian Newspaper): Iran is not seeking to acquire nuclear weapons". According to IRNA, the Iranian ambassador in Tirana said that this stage of negotiations between the P5+1 Group and Iran could be a good start for taking bigger steps towards a final resolution of the issue, adding: "The Islamic Republic of Iran has embarked on this path with serious political will pursue it with firm determination and open eyes." Speaking about Iran's newly elected president, Hassan Rouhani, he noted

that “the majority of the people voted for the candidate whose main slogan—both domestically and internationally—is moderation and dialogue based on logic.”

The article ends with the Ambassador expressing "hope for the development of economic interactions between Tehran and Tirana, saying: The Islamic Republic of Iran can meet the needs of Albania in sectors such as oil, gas, petrochemical products, industrial goods, agricultural machinery, and technical and engineering services...The geographical location of Iran and Albania can turn the two countries into each other's gateways to two important regions: the Balkans, Central Asia, the Caucasus, and the Persian Gulf".



Iran's ambassador to Albania: Iran is not looking for a nuclear weapon
02/12/2013
https://irna.ir/xj3W3f

This article was followed by another of December 6, 2013, titled "Albania: Iran's new approach to resolving the nuclear issue is promising", which stated:

> The Albanian Foreign Minister, in a meeting with our country's ambassador in Tirana on Friday, welcomed the recent developments in the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran since the beginning of Mr. Rouhani's government noting: “Iran's new approach to resolving the nuclear issue is very promising"… The Albanian Foreign Minister proposed exploring areas of cooperation between the two countries – particularly in the economic and cultural sectors -given the significant capacities on both sides…



Albania: Iran's new approach to resolving the nuclear issue is promising
06/12/2013
https://irna.ir/xj3Yp9

In 2014, IRNA's media coverage of Albania begins with an article dated 5 January, titled "Printing a calendar with religious occasions of the Ahl al-Bayt (a) in Albania," which states: "According to a report on Sunday by the Islamic Culture and Communications Organization, this calendar was printed on the occasion of the new year". It is worth noting here that the Islamic Culture and Communications Organization is a governmental body subordinate to Iran's Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance.

The publication of a religious calendar does not usually constitute news, except when it is part of a broader narrative—which, in this case, is the portrayal of Albania as a regional epicenter of Shi'a Islam, that is, as a religious gateway for the projection of soft power. In this context, the article establishes doctrinal parallels by mentioning, within the same paragraph, the shrine of Abas Ali on Mount Tomor in Albania and the shrine of Imam Ali (bin Abu Talib) in Najaf, and it confers a regional dimension on the Shi'a presence: "This calendar is decorated with images of the shrine of Hazrat Abbas Ali on Mount Tomor in Albania, Bektashi strongholds in Albania, Greece, Serbia and Egypt, [and] the holy shrine of Imam Ali (AS) in the city of Najaf…". This narrative would

subsequently remain a recurring feature of IRNA's religiously themed articles relating to Albania.



Printing a calendar featuring the religious occasions of the Ahl al-Bayt in Albania
05/01/2014
https://irna.ir/xj4kMc

This new wave of Iran's efforts to strengthen relations with Albania was reinforced by the message conveyed by the President of Iran, Hassan Rouhani, during a special meeting with the new Ambassador of the Republic of Albania to Iran, Mr. Genci Muçaj[5], on the occasion of the presentation of his credentials. In an IRNA article dated February 24, 2014, titled "President of the Republic in the meeting with the new ambassador of Albania: I hope we will see closer relations between Iran and Albania," the Iranian President, Hassan Rouhani, stated: "Stability in your region and good relations with Iran are among our goals, and I hope that we will soon see closer relations between Iran and Albania."

According to IRNA, this was reciprocated by the Albanian Ambassador, Muçaj, who said: "…With your new thinking and approach in the international arena, the world has come to understand that Iran holds a significant place in the region and in the world."

[5] Genci Mucaj was nominated by the President of Albania as the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Albania to Republic of Turkey (resident) and as non-resident ambassador to the Republic of Azerbaijan, Republic of Georgia the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the Republic of Kirghizstan.

Transitional Phase (2015–2017): Increase in the Intensity of Articles as the result of the increase in the cooperation between the two countries.

The period between 2015 and 2017 marked a transitional stage in the Iranian media's portrayal of Albania, as reflected in IRNA's reporting. Regardless of the warm tones of the articles between 2012-2014, one cannot but observe that in 2014 there are only two articles, one in January and one in February about Albania. In 2015 the number of articles increases to ten distributed pretty much throughout the year. The novelty here is that for the first time IRNA starts to write also for social, economic and judicial problems of Albania such as student protests, emigration, judicial reform etc. After 2015, the number of articles increases radically with 25 articles in 2016 and 51 articles in 2017. This period is of paramount importance to analyze because it is marked by the signatory of JCPOA by Iran and 5+1 Group, which had its impact in Albania as well. The JCPOA aimed at easing economic sanctions on Iran, which in turn would create opportunities to increase the volume of economic relations with Europe, primarily in the petrochemical sector. Iran sought to exploit this new reality as an opportunity to raise the level of its relations with Albania by promising an expansion of economic ties. However, given Albania's small size, it was not a primary focus of Iran's economic interests; rather – as will be shown below – Iran appears to have sought to leverage this opening as a form of soft power to gain access to the MEK issue in Albania.

Dominance of Soft Power – Cultural, Religious and Economic Diplomacy: IRNA gave considerable attention to Iranology conferences held in Tirana, poetry events and literary analysis seminars, and celebrations of religious milestones such as the birth anniversaries of Imam Ali and Hazrat Fatima. These events functioned as soft-power tools to promote Iranian culture and religious identity. For instance, the conference on

Iranian poetry and cultural philosophy (3 January 2015) and the cultural event celebrating the work of Iranian poet and singer Shahram Nazeri in the city of Berat (8 march 2015) were highlighted as successful instances of bilateral intellectual exchange.



Explaining and Studying Iranian Poems in Albania

According to the IRNA cultural group on Saturday, the "Iranian Poetry Night" ceremony was held in Tirana with the support of the Albanian Center for Oriental Studies and the participation of the Saadi Shirazi Cultural Foundation… The ceremony, which was attended by Ermal Bega, the head of the Albanian Center for Oriental Studies, Abbas Azizi, the head of the Saadi Shirazi Cultural Foundation, Ghanvi, the representative of the Iranian Embassy in Albania, and a group of Albanian intellectuals and cultural figures, discussed on the issue of the Albanian's connection and familiarity with Iranian poetry.

03/01/2015

https://irna.ir/xj8jTq



Celebrating Shahram Nazeri in Albania

According to the IRNA Cultural Group on Sunday, this ceremony was held in continuation of the cooperation between the Iranian Cultural Delegation, the Cultural Center and Library

> of Vexhi Buharaja in Albania and the High School of Arts in Berat, with the presence of Abbas Azizi, head of the Saadi Shirazi Cultural Foundation, and a group of intellectuals, cultural figures, and young Albanian enthusiasts… In this ceremony, Renuard Mimani, head of the Margarita Tutulani Cultural Center, expressed his gratitude to Professor Shahram Nazeri and delivered a speech celebrating traditional and classical Iranian poetry and music and its impact on the people and cultural figures.
>
> 08/03/2015
>
> https://irna.ir/xj92Zx

A very interesting article as a case study is the one regarding an interview that the head of the Rufai Tariqat in Albania, Sheikh Qemaludin Reka, gives to IRNA on the occasion of the 26th anniversary of the death of Ayatollah Khomeini. In this article tittled: "*Head of the Albanian Muslim Community: Imam Khomeini (RA) was the factor behind the spreading Islam*", Sheh Qemaludin Reka is not presented as a leader of the Rufai Tariqat in Albania, which has a modest number of members, but as the "*Head of the Albanian Muslim Community*" (رئیس جمعیت مسلمانان آلبانی) – a community that represents the majority of Muslims in Albania. The article makes no mention of Sheh Qemaludin Reka as a leader of the Halwati Tariqat. According to IRNA, Qemaludin Reka said referring to Khomeini "Imam Khomeini (RA) caused a large number of people in southeastern Europe to convert to Islam... his thoughts illuminate the path of Muslims", and called acting in compliance with Imam Khomeini's teachings as an undeniable necessity for Muslims. In the perception of the Iranian public, this creates the impression that the majority of Muslim Albanians, represented by the "Head of the Community", consider Ayatollah Khomeini as a guidance for all the Muslims and as a disseminator of the Islamic Religion in the world. Such "lapses", reappear later in IRNA's media coverage of Albania, which tends to present the Muslim population of Albania as predominantly Shi'ite-Sufi… These are typical cases of distorting facts and deforming reality through the use of terms and coinages.



Head of the Albanian Muslim Community: Imam Khomeini (RA) was the factor behind the trend towards Islam
02/06/2015
https://irna.ir/xj9SqM

Similarly, in the article "*The Ceremony of The Birth of the Prophet (pbuh) and Imam Xha'far al-Sadiq (a) in Tirana*", the celebration of the Prophet Muhammad's birth in Tirana (18 December 2016) was reported with an emphasis on interfaith harmony and Islamic unity. These initiatives were designed to emphasize Iran's commitment to cultural cooperation. It is worth noting that the celebration of the Prophet Muhammad's birthday —an established religious event in the Islamic tradition in Albania—was, in this instance, celebrated on the same day as the birthday of Jafar al-Sadiq', an eighth-century Muslim scholar who is considered by Shi'ites to be the sixth Imam in the order of the Twelve Imams of Shi'ism. This type of dual celebration is not part of the religious tradition rituals of Albanian Muslims. Moreover, in the historical context, although both were born in the same lunar month, Rabi al-Awwal, the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad falls on the twelfth day of that month, while the birthday of Jafar al-Sadiq falls on the seventeenth, thus a difference of five days. This distinction is further confirmed by the fact that the Bektashis—the Shi'a Sufi order with the largest number of followers in the Albanian territories—do not observe this kind of joint commemoration.

It is evident, therefore, that we are dealing with an initiative to create a new, "hybrid" rite that fuses Albanian Muslim tradition with Iranian Shi'ite practice by celebrating both birthdays on the same day. The presence at the ceremony of Iran's ambassador and the cultural attaché of the Iranian embassy in Tirana indicates that Iran was a party to this initiative.



The Ceremony of The Birth of the Prophet (pbuh) and Imam Xha'far al-Sadiq in Tirana

The ceremony to celebrate the birth of the Holy Prophet of Islam, Hazrat Muhammad Mustafa (PBUH) and Imam Jafar Sadiq (AS), was held on Friday night in the presence of the Ambassador and Cultural Counselor of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Tirana, the capital of Albania.

18/12/2016

https://irna.ir/xjhY5g

Iran's engagement with Albania in trade diplomacy and media collaboration continued throughout 2016-2017. IRNA noted several joint meetings between Iranian and Albanian press agencies and references to the publication of Iranian cultural and scientific journals in Tirana. These efforts sought to maintain a narrative of mutual respect and cooperation in areas outside of politics.

IRNA devoted particular attention in this period to its cooperative relations with the Albanian Telegraphic Agency (ATA) and Albanian Radio and Television (RTSH), covering these developments in several dedicated articles.

On 27 February 2016, on the occasion of a visit to Iran by the Director of Albanian Radio and Television, Martin Leka, IRNA published two related articles titled "*Albania radio and television director: IRNA is the source of news from the Persian Gulf region*" and "*IRNA and Albanian Radio and Television (RTSH) expand cooperation*." According to IRNA, the RTSH director—accompanied on this visit by Besnik Mustafaj, senior adviser, and Ilir Keko, director of the network's film and documentary department—emphasized: "Our visit to Iran marks the starting point of bilateral relations, and this meeting demonstrates both sides' interest in developing these relations." According to IRNA, during this visit Leka held a meeting with Mohammad Khodadi, Managing Director of the Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA), at which a cooperation agreement was signed between IRNA and RTSH. In this meeting, the Director of RTSH "expressed his surprise at the massive participation of the Iranian people at the ballot boxes in the 10^{th} term of the Islamic Consultative Assembly elections and the 5th term of the Assembly of Experts, saying: I visited some polling stations in Tehran yesterday. The presence of the people was truly magnificent and admirable." He also "expressed his satisfaction with the nuclear agreement between Iran and the P5+1 countries, considering it a basis for strengthening peace and friendship in the world, and expressed his hope that media cooperation between Iran and the Republic of Albania would also expand under the new circumstances".



Albania radio and television director: IRNA is the source of news from the Persian Gulf region
27/02/2016
https://irna.ir/xjdQV2



IRNA and the Albanian Radio Television expand cooperation
27/02/2016
https://irna.ir/xjdR2g

This cooperation between IRNA and Albanian media expanded in February 2017 with the signing of a cooperation agreement with the Albanian Telegraphic Agency (ATA). The agreement was concluded during a visit to Tehran by ATA's director, Gëzim Podgorica, and was covered in two separate articles on 21 February 2017 titled "*Direct*

exchange of news between Iran and Albania with IRNA and ATA cooperation" and "*Iran and Albania expand their news cooperation*."

According to IRNA, during his meeting with Mohammad Khodadi, Managing Director of the Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA), Gëzim Podgorica, the Director of ATA, said: "Until now, we have been translating news related to Iran from media outlets in different countries, but from now on, we hope to receive the news directly from IRNA". In a separate meeting with the Director General of Foreign Media of Iran's Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, Mohammad Jafar Safi, Podgorica stated: "It is important for us to publish accurate and verified news," while Mohammad Jafar Safi suggested that Albanian radio and television networks establish direct relations with Iranian radio and television.



Direct exchange of news between Iran and Albania with IRNA and ATA cooperation
21/02/2017
https://irna.ir/xjjJR9



Iran and Albania expand their news cooperation

Tehran - IRNA - The Director General of Foreign Media of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance and the Head of the Official News Agency of Albania emphasized the determination of both sides to expand news cooperation between Tehran and Tirana.

21/02/2017

https://irna.ir/xjjK36

In addition to its institutional cooperation with RTSH and ATA, during this period IRNA gave special attention to media collaboration with Albanian publicists and commentators, an example of which is the visit to Iran by the well-known Albanian publicist and commentator Ben Andoni (Baftjar Luzati).

In an article of October 2017, titled "*Passing traditional journalism and entering the digital age, obstacles and challenges*" IRNA reports:

> Baftyar Luzati, editor-in-chief of the political and social weekly 'Java' in Albania, explained the process of transitioning from traditional journalism to the digital age at the special session of the international section of the 23rd edition of the Press Exhibition, and examined the obstacles and challenges facing modern journalism, including the spread of fake news and the deviation from news values to attract the audience.

In another article dated 31 October 2017, titled "Albanian journalist: Iran is a cultural superpower", IRNA reports:

> …On the sidelines of a meeting between a delegation of European media and a group of Albanian journalists in the Islamic Republic News Agency, Andoni told an IRNA reporter: "This is my third visit to Iran and I was previously in Iran to cover parliamentary elections."… The editor-in-chief of the Java news agency continued: "During this time, I have been observing the young generation of Iran and, to be honest, I have witnessed more freedoms in these three years."



Passing traditional journalism and entering the digital age, obstacles and challenges

29/10/2017

https://irna.ir/xjn48T



Albanian journalist: Iran is a cultural superpower

…The editor-in-chief of the JAVA news agency continued: During this time, I have been looking at the young generation of Iran and, to be honest, I have witnessed more freedoms in these three years… Andoni added: "Most of the news we see and hear in European media about Iran consists of 'propaganda attacks.' For example, you can look at BBC or CNN—most of their reports are about nuclear weapons… Iran is a cultural superpower; it is a treasure of traditions, culture, and music. We are very interested in your culture and want it to spread throughout the world, rather than hearing only news about nuclear weapons from Iran

31/10/2017

https://irna.ir/xjn4ZL

The IRNA coverage of cultural cooperation between Albania and Iran goes hand in hand with the coverage of the cooperation in the economic diplomacy. The JCPOA agreement occupies an important part in these articles. It appears frequently from both parties, Albanian and Iranian representatives, which shows the importance of this agreement in the international arena and hence on the international relations between the two countries. Below is a presentation of a part of some articles focused mainly on the economic and political cooperation between the two countries. Hence, in an article dated May 3, 2016, titled: "Albania invites Iran's private sector to share production and exports to the European market", which describes the meeting in Iran of the Deputy Foreign Minister of the Republic of Albania, Selim Belortaja with the Head of Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Belortaja called for investment by Iranian firms in the country for joint production and exports to the European market. He added: "Albania's imports are three times the country's exports, and Tirana's trade balance with Tehran is negative; Iran exports $1.4 million worth of goods to Albania annually, while it imports less than $1 million from this country".



Albania invites Iran's private sector to share production and exports to European market
03/03/2016
https://irna.ir/xjdThZ

On 19 October 2016, IRNA published an article on the occasion of the presentation of the letters of credence by the new Iranian Ambassador to the Republic of Albania, Gholamhossein Mohammadnia (who, two years later, would be declared persona non grata). In this article, titled "Albania's President: I value economic and cultural exchanges with Iran," it is reported that the President of the Republic of Albania, Bujar Nishani, "described Iran as a great country with a rich culture and world history, and said: I highly value the economic and cultural exchanges between the two nations."



The President of Albania: I value economic and cultural exchanges with Iran
19/10/2016
https://irna.ir/xjhjKd

A month later, on 14 November 2016, IRNA published another article on political cooperation between Iran and Albania. This time, it was another high-ranking Albanian official, the the Speaker (Chairman) of the Albanian Parliament, who emphasized the value of relations between the two countries. The article, titled "The Head of the Albanian Parliament: Iran has a great historical and civilizational status," describes the meeting of Ambassador Mohammadnia with the Speaker of the Albanian Parliament, Mr. Ilir Meta, who, according to IRNA, "considered the relations between the two countries to be good in all fields, especially cultural, given their historical and cultural affinities, and added

that Tirana and Tehran can also enhance their economic cooperation by leveraging the extensive opportunities they possess".



Albania's Parliament Speaker: Iran has a great historical and civilizational status
14/11/2016
https://irna.ir/xjhBK7

This "soft power" trend continued throughout 2017 with several high-level meetings. Particularly noteworthy is the media coverage of the visit of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania, Ditmir Bushati to Tehran, where he met with the highest-ranking officials of the Iranian state, accompanied by a delegation of major Albanian business representatives. IRNA dedicated intensive coverage to this visit.

The first article on the visit, dated 15 January 2017 and titled "Albanian Foreign Minister: We are determined to remove all trade barriers with Iran," reported that the Albanian foreign minister arrived in Tehran on 15 January at the head of a trade and economic delegation. The senior Albanian official identified the gas, agricultural products, and tourism sectors as priority areas for cooperation with Iran, adding: "In addition to these sectors in which we seek special cooperation with Iran, we also welcome cooperation with Iran in other fields." Bushati emphasized: "I will soon speak with my Iranian counterpart about a comprehensive package to support investment in the two

countries, including the avoidance of double taxation for investors." These statements—made during a meeting with the head of Iran's Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture in Tehran — indicate that the primary focus of the visit was the development of economic relations between Albania and Iran.



Albania's Foreign Minister: We are determined to remove all trade barriers with Iran
15/01/2017
https://irna.ir/xjjhtw

Also on 15 January 2017, Minister Bushati met with his Iranian counterpart, Mohammad Javad Zarif. In the article related to this meeting, titled "The Albanian Foreign Minister: Conditions have been provided for the deepening of relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran," IRNA reported that "the Albanian Foreign Minister, referring to Tirana's will and interest in expanding relations with our country, said: 'Unlike in the past, the time and conditions are now in place to deepen relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran; for this reason, Albania has decided to open its embassy in Tehran'".

For his part, his Iranian counterpart, Zarif, stated: "There are many opportunities to develop and strengthen cooperation in the political, cultural, and economic fields between the two countries", mentioning as potential areas of cooperation "road construction, railways, and energy (electricity and gas), in which Iran has the requisite technology". In

addition, during this meeting, the Iranian Foreign Minister "stated that European countries, including the Balkan countries, are suffering from the growth of extremism and expressed Iran's readiness for cooperation between the two countries in combating extremism and terrorism."

It should be noted at this point that this "cooperation between the two countries in combating extremism and terrorism" appears to be a diplomatic way of signaling the presence and activities of the MEK organization in Albania—an organization to which IRNA, in its articles, consistently refers as the "Terrorist Group of Hypocrites," thus reflecting the rhetoric used by Iran. This seems, therefore, to be a hint at establishing a "cooperative relationship" aimed at monitoring the MEK—in other words, to gain access to information, and more, concerning this organization. Minister Bushati did not comment on this point, which may be understood as a sign of the Albanian authorities' unwillingness to cooperate with Iran on this matter.



The Albanian Foreign Minister: Conditions have been provided for the strengthening of relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran
15/01/2017
https://irna.ir/xjjhD6

On 16 January 2017, Minister Bushati met with the President of Iran, Hassan Rouhani—the highest-level official meeting between the two countries. In the article published on this occasion, titled "*Rouhani: The post-JCPOA period is an appropriate opportunity to deepen cooperation between Iran and Albania*," IRNA writes:

> In a meeting with the Albanian Foreign Minister, the President said: The post-JCPOA period has provided a good opportunity to develop and deepen Tehran–Tirana cooperation in all fields, especially economic and trade, and the private sectors of the two countries should make good use of this opportunity… Recalling the extensive capacities and capabilities of the two countries, the President deemed cultural cooperation – including between the academic and scientific centers of the two countries – essential.

It should be emphasized that, within its soft-power strategy, Iran assigns particular importance to cooperation in the academic and scientific sphere—a priority later reflected in several joint activities with the Albanian Academy of Sciences—viewing this as an opportunity to highlight "shared cultural-religious roots" through institutions that produce scholarly knowledge.

Further, during the visit—and in parallel with the foreign minister, Zarif—President Rouhani "continued by stressing the necessity of a common fight against violence, extremism, and terrorism, saying: Terrorism is a global problem and one of our great tasks is to combat violence, especially terrorism," adding that: "Tehran is ready to cooperate with various countries, including Albania, in the fight against terrorism." Although couched in diplomatic language, within the framework of "a common fight against violence, extremism, and terrorism," it is clear that Iran's primary concern lies with the activity of MEK members in Albania—whom IRNA subsequently also refers to as "the group of hypocrite terrorists residing in Albania." This is borne out by the fact that, in these top-level official meetings, senior Iranian officials repeatedly link the development of comprehensive economic–cultural cooperation to "Iran's readiness to cooperate with Albania in combating extremism and terrorism."

As for Minister Bushati's position, IRNA reports:

> Confirming that the JCPOA has opened new horizons in Iran's cooperation with the world, including Albania, the Albanian Foreign Minister said: "By developing a roadmap, we are determined to create a solid foundation for the future relations between the two countries by enhancing the level of political, economic, commercial and cultural cooperation"… He also pointed out the necessity of combating violence, extremism and terrorism and reminded: "We must act unitedly in this area and we are ready to strengthen consultations with Iran in the fight against terrorism".

Regarding this reported statement by Minister Bushati on willingness "to strengthen consultations with Iran in the fight against terrorism," it's noteworthy that I have not been able to confirm it from sources outside Iranian media. In any case, it certainly does not represent the official position of the Albanian government; indeed, it is worth emphasizing that in subsequent developments, IRNA itself would portray Bushati as aligned with "the American pro-MEK stance," as will be seen in articles from the 2018–2019 period.



Rouhani: The post-JCPOA period is an appropriate opportunity to deepen cooperation between Iran and Albania
16/01/2017
https://irna.ir/xjjhT4

Also on 16 January 2017, another article was published, titled "In an interview with IRNA, Albania's foreign minister: Our country's banking sector is seeking ties with Iran," in which Minister Bushati was quoted as saying: "The fact that the Albanian trade

delegation includes representatives of the country's large companies is a sign that there are no concerns regarding commercial and financial issues, but establishing banking connections takes time".

In effect, this reflects a degree of caution on the part of the Albanian government regarding the establishment of banking links with Iran, showing that, despite efforts to elevate the level of relations a mutual climate of mistrust persists over deepening cooperation in strategically sensitive sectors.



In an interview with IRNA, Albania's foreign minister: Our country's banking sector is seeking ties with Iran
16/01/2017
https://irna.ir/xjjhZv

Following this interview, on the same day, 16 January, IRNA published another article titled "Vice President in a meeting with the Albanian Foreign Minister: In the post-JCPOA era, we are ready to host Albanian investors", which reports:

> The Vice President and Head of the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization said in a meeting with the Albanian Foreign Minister: "Given the positive atmosphere after the JCPOA, we are ready to host Albanian investors in the field of tourism infrastructure construction." Zahra Ahmadipour, from the Cultural Heritage Organization, added in her meeting with Ditmir Bushati: "We are also prepared to hold exhibitions, conferences, and promote interaction and communication among artists."

The use of the term "the post-JCPOA era" (دوران پس از برجام) in this article, as well as in preceding ones, indicates that this elevation of relations between Albania and Iran was a direct outcome of Iran's signing of the nuclear agreement, JCPOA, with the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (United States, United Kingdom, China, France, Russia) and Germany—otherwise known as the P5+1 agreement—which was finalized in Vienna on 14 July 2015.



Vice President in a meeting with the Albanian Foreign Minister: In the post-JCPOA era, we are ready to host Albanian investors
16/01/2017
https://irna.ir/xjjj8y

I wish to emphasize that this upgrading of Albania's relations with Iran is not an isolated case, but part of a broader atmosphere created after the signing of the P5+1 agreement, the JCPOA. This is corroborated by the fact that, during this period, top-level officials from five Balkan states paid official visits to Tehran. In an article of January 18, 2017 titled "*5 heads of state travel from Balkan region to Iran, political achievement of JCPOA*", in an interview with the scholar Vahid Parastash, IRNA describes the visits of five Balkan leaders to Iran in the period following the JCPOA. The article reports:

> In order to have an accurate picture of the development of relations with these countries after the implementation of the JCPOA, it is necessary to refer to the visits of high-ranking political officials from this region to Iran after January 17, 2015. The first president from the Balkan

> region to visit Iran after the implementation of the nuclear agreement was Serbian President Tomislav Nikolić. On April 19 of this year (2016), in a meeting with Dr. Rouhani, he expressed his interest in developing relations with our country and celebrated the nuclear agreement… Exactly one month later, on May 19 (2016), Croatian President Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović visited Tehran… On July 10 of this year (2016), Bulgarian Prime Minister Boyko Borissov arrived in Tehran… On November 25 (2016), 'Baqer Alija Izzetbegović,' the then Chairman of the Presidential Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina, traveled to Tehran and Isfahan with a high-ranking delegation of ministers… The visit of Slovenian President Borut Pahor to the Islamic Republic of Iran on December 2 (2016), which was carried out for the first time in the past 25 years, as well as the opening of this country's embassy in Tehran, is considered an expression of the strong will of the two countries to develop relations… The senior researcher of international relations added: The last political official from the Balkan region arrived in Tehran from Albania just two days before the anniversary of the implementation of the JCPOA. During this visit, Albanian Foreign Minister Ditmir Bushati, in a meeting with Dr. Rouhani, stated that the JCPOA has opened new horizons in Iran's cooperation with the world, including Albania…

Thus, as cited in this article, the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Albania was the last high-ranking official from a Balkan country to visit Tehran after the signing of the JCPOA.

This visit of the Foreign Minister, Ditmir Bushati, to Tehran was quickly followed by a number of cultural, religious, and scientific events, both in Albania and in Iran, involving prominent academics, journalists, publicists, local government leaders, associations, educational institutions, and others. Iran was invested significantly in the organization of these activities, as part of a clear effort to increase its influence through soft power. The media framing of these events often came through the publication of statements by participants expressed in positive tones about Iran, its culture, or its "leading role in the Islamic World".

At times, this "enthusiasm" in describing Iran in positive terms shifted toward the publication of opinions with one-sided positions on regional developments in the Middle East. For example, in an article of 25 January 2017, titled "Albanian Islamic activist: Iran's government has always been a supporter of Muslims", IRNA published an interview with one of the leaders of the Khalwati Sufi order in Albania, Sheh Rustem Shehu, during his visit to Iran on the occasion of the ceremony to introduce Mashhad as

the cultural capital of the Islamic world. He is quoted by IRNA's correspondent as saying: "Unfortunately, there is now extremism among some neighboring Muslim countries, which is not worthy of Muslims". I should clarify here that by these "neighboring Muslim countries" he was referring to the Arab-Sunni states of the region. The article then quotes this "Islamic activist" as saying: "We must ask God to establish unity in the Islamic world so that people themselves can recognize their true and appropriate leaders". Regardless of the accuracy of this quotation, it is clear that what is being employed here is purely political rhetoric, presenting Iran as a moderate Islamic state and as the "true and appropriate leader" of the Islamic world, in contrast to its Arab-Sunni neighbors.

Rustem Shehu is further quoted as saying: "It is a great honor for us to visit Imam Reza (AS) because he was one of the great Imams and we want to continue the path of the prophets. We ask the Iranian people to keep the Islamic Revolution alive and ask God to reward the leader of the revolution". This is clearly a case of the blending of religious rhetoric with political rhetoric, typical of the theocratic establishment in Iran. A similar type of framing, in a somewhat softer manner, is conveyed in other IRNA media coverage as well.

I find it appropriate to note, in contrast to this, that in the Arab or Israeli media under examination, we do not encounter such instances of interweaving religious rhetoric with political rhetoric.



Albanian Islamic activist: Iran's government has always been a supporter of Muslims
25/01/2017
https://irna.ir/xjjqbF

In an article dated 29 February 2017, titled “The President of the Friendship Association of Iran and Albania: The role of the JCPOA in the development of Tehran–Tirana relations is valuable,” IRNA publishes excerpts from an interview that the President of the Iran-Albania Friendship Association and former Iranian ambassador to Albania, Alibeman Eghbali Zarch, gave to the Albanian newspaper ‘Koha Jonë’, in which he stated: “Iran–Albania relations have been progressing in recent years, especially in the past year since the implementation of the JCPOA”. This underscores that the deepening of bilateral relations is framed in relation to the JCPOA’s signing and implementation.



The President of the Friendship Association of Iran and Albania: The role of the JCPOA in the development of Tehran-Tirana relations is valuable
29/01/2017
https://irna.ir/xjjsjh

Despite this, with the inauguration of President Donald Trump's first term on January 20, 2017—who had a different approach toward the JCPOA—Iran felt uncertain about the continuation of this agreement with the United States as part of the P5+1 group. Thus, in an article dated February 7, 2017, titled "Iran's Ambassador to Albania: America cannot fail to fulfil its obligations to the JCPOA," IRNA reports:

> The Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Tirana said in an interview with the English-language Albanian newspaper Daily News: 'The JCPOA is an international agreement and the US cannot fail to fulfil its international obligations.' According to IRNA, citing the Iranian Embassy in Tirana, Iranian Ambassador Gholamhossein Mohammadnia, referring to US President Donald Trump's statements during the election campaign that he would tear up the JCPOA, said: 'Although Trump had said that he would tear up the nuclear agreement with Iran, he has not done so yet'.

This statement by the Iranian Ambassador to Albania carries a dual message: on the one hand, it confirms President Trump's opposing stance toward the JCPOA—an agreement that had by then become the centerpiece of the development of Iran's relations with Albania—while on the other hand, by stating "he has not done so yet," Mohammadnia attempts to "raise hopes" that the United States might not withdraw from the agreement.

This political context demonstrates how important Albania's relations with its strategic allies, particularly with the United States, truly are, and how strongly these relations influence Albania's relations with other states as well.



Iran's Ambassador to Albania: America cannot fail to fulfill its obligations to the JCPOA
07/02/2017
https://irna.ir/xjjwJc

This statement pubished by IRNA can be read as an attempt to defuse concerns arising from the new U.S. administration's unpredictable stance toward the JCPOA and to reassure audiences in both Albania and Iran that the activities and agreements envisaged after the accord would continue—apparently with the aim of cultivating a supportive climate and shaping public opinion in Albania. In fact – also due to the fact that the U.S. withdrew from this agreement a year later, in May 2018 – these activities continued and intensified throughout 2017, mainly through economic, cultural, and religious initiatives, including efforts to promote interfaith harmony. Selected articles documenting these activities are provided below:

In an article of February 9, 2017, titled "There are good prospects for developing cooperation between Iran and Albania," IRNA reported: "The Deputy Minister of Tourism of the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization of our country said in a meeting with the President of the Confederation of Albanian Industries: There are good prospects for developing cooperation between Iran and Albania". According to IRNA, during this meeting, which took place in Iran, the President of the Confederation of Albanian Industries stated: "The image of Iran is very different from the one portrayed in world political propaganda, and this has caught my attention". Further, IRNA reported: "Pointing out that 20 percent of the Albanian population is Shiite, he (the President of the Confederation of Albanian Industries) said: The interesting thing is that even the names of our capitals are similar, and it seems that the word Tirana is derived from Tehran".

Notwithstanding this "warm, fraternal blend" of economic–diplomatic–religious rhetoric, it should be emphasized that the efforts to upgrade relations during 2015–2017 did not yield tangible economic benefits for Albania, nor did they increase bilateral trade

volume, which—according to IRNA (as cited above, referring to Albania's deputy foreign minister Selim Belortaja)—stood at only $2.4 million in 2016.



There are good prospects in the field of cooperation development between Iran and Albania
09/02/2017
https://irna.ir/xjjzN8

In an article on February 12, 2017, titled "Celebration of Islamic Revolution Victory Anniversary in Albania", IRNA reported:

> The celebration of the anniversary of the victory of the glorious Islamic Revolution was held at the Tirana International Hotel with the presence of officials from the Presidency, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Economy, ambassadors and members of the diplomatic corps residing in Tirana, and members of the Iranian embassy, consular and cultural institutions, and other institutions with their families… The ceremony was also attended by responsible managers and journalists from the mass media and press, leaders and representatives of the Ahl al-Bayt friendly sects, municipal officials and city council members, university professors and intellectuals, and Albanian citizens interested in Iranian and Islamic culture and civilization.

Noteworthy here is the use of the term "leaders and representatives of the Ahl al-Bayt–friendly sects" (رهبران و نمایندگان طریقت‌های دوستدار اهل بیت), instead of the vernacular term "representatives of religious communities" that is usually employed in such cases. In this context, IRNA makes a clear distinction between "leaders and representatives of the Ahl al-Bayt– friendly sects", meaning the Shi'ite orders, and the other representatives of the Muslim Community in Albania.



Celebration of Islamic Revolution victory anniversary in Albania
12/02/2017
https://irna.ir/xjjCFk

During this period, a number of cultural activities were also held, to which IRNA devoted special coverage. In the article "Original Iranian Music in Albania", IRNA reports: "The 'Soluk' art group, consisting of five Iranian artists, performed various artistic programs in Albania to commemorate the 38th anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution of Iran... This art group, which traveled to Albania with the support of the Cultural Advisor of the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, also performed traditional Iranian music in the presence of Albanian students and their families at the Revolution Day celebration at Saadi College in Tirana".



Original Iranian Music in Albania
12/02/2017
https://irna.ir/xjjD95

Between October and December 2017, several exhibitions of Iranian artists were organized in Albania, to which IRNA dedicated special reports. Two of these reports, dated 15 February 2017, titled *"Iranian artists' painting exhibition opens in the city of Fier, Albania"* and *"Young Shirazi photographers attend Albania's 'Unfinished Lines' exhibition,"* were dedicated to the opening of a fine arts exhibition featuring works by Iranian artists in the city of Fier: *"An exhibition of paintings by Iranian artists entitled 'Unfinished Lines' was opened at the Art Gallery of the city of Fier, Albania, in the presence of the Deputy Mayor of Fier for Arts, the Deputy Ambassador and the Cultural Counselor of the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Tirana, and a large gathering of Albanian citizens."*



Iranian artists' painting exhibition opens in The City of Fier, Albania
15/10/2017
https://irna.ir/xjmVmR



Young Shirazi's photografers attend Albania's unfinished lines exhibition
15/10/2017
https://irna.ir/xjmVB6

On November 2, 2017, on the occasion of the opening of a similar exhibition in Tirana, IRNA published an article titled “Iranian Artists’ Painting Exhibition Held in Albania,” in which it reported: “The opening ceremony of this exhibition, which will continue for 7 days at the National Museum of Tirana, was attended by Abaz Hado, Deputy Mayor for Culture and Arts of the Municipality of Tirana, Albanian artists and art enthusiasts, representatives of the mass media, the Ambassador and Cultural Counselor, and the families of members of the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Tirana.”



Iranian Artists Painting Exhibition held in Albania
02/11/2017
https://irna.ir/xjn6b2

In these articles, particular emphasis is placed on the presence of the deputy mayors of Fier and Tirana, indicating the breadth of cooperation in organizing cultural activities with local governing institutions in several major cities, a pattern that would be continued by subsequent, similar cultural initiatives.

During 2017, according to IRNA's reporting, several cultural events were also organized in Iran with the participation of personalities from Albania, including academics, mayors, and others. Thus, in an article dated 25 April 2017, titled "Mayors of Islamic Countries Visit Ferdowsi's Tomb," IRNA reported:

> Forty mayors from 27 Islamic countries on different continents of the world visited the tomb of Hakim Abolghasem Ferdowsi [the well-known Persian poet] on the outskirts of Mashhad on Tuesday… The head of the Mashhad Municipality's Foreign Relations Department told IRNA: "These mayors have traveled to Mashhad from cities such as Sarajevo in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Tirana in Albania, Kazan in Russia, Tanzania, Mauritania, Nigeria, Ghana, Bangkok in Thailand, Karbala, Damascus, Lahore, Kabul, and Muscat to attend the Islamic World Mayors' Summit… The first Islamic World Mayors' Summit will begin this evening in Mashhad… This summit is a good opportunity to introduce Mashhad and its potential to the Islamic world and to become acquainted with the historical and tourism potential of the Islamic World Cultural Capital in 2017."



Mayors of Islamic Countries Visit Ferdowsi's Tomb
25/04/2017
https://irna.ir/xjkj29

Literary heritage is another area in which Iran was invested particularly, with the aim of highlighting the cultural and linguistic ties between Iranians and Albanians. In this

context, Iran focused on promoting the Albanian poet of the National Renaissance period, Naim Frashëri, whom IRNA would often describe as the "Persian-speaking poet" (شاعر پارسی‌گوی), or as the "Albanian Bektashi Persian-speaking poet" (شاعر بکتاشی و فارسی‌گوی آلبانی). To this end, with the involvement of Iranian cultural institutions, a number of activities were organized both in Iran and in Albania, with the participation of well-known Albanian linguists and academics.

Thus, in an article dated 14 February 2017, titled "Albania's Distinguished Poet in Tehran," IRNA reported:

> The head of the Eastern Europe Department of the Islamic Culture and Communications Organization, emphasizing the strengthening and deepening of cultural relations between Iran and Albania, said that, in this regard, a commemoration of the prominent Albanian poet Naim Frashëri will be held in Tehran. According to an IRNA reporter, Seyed Hossein Tabatabaei added on Monday at the 'Open Doors, Intercultural Journey between Iran and Albania' meeting at the Shahr-e-Ketab Cultural Center: 'This October's 2017 conference has been placed on the agenda of the Islamic Culture and Communications Organization in cooperation with one of Tehran's major universities…Ali Asghar Mohammadkhani, Deputy Director of Culture and International Affairs of the City of Books, spoke about the cultural and literary traits of Albania, mentioning among the country's prominent writers and poets Xhevahir Spahiu, Ismail Kadare, and Naim Frashëri. He further added that several cultural and literary magazines, including the quarterly *Perla*, are published in Albania in cooperation with the Saadi Cultural Foundation. Emil Lafe, professor of Albanian language and literature, linguist, and editor-in-chief of *Perla*, also spoke at the meeting about the cultural and linguistic characteristics of Albania, the role of Naim Frashëri and other intellectuals in preserving the Albanian language, and the establishment of the first Albanian-language school in the country.



Albania's distinguished poet in Tehran
14/02/2017
https://irna.ir/xjjF5t

Within the same framework, during November and December 2017, IRNA covered two activities organized in Albania: the first in Tirana and the second in the city of Berat.

In the article of November 10, 2017, titled "Albanians Welcome Publication of Iranian Scientific and Cultural Journal in Tirana", IRNA reported:

> The ceremony to celebrate the 22nd anniversary of the publication of the cultural and scientific magazine 'Perla' was held with the presence of dozens of university professors and Albanian intellectuals… According to IRNA, a ceremony honoring the contributors of the magazine—which has been published in Albania for the past two decades—was held on Friday at the Academy of Sciences in Tirana, the capital of Albania, by the Embassy and Cultural Attaché of the Islamic Republic of Iran… The event, attended by dozens of Albanian university professors, intellectuals, and admirers of Iranian culture and the Persian language, paid tribute to the continuous and outstanding scholarly contributions of Professor Shaban Sinani, a renowned Albanian Iranologist… Among Professor Sinani's academic achievements is the compilation of Ferdowsi's Shahnameh into Albanian… Prominent Albanian scholars, including Dr. Emil Lafe, Dr. Gazmend Shpuza, and Dr. Muzzafar Kërkuti, attended the ceremony and delivered speeches praising Iranian-Islamic culture and civilization…



Albanians welcome publication of Iranian Scientific and Cultural Journal in Tirana
10/11/2017
https://irna.ir/xjn9Hm

In another article titled "Welcoming the Conference of Iranology in Albania," published on December 2, 2017, IRNA stated: "An Iranology conference was held in the conference hall of the Central Library of the city of Berat, Albania, with the support of the Cultural Counselor of the Embassy of our country and the participation of the Central Library and the University of the city of Berat, Albania, and was well received by interested parties".



Welcoming The Conference of Iranology in Albania
01/12/2017
https://irna.ir/xjnnt7

During 2017, IRNA dedicated special media coverage to the celebration of religious events in Albania. Unlike in previous years, this coverage did not focus only on Shi'ite religious events, but primarily on the participation of Iranian diplomats in various religious celebrations in Albania, and on their meetings with leaders of the Albanian religious communities, including the Archbishop of the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Albania, His Beatitude Anastasios Yannoulatos. In other words, in this coverage IRNA placed greater emphasis on "religious diplomacy" rather than on the celebration of religious tradition. The following provide some examples.

In an article of March 20, 2017, titled "*A Ceremony to Commemorate the Birth of Hazrat Fatima Was Held in Albania*", IRNA reported: "A group of lovers of the Infallible Imams, Gholam Hossein Mohammadnia, the Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Albania, and Ahmad Hosseini Alast, the Cultural Advisor of our country, were present at this celebration, which was held with the efforts of the followers of Hazrat Zahra."



A ceremony to commemorate the birth of Hazrat Fatima was held in Albania
20/03/2017
https://irna.ir/xjjYZ9

Three days later, on March 23, 2017, in an article titled: "Albanian Bektashis celebrated the birth of Imam Ali (AS) at the same time with the second day of spring", IRNA reported:

> "The Sultan Nowruz ceremony was held at the Bektashi World Headquarters in Tirana, the capital of Albania, in the presence of the head of this country's parliament, ambassadors and foreign representatives, and a large gathering of Bektashi followers, hosted by Baba Mondi, the leader of the Bektashi Order... According to IRNA on Thursday, Gholamhossein Mohammadnia, the ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Albania, and Ahmad Hosseini Alast, the country's cultural advisor and director of the Saadi Foundation in Tirana, attended the ceremony at the invitation of the Bektashi Leader.



Albanian Bektashis celebrated the birth of Imam Ali (AS) at the same time with the second day of spring
23/03/2017
https://irna.ir/xjk24p

With regard to the Bektashi Community, in another article of April 4, 2017, titled "The Albanian Bektashis performed a Mawlud singing ceremony on the eve of The Birth of Hazrat Ali (AS)", IRNA reports:

> A Mawlud singing ceremony and commemoration of the Prophet of Islam, Hazrat Muhammad (peace be upon him), and the Ahl al-Bayt (the Prophet's family), was held by the Bektashi community of Albania on the occasion of the advent of the month of Rajab and on the eve of the blessed birth of Imam Ali (peace be upon him), with the participation of the Iranian Ambassador in Tirana… According to IRNA, at the invitation of Haji Baba Mondi, the leader of the Bektashis in Albania, a ceremony was held at the World Headquarters of the Bektashi Order in Tirana, attended by followers of the Bektashi tariqat and representatives of the Albanian Muslim Committee... Gholamhossein Mohammadinia, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and Ahmad Hosseini Elest, Iran's Cultural Attaché in Albania, together with members of the embassy and their families, attended the event…

An interesting detail in this article is the accompanying photograph, which shows Iranian diplomats seated at the same table with the vice-chairman (now chairman) of the Albanian Muslim Community, Mr. Bujar Spahiu.



The Albanian Bactashians performed a mevlud singing ceremony on the eve of The Birth of Hazrat Ali
04/04/2017
https://irna.ir/xjk6gw

A particularly interesting article within the framework of 'religious diplomacy' is that of August 23, 2017 titled: "The Archbishop of Albanian Orthodox Church welcomes religious and cultural exchanges between Albanian and Iranian Christians". IRNA

reports: "Anastasios Yannoulatos, Archbishop of the Albanian Orthodox Church, in a meeting with the Deputy Ambassador of our country in Tirana, referred to his previous visit to Iran and the visit of Sarkisian, Archbishop of the Armenians of Iran, to Albania. He praised the existing cooperation between the two churches and welcomed the religious and cultural exchanges between Albanian and Iranian Christians".



The Archbishop of Albanian Orthodox Church welcomes religious and cultural exchanges between Albanian and Iranian Christians
23/08/2017
https://irna.ir/xjmsFN

A week later, in an article titled “Eid al-Adha Prayers Were Held in Albania,” describing the visit of Iranian diplomats to the Albanian Muslim Community (Sunni) on the occasion of Eid al-Adha, IRNA reported: “Seyyed Ahmad Hosseini Alast, Cultural Counselor of the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Albania, met with Skënder Bruçaj (the Head of the Muslim Community of Albania) at the end of the Eid al-Adha

prayer ceremony at the Muslim Committee, in accordance with the annual tradition, and discussed issues of cooperation and exchanges".



Eid al-Adha prayers were held in Albania
01/09/2017
https://irna.ir/xjmxRV

Later, on 10 September 2017, IRNA published an article titled "Eid al-Ghadir Khumm Celebration Held in Albania," in which it reported:

> The ceremony to commemorate Eid al-Ghadir, the Eid of Prophethood and Imamate, was held on Saturday night by the Embassy and Cultural Counselor of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Tirana, the capital of Albania… The ceremony was attended by Shiites and friends of the Ahl al-Bayt (a.s.), as well as several Albanian intellectuals from the Saadi Quran Foundation, the Rumi Foundation, and the leader of the Khalwatiyyah Sufi Order from the city of Durrës, Albania. Together with the staff of the Iranian Embassy and Cultural Counselor in Tirana, they celebrated the honorable position of the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) and the Eid of Prophethood.



Eid Al-Ghadir Khumm celebration held in Albania
10/09/2017
https://irna.ir/xjmCck

As is evident from the content, the primary focus of these articles is the presence of Iranian diplomats as guests—or, in some cases, as in the last article, even as organizers—of these religious ceremonies, where cooperation between the religious communities of Iran and Albania is frequently mentioned. This is a typical expression of Iran's increasing efforts in the sphere of religious diplomacy during this period.

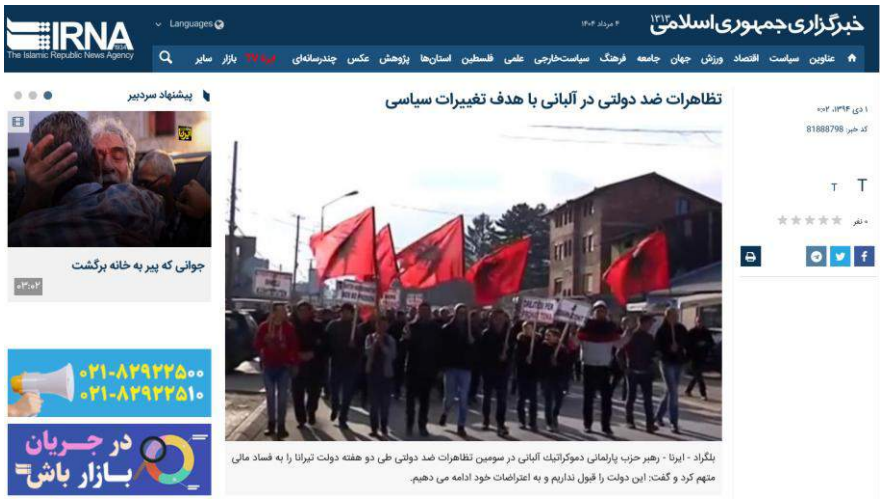
Albania's Western Alignment and the Rise of Security Discourse: In 2015, IRNA reported on several events that hinted at growing domestic instability in Albania, but did so within a broader regional frame. Articles such as the bomb explosions in Tirana (10 February 2015) and anti-government protests calling for political change (22 December 2015) signalled a preoccupation with Albania's internal security dynamics.

In the first article, titled "Two bomb blasts shake Albania's capital," IRNA places a law-and-order incident within a "political frame," noting that "Albanian police announced that the first explosion severely damaged a pharmacy belonging to the family of the Albanian interior minister. The second explosion, which occurred shortly after the first, seriously damaged the apartment of a senior police officer."

In the article titled "Anti-government protests in Albania aimed at political change," IRNA presents statements by three representatives of the Albanian opposition—the Democratic Party (PD) leader Lulzim Basha, and MPs Jorida Tabaku and Belind Këlliçi, the chair of the PD Youth Forum—who said: "We want to work and live a dignified life, and we will gather in the squares and demonstrate until the government and the Prime Minister are overthrown."

The article then continues with commentary that situates Albania within the broader context of being an EU candidate state, mentioning that Albania is also a NATO member. At the same time, however, it highlights the country's "negative balances" by portraying

it as a country facing unemployment, economic-financial difficulties, and popular dissatisfaction, by saying: “Albania, a candidate for EU membership, is facing 17.7 percent unemployment, economic problems and public discontent despite receiving loans from international financial institutions”. The article also depicts Albania as a country suffering from political instability that hinders its accession to the EU, by saying: “Albania's EU membership process had been stalled since 2009 due to political crises and the previous government's lack of cooperation with the country's opposition political groups”.



Anti-government protests in Albania aimed at political change
22/12/2015
https://irna.ir/xjd47Y

By 2016, IRNA began to frame Albania’s domestic security landscape within the logic of counterterrorism and international intelligence activity. Notably, articles highlighted events such as the arrest of 9 Albanian citizens for recruiting for terrorist groups (5 May 2016) and the announcement that Albania would auction off its outdated Kalashnikov rifles (22 November 2016)—a symbolic gesture signalling the state’s modernization of its defence capabilities under NATO guidance. Other reports mentioned the establishment of a NATO command centre in Albania (14 May 2016) and the visit of

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry to Tirana to discuss judicial reform and anti-corruption measures (14 February 2016). These developments were significant not only in the context of Albania's domestic reforms, but also as indicators of its firm commitment to Western security architectures.



NATO center to start in Albania
14/05/2016
https://irna.ir/xjfCP

During this period, IRNA pays particular attention to Albania's internal political developments and legislative reforms, especially the judicial reform, highlighting that these changes were urged by international actors, and in particular by the United States. This indicates that in Iran there was a keen interest in following the changes taking place in the judicial system of the Republic of Albania and the influence of external actors, especially that of the United States.

This media coverage begins with the visit to Tirana of U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, in an article titled "John Kerry arrived in Tirana to encourage Albania to carry out judicial reforms", which stated: "U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry arrived in Tirana on Sunday to exert political pressure on Albania to carry out a series of reforms in the judiciary". Particularly interesting in this article is the shift in tone between the title and

the subtitle: in the title the term "encouragement" (ترغیب) is used, whereas in the subtitle the expression "political pressure" (فشار سیاسي) appears, thus presenting American support for the judicial reform as a form of "political pressure" on Albania. This framing would continue in IRNA's subsequent coverage of developments in Albania whenever they were linked to the United States.



John Kerry arrived in Tirana to encourage Albania to carry out judicial reforms
14/02/2016
https://irna.ir/xjdH9D

In the 7 June 2017 article titled "Mogherini calls for judicial reform in Albania," IRNA writes: "European Union foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini called for the adoption of fundamental reforms in Albania's judiciary, describing this as a decisive step in light of the country's efforts to join the European Union."

Unlike the report on John Kerry's visit, Mogherini's call for "fundamental reforms" was presented as a decisive step in Albania's EU accession efforts: "A statement from Mogherini's press office said: The adoption of such reforms is essential as a next step toward integration with the European Union. The reform package, which also reflects recommendations from the [European] Commission as well as a legal body affiliated with the Council of Europe, is fully in line with European standards."

This article was followed on 8 June 2017 by another article, "Albania's political leaders fail to agree on drafting judicial reforms," which reported: "Senior Albanian political officials failed to agree on a draft constitutional amendment—considered the next step toward convincing the European Union to open membership negotiations—during their meeting on Monday." Here again, IRNA makes a hint that political instability is an obstacle to Albania's implementation of reforms.



Mogherini calls for judicial reform in Albania
07/06/2016
https://irna.ir/xjfS3N

Iran's particular interest in Albania's judicial reform/judicial system, as we shall see in the following articles, is also connected to its efforts to seek the extradition of certain members of the MEK, whom Iran accuses of "terrorist acts" and against whom it has issued international arrest warrants, as will be discussed in the next section.

Emergence of the MEK Narrative: During 2016, the Iranian media's treatment of Albania underwent a visible pivot with the intensified focus on the MEK.

As noted above (in the context of IRNA's particular interest in Albania's judicial reform/judicial system), Iran sought during this period to establish precedents for the extradition of MEK members residing in Albania by issuing international arrest warrants. One such case appears in a 16 May 2016 article titled "A Woman Was Involved in the

Bombing of the Office of the Islamic Republic Party," in which IRNA cites National Security Forces Spokesman Brigadier General Saeed Montazer al-Mahdi as "referring to the identification, arrest, and detention of an MEK member in Albania on the basis of an Interpol red notice—akin to an international arrest warrant—and adding: This woman was involved in the bombing of the Islamic Republic Party office."



A woman was involved in the bombing of the Office of the Islamic Republic Party
16/05/2016
https://irna.ir/xjfDTQ

The following day, on May 17, 2016, IRNA published another report on the same event, titled "We Seek the Extradition of the Perpetrators of the Republican Party Office Explosion", which stated: "The commander of the police force announced: We are seeking the extradition of a woman who was one of the perpetrators of the explosion at the Republican Party office, although Albania has not yet cooperated in this regard."



We seek the extradition of the perpetrators of the Republican Party office explosion
17/05/2016
https://irna.ir/xjfFhk

In an article dated 10 September 2016, titled "The Latest Details of the Expulsion of the Hypocrites (MEK) from Baghdad / Germany and Albania the Destination of the Deportees", IRNA reported:

> The remaining members of the Hypocrites (MEK), including 280 members of the organization, left Iraq via Baghdad International Airport on Friday night, bound for Albania… The terrorist group of the Hypocrites (MEK) carried out numerous terrorist operations after the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, and then fled Iran in the early 1980s and settled in Iraq, where it participated as part of the forces of Saddam's Baathist regime in the eight-year imposed war against Iran…

Such harsh rhetoric of "demonizing historical retrospection" toward the MEK appears in almost every article related to members of this organization residing in Albania.



The latest details of the expulsion of the Hypocrites (MEK) from Baghdad/ Germany and Albania the destination of the deportees
10/09/2016
https://irna.ir/xjgTVP

A key article published on December 13, 2016, titled "*Managing director of Iran's Nejat Society: The Hypocrites' Group (MEK's) current activity is recruiting spies*", cited statements from the head of Iran's Nejat Society, which accused the MEK of using Albania as a base for intelligence gathering and recruitment of spies. This claim, framed the MEK not merely as a dissident exile group but as an active security threat linked to Western and Israeli intelligence. Simultaneously, IRNA began to draw connections between Albania's hosting of the MEK and its broader alignment with U.S. foreign policy. The narrative gradually took on a conspiratorial undertone, suggesting that Albania had become a facilitator of "anti-Iranian operations" under the guise of humanitarian asylum. Although not yet a central focus of daily coverage, this was the first point at which IRNA began to frame Albania itself—not just the MEK—as complicit in regional destabilization.



Managing director of Iran's Nejat Society: The Hypocrites' Group (MEK's) current activity is recruiting spies
13/12/2016
https://irna.ir/xjhVzb

However, during this period the issue of MEK takes a limited space in IRNA's media coverage about Albania. In fact, throughout 2017—the year of the highest-level meetings between the two countries—IRNA did not publish any article with a direct focus

on MEK. As noted above, even in the official high-level meetings in Tehran, the MEK issue was never explicitly mentioned by Iranian authorities, but rather "implied" through calls for cooperation between the two countries "in the fight against extremism and terrorism".

Regional Context and Strategic Warnings: Throughout 2016, Iran's regional commentary on Balkan politics also included coverage of Greek-Albanian disputes, EU judicial reform mandates, and Albania's military modernization efforts. The tone of these reports was increasingly marked by caution, and occasionally subtle critique. For example, reports such as the failure of Albanian political leaders to agree on judicial reform (8 June 2016) were used to highlight internal instability and the perceived vulnerability of Albania's democratic institutions. While these stories appeared neutral in isolation, their cumulative effect was to paint a picture of Albania as a fragile, externally influenced state—a narrative consistent with Iran's broader criticism of NATO expansion and Western political interference in smaller nations. Here are some examples:



Albania's Prime Minister: Disputes with Greece must be resolved with dialogue
Athens - IRNA - Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama said that his country does not want to change borders, but that there are issues with Greece that can be resolved through dialogue with this country.

24/11/2016,
https://irna.ir/xjhJz6



Greek foreign minister: Some are trying to disrupt us and Albania

Athens - IRNA - The Greek Foreign Minister, in response to the raising of a banner against Greece by some Albanians at the Euro 2016 games in France, said: "Some individuals or organizations are unhappy with the closeness and development of relations between Greece and Albania and are seeking to cause disruption and incite tension between the two countries."

13/06/2016

https://irna.ir/xjfW9w

Escalation and Securitization (2018–2019): The years 2018–2019 marked a decisive turn in the Iranian media's portrayal of Albania, moving firmly from a tone of cautious diplomacy and cultural exchange toward one of overt hostility and securitized rhetoric. The escalation was catalyzed by the deepening presence of the Mojahedin-e-Khalq (MEK) in Albania and reached its zenith with the *expulsion of Iranian diplomats from Tirana in December 2018*. The Iranian news agency IRNA covered this event extensively, framing it as a politically motivated act carried out under the direct influence of the United States and Israel. Rather than interpreting the expulsion as a bilateral diplomatic dispute, Iranian media presented it as part of a broader geopolitical campaign aimed at isolating Iran and legitimizing the MEK's activities in the region.

But what triggered this narrative shift in IRNA's media coverage of Albania during the period 2017–2018? As noted above, the "leitmotif" or "crucial point" of official talks and high-level meetings between Iran and Albania was the potential for a significant expansion of bilateral relations in the "post-JCPOA" period, after the signing of the P5+1

nuclear agreement in 2015. However, with the inauguration of Donald Trump as the 45th President of the United States on 20 January 2017, the implementation of this agreement came into question, since Trump and his administration's position towards Iran in general, and towards the JCPOA in particular, was far more "skeptical" and "rigid" than that of his predecessor Barack Obama and his administration. This stance found support among several Middle Eastern states such as Israel and Saudi Arabia, primarily due to the perceived threat posed by Iran through the activities of Shi'ite militias and other Iranian proxy groups in the region, but also because of the climate of mistrust regarding Iran's commitment to refrain from enriching uranium at levels that would enable it to produce nuclear weapons—a development that would not only raise the risk of their use by Iran but also of nuclear proliferation across the region.

To understand the dynamics of these developments, it is important to recall that in July 2015 Iran concluded an agreement with China, France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom, the United States, and the European Union. This agreement—the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)—limited Iran's nuclear activities in exchange for sanctions relief (Beauchamp, 2017; Mulligan, 2018). Under U.S. domestic law, specifically the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act (INARA), the President was required every 90 days to certify to Congress, among other things, whether Iran was meeting its commitments (Beauchamp, 2017; Mulligan, 2018). The very existence of this certification mechanism signaled a shadow of mistrust from the moment the accord was reached and preserved political space for a future U.S. withdrawal (Palamar, 2017). The Trump administration issued certifications in April 2017 and again in July 2017 that Iran was in compliance (Associated Press, 2017; Baker, 2017), and contemporaneous IAEA reporting also affirmed Iran's implementation of its nuclear commitments (Amano,

2018). On October 13, 2017, however, President Trump announced that he would not provide certification under U.S. law, arguing that the suspension of sanctions was not "proportionate and appropriate" (Beauchamp, 2017; Bucher, 2017). The United States then formally announced its withdrawal from the JCPOA on May 8, 2018 (BBC News, 2018; Landler, 2018; Mulligan, 2018).

Already in 2017, several Republican senators held meetings with MEK members in Albania – for example, the Senator John McCain's meeting in April 2017 and Senator Roy Blunt's meeting in August 2017 with MEK leader Maryam Rajavi at the MEK camp in Albania. At this time, MEK started to be perceived as an Iranian opposition in exile. Nevertheless, IRNA did not publish any report regarding these meetings in its coverage on Albania, choosing instead to "ignore" or "leave in silence" this issue. It started to publish again articles on MEK on 4 July 2018, that is, shortly after the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA on May 8, 2018. It is worth noting, on the other hand, that these meetings, as I mentioned earlier in this study, received extensive coverage in the pan-Arab media of the Middle East, such as Al-Arabiya.

Under these circumstances, in the first six months of 2018, IRNA's media coverage of Albania exhibits a dual posture: on the one hand, there is a number of negative news items which, as will be shown below, focus on the themes of 'corruption,' 'domestic political instability,' and 'regional instability' – on the other, there are a handful of "soft-power" articles seeking to amplify economic and cultural events that appear largely as an "inertia" of agendas planned in 2017—lacking, however, the "enthusiasm" evident a year earlier. Notably, items linked to "religious diplomacy"—including activities of "Ahl al-Bayt sympathizers," i.e., Shiʿa-oriented groups—disappear from IRNA's coverage in

sharp contrast to 2017. This soft-power/economic-religious-cultural diplomacy coverage ceases altogether in June 2018—immediately after the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA

To illustrate this point, I have analyzed the following articles:

On February 14, 2018, in an article titled "'Mohammad Naim Frashëri' Poetry Evening in Albania," IRNA reported: "According to Wednesday report from the Iranian Embassy in Tirana, Albania's Ministers of Culture, Agriculture and Development were present at this poetry evening ceremony, where 12 poems by 'Mohammad Naim Frashëri' were screened in the form of a classic play". It is noteworthy that, although the article states that the Minister of Culture and the Minister of Agriculture and Development attended this poetry evening, it does not provide any photographs from the event—as is typically the case when reporting on events attended by high-ranking officials. In fact, the only image presented in the article was of the poster announcing an event that was to be held in Iran three weeks later: the commemorative conference for the Albanian national poet Naim Frashëri (همایش بین المللی بررسی اندیشه های نعیم فراشری). The poster announced the conference to be held on March 3, 2018, though it seems that it was never held—or at least received no media coverage from IRNA. In this poster, several institutions were mentioned as organizers, either by name or by logo, and, the only logo of an Albanian institution shown in the poster was that of the Albanian Academy of Sciences – yet no member or scholar of this Academy was mentioned as having traveled to Iran to take part in the conference. The article itself announced the conference in its final paragraph, but without providing any details about the participants, stating: "A conference to commemorate this prominent poet, the only Persian-language poet to have lived in Europe, will be held in Tehran on March 5, 2018, with the support of the Islamic Culture and Communications Organization and domestic institutions, and with the presence of

intellectuals and those interested in Persian language and literature from Albania and other countries in the Balkan region".



"Mohammad Naim Frasheri" Poetry Evening in Albania
14/02/2018
https://irna.ir/xjp4WV

In fact, the only subsequent cultural article for this period is the one of June 8, 2018, titled "Albania's Poetry Reading and Naqqali Persian Saray held", in which IRNA reports: "A poetry reading and recitation ceremony of the poems of the Divan of Imaginations by the Albanian Persian poet Naim Frashëri was held in cooperation with the Albanian National Theater and the Municipality of Korça, which is known as the cultural capital of Albania". In contrast to earlier accounts of similar events, this article offered no details concerning the rank or nature of participants, whether from academic circles or local governance. The article itself is very brief and phrased in general terms.



Albania's Poetry Reading and Naqqali Persian Saray Held
08/06/2018
https://irna.ir/xjpXGP

Between 24–25 April 2018, IRNA published three articles on bilateral economic relations, all effectively covering the same event: the visit to Albania of the Head of the Iranian Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture and his meetings with the Albanian Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Affairs and with Albanian businesses.

This media coverage by IRNA begins with a 24 April 2018 article titled “Iran and Albania Explore Ways to Expand Economic Ties”, in which, according to IRNA, Shafei, the head of the Chamber of Commerce, and Gholamhossein Mohammadnia, Iran's ambassador to Tirana, on the first day of this visit, held separate meetings with the Albanian Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Affairs and the head of the Union of Chambers of Commerce of the country. In these meetings, they “emphasized the strong political and economic will of our country's (Iran’s) officials to expand and enhance trade and commercial relations with Albania in various fields”.

An analysis of the content shows that the article speaks in general terms, offering no concrete details about the outcomes of a years-long effort to develop economic and trade relations; it merely underscores the “good will” to advance these ties.



Iran and Albania explore ways to expand economic ties
24/04/2018
https://irna.ir/xjpCSm

In the same vein, IRNA publishes the article of 25 April 2018 titled "Iranian Chamber's President: Albania is Iran's Gateway to the Balkan Area". Despite the use of grandiose phrasing such as "Albania is Iran's gateway to the Balkan area", the article once again provides no figures on bilateral trade exchanges and makes no reference whatsoever to financial terms, import–export data, real investments, or similar indicators. From this coverage, it seems to amount largely to a "propagandistic balloon" surrounding a series of meetings scheduled long in advance, since there is no substantive, concrete discussion of how these relations would actually be developed.



Iranian chamber's president: Albania is Iran's gateway to the Balkan area
25/04/2018
https://irna.ir/xjpDb3

On 25 April 2018, IRNA published another article titled “Iran–Albania Joint Business Meeting Held in Tirana”, which mentions high-level participation and significant opportunities for cooperation. However, the only concrete “issue” was: “*establishing a Halal brand representative office and issuing Halal certificates in the food industry, tourism and research at the national and international levels, developing Iran's relations with Balkan countries, including Albania*” – In other words, the discussion still revolved around “perspectives” rather than any concrete balances or measurable outcomes.



Iran-Albania joint business meeting held in Tirana
25/04/2018
https://irna.ir/xjpDkF

This absence of concrete balances in the development of economic and trade relations, after several years of bilateral meetings that merely emphasized the “goodwill” to advance such relations, is a clear indication that Albania did not represent any particular economic interest for Iran, and that economic diplomacy was being used by Iran merely as an element of soft power to gain access, and conditioned with Albania’s positioning on other issues related to a broader geopolitical and international context, such as the presence of MEK in Albania, or international developments related to Iran, such as the JCPOA agreement.

This is further confirmed by the fact that during this period, IRNA did not report any other events of economic, cultural, artistic, or religious nature, apart from the above-mentioned articles. It is noteworthy that the interruption of IRNA's media coverage of soft-power activities occurred immediately after the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA in May 2018— the cause being either a total absence of such activities, or a total disinterest in developing bilateral relations in the new international context.

Subsequently, IRNA's entire attention focused to the media coverage of political developments in Albania, with a particular emphasis on "political instability", "governmental corruption", and issues related to MEK.

The MEK, described consistently in Iranian media as a "terrorist cult," occupied a central place in this emerging hostile narrative. Dozens of articles between 2018 and 2019 were focusing exclusively on exposing what IRNA called the group's "criminal past," "terrorist affiliations," and "ongoing subversive operations." Detailed reports drew attention to the MEK's *alleged mental abuse of its members*, referencing *Western journalistic investigations such as Der Spiegel's exposé on psychological torture at the MEK's camp in Albania (February 2019)*. These reports were extensively cited by IRNA to validate the Islamic Republic's longstanding claim that the MEK remained a threat not only to Iran but to regional security more broadly.



Spiegel's shocking account of mental torture to the members of MEK in Camp Albania

Tehran - IRNA - In a report published on its website, the German magazine "Spiegel" revealed the existence of numerous cases of mental and psychological torture of members of the MEK terrorist group in the group's camp in Albania… Since the presence of members of the MEK group in Albania, the National Geographic Network, the British Channel 4, Al Jazeera and several local Albanian networks have produced reports on these terrorists… The common thread in these reports and documentaries has been the terrifying and mysterious nature of this terrorist group and the desperation and helplessness of its members…

16/02/2019

https://irna.ir/xjshY5)

The MEK's presence in Albania was increasingly portrayed by IRNA not just as a humanitarian issue, but as part of a sophisticated geopolitical strategy orchestrated by Iran's adversaries. Iranian media claimed that the MEK was being used as a tool for cyber warfare, disinformation campaigns, and internal sabotage. In 2019, for example, IRNA published several pieces suggesting that *Twitter-based propaganda linked to the MEK was being coordinated from Albania* to support opposition movements in Iran. The term "cyber terrorism" was deployed in these contexts, linking the group to operations designed to spread unrest during events such as the Warsaw Summit, which Iran viewed as part of a U.S.-led effort to undermine the Islamic Republic diplomatically.

Here are some examples:



Media: Zarif calls for Twitter to close fake accounts

Tehran – IRNA – International media outlets, echoing the Iranian Foreign Minister's tweet criticizing Twitter's inaction to the fake accounts against the Islamic Republic of Iran, wrote: Mohammad Javad Zarif accused Twitter of closing the accounts of "real" Iranians instead of fake anti-Iranian accounts sponsored by the US… According to IRNA on Monday, Reuters news agency wrote that Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif reminded Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey in a tweet: "Hi Jack. Twitter has closed the accounts of real Iranians, including TV presenters and students, on the assumption that they are part of an "infiltration operation." He added: "Look at the robots in Tirana (the capital of Albania) that were used to support the "regime change" propaganda coming from Washington, DC. You are a robot.

17/09/2018

https://irna.ir/xjqNTR



The Hypocrites' (MEK's) Twitter operation for the Warsaw summit

The reluctance of European leaders and influential countries in international interactions to attend the anti-Iran summit, which was supposed to be held next month at the level of "world leaders" and focusing on "Iran's regional influences" in Warsaw, the capital of Poland, has caused the designers of this anti-Iran scenario to take strange propaganda measures to keep the summit alive and give it an echo… In anti-Iranian issues, the MEK and the Saudis have always been the pioneers in producing content on Twitter. If we put this incident next to the documentary that Al Jazeera released last September, the role of the MKO in trying to trend anti-Iranian issues becomes clear… Al Jazeera had reported that members of the MEK terrorist group, which is based in Albania, are using bots to spread lies against the Iranian regime in cyberspace and also to help with the "Iranian regime change" agenda that Washington is pursuing.

21/01/2019

https://irna.ir/xjs284



Iran's ambassador to London: Hypocrites seek to instill people's distrust of officials

Hamid Baeidinejad (Iran's ambassador to London) wrote in a post on his Twitter page and Telegram channel: “After media critics tried to expose the fake identity of a person named "Heshmat Alavi" who regularly wrote articles in various American media outlets, especially "Forbes", Twitter has suspended this account; investigations have shown that such a person does not exist and this account was run by the Hypocrites organization from Albania…The MKO has defined its military operations today as a media war, and thousands of its forces, with the most powerful media facilities provided to it by the US and Israel in Albania, publish thousands of tweets and other content on social media every day, with the aim of overthrowing and, within the same framework, demoralizing Iranian society.

10/07/2019

https://irna.ir/xjtsC4



Hashtag Maker Executioners

Since they were transferred to the Tirana camp in Albania by the US government during the Obama era, especially John Kerry, the Hypocrite (MEK) terrorists have designed new measures against Iran's security, the most important of which was the creation of terrorist and fake hashtags about the conditions in Iran, hashtags that target the minds and thoughts of the Iranian people.

11/07/2019

https://irna.ir/xjtPLR



Who is the loser of cyberwarfare?

The US President has launched a cyber war against Iran and other countries at a time when, according to experts, the digital nature of many activities in the United States has significantly increased its vulnerability compared to other countries… Two days ago, General Gholamreza Jalali, head of the Passive Defense Organization, said in an interview that we invented a subject called cyber defense for the first time in the world in 2011: "We invented cyber defense even before America, while the Americans were looking for cybersecurity, we designed cyber defense." According to General Jalali, another area of war that has recently been addressed and its scientific foundations also exist is the war on social networks, which is formed on the people's sphere using social network tools. In such a framework, the MEK went to Albania, changed their military structure and formed the structure of cyber divisions there, and thus they are waging war against us.

29/09/2019

https://irna.ir/xjvJdF

The common thread in these reports is the construction of a conspiratorial narrative in which—according to IRNA (i.e. the Iranian authorities)—a "triangle hostile to Iran," composed of Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the United States, was supporting activities aimed at regime change in Iran, with MEK members in Albania cast as "instruments" of this "conspiracy." This narrative surfaces in virtually every item related to cyber-warfare and "Twitter propaganda linked to the MEK." The same framing also dominates IRNA's articles portraying Albania as a "victim of this anti-Iranian front."

In fact, this "conspiratorial narrative" is not tied par excellence to the MEK; rather, it is a narrative that has been shaped over decades since the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran.

Regarding Saudi Arabia, this narrative reflects four decades of strained relations marked by periodic ruptures and restorations of diplomatic relations. Before the revolution, during the reign of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, both Iran and Saudi Arabia were aligned with the Western bloc in the Cold War against the Soviet Union, until the termination of formal Iran–U.S. relations in 1980 following the revolution (Wehrey et al., 2009; Ansari, 2006). After 1979, relations deteriorated sharply as Iran accused Saudi Arabia of aligning with the United States in the Persian Gulf and of representing U.S. interests rather than those of the broader Muslim world (Wehrey et al., 2009). Saudi Arabia, for its part, has been concerned by Iran's persistent ambition to export its revolution across the region—notably in post-Saddam Iraq, the Levant, and further south—and it opposes Iran's controversial nuclear program (Wehrey et al., 2009).

The difference in political ideologies and governing structures further divided the two states. The Islamic Republic of Iran is founded on the principle of the Guardianship of the Islamic Jurist (Velāyat-e Faqīh), which stipulates that a faqīh (Islamic jurist) exercises custodianship over all Muslim believers, including traditional rulers such as monarchs, regardless of nationality; Iran's Supreme Leader is a Shi'a faqīh. The leader of the 1979 Revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini, was ideologically opposed to monarchy, which he regarded as un-Islamic. By contrast, the Saudi monarchy has remained consistently conservative and non-revolutionary (Ansari, 2006).

There have also been periodic attempts to improve the relationship. After the 1991 Gulf War, a noticeable warming occurred (Hadzikadunic, 2023). In March 2007, Iranian President Ahmadinejad visited Riyadh, where he was greeted at the airport by King Abdullah; at that time, the two countries were referred to in the press as "brotherly nations" (Hadzikadunic, 2019). However, diplomatic relations were severed following

the attacks on the Saudi embassy in Tehran and the Saudi consulate in Mashhad in January 2016. After the assault on its embassy, Saudi Arabia broke off relations and ordered all Iranian diplomats to leave within 48 hours (BBC News, 2016). The two countries announced the resumption of diplomatic relations on March 10, 2023, following a deal brokered by China after several days of secret negotiations in Beijing between Iranian and Saudi officials.

Regarding Israel, following the Iranian Revolution and the fall of the Pahlavi dynasty in 1979, Iran adopted a sharp anti-Israel stance. Iran cut off all official relations with Israel; official statements, state institutes, and events reflected this posture. Iran ceased to accept Israeli passports, and holders of Iranian passports were banned from traveling to "the occupied Palestine." The Israeli Embassy in Tehran was closed and handed over to the PLO. Ayatollah Khomeini declared Israel an "enemy of Islam" and the "Little Satan," while the United States was termed the "Great Satan" (Ansari, 2006).

In December 2000, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei called Israel a "cancerous tumour" that should be removed from the region (Office of the Supreme Leader, 2005). In 2005 Khamenei clarified Iran's position—after an international furor over a remark attributed to President Ahmadinejad that Israel should be "wiped off the map"—by saying that "the Islamic Republic has never threatened and will never threaten any country" (Edalat, 2007). On 15 August 2012, during a meeting with veterans of the Iran–Iraq War, Khamenei said he was confident that "the superfluous and fake Zionist (regime) will disappear from the landscape" (Cohen, 2012). On 19 August, he reiterated comments made by President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, which members of the international community—including the United States, France, EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton, and UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon—condemned, calling Israel a

"cancerous tumour in the heart of the Islamic world" and asserting that its existence is responsible for many problems facing the Muslim world (AFP/Ynet, 2012; Tepper, 2012).

On 9 September 2015, Khamenei said, during discussion of the JCPOA: "I'd say to Israel that they will not see the end of these 25 years," remarks offered in response to Israeli officials who said they had no more concern about Iran for the next 25 years after the JCPOA agreement (McLaughlin, 2015).

*Regarding the United States***,** Iran and the United States have had no formal diplomatic relations since 7 April 1980 (Ansari, 2006). In August 2018, Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei banned direct talks with the United States (Reuters, 2018). According to the U.S. Department of Justice, Iran has since attempted to assassinate U.S. officials and dissidents, including U.S. President Donald Trump (AP News, 2024; Rabinowitz, 2024). Since 1995, the United States has maintained a broad embargo on trade with Iran (Ansari, 2006; Torbat, 2020). In 2015, the United States led successful negotiations for a nuclear deal—the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)—intended to place substantial limits on Iran's nuclear program, including IAEA inspections and limitations on enrichment levels; in 2016, most nuclear-related sanctions on Iran were lifted following Implementation Day (The New York Times, 2016). The Trump administration unilaterally withdrew from the nuclear deal and re-imposed sanctions in 2018, initiating what became known as the "maximum pressure" campaign against Iran (International Crisis Group, 2021). In response, Iran gradually reduced its commitments under the nuclear deal and eventually exceeded pre-JCPOA enrichment levels, including 60% enrichment announced in April 2021 (Reuters, 2021).

Consequently, this rhetoric of a "conspiratorial plot" against Iran resurfaces in Iranian politics and media whenever these three states (and not only them) react—particularly in response to Iran's expansionist tendencies in the Middle East region. These tendencies are manifested through the strengthening of influence via proxy groups such as Shi'a militias in Lebanon, Yemen, Syria, and Iraq; through the incitement of Shi'a minorities in Persian Gulf countries such as Saudi Arabia; or through direct threats and the financial and military support provided to extremist Shi'a groups such as Hezbollah, against Israel.

Parallel to this, IRNA's coverage of Albania's internal affairs became more selective and ideologically inflected. Reports highlighted *domestic unrest, protests against the Albanian government,* and *accusations of corruption,* constructing a narrative of a politically unstable and morally compromised state. IRNA covered *violent student protests, allegations of election fraud,* and *widespread public dissatisfaction* as symptoms of a country in decline—ostensibly under the sway of Western influence. This internal portrayal was framed to delegitimize the Albanian government's decisions regarding Iran, implying that a government unable to maintain domestic order or democratic integrity could not be trusted in its foreign policy choices.

Here are some examples:



12 Albanian officials arrested for involvement in financial corruption

The Albanian prosecutor's office announced the arrest of 12 officials, including a mayor, for their involvement in the sale of state-owned land near the sea… Combating financial corruption is one of Albania's top priorities in its ongoing negotiations to join the European Union… Albania, which became a member of NATO in 2009, is striving—like other countries in the region—to join the European Union, although accession to the 28-member bloc does not appear likely in the near future…

17/03/2018

https://irna.ir/xjpmM6



Albania government opposition calls for PM's resignation

Albanian government opponents, accusing the government of having ties to organized crime groups and protesting against income tax increases and poverty, have demanded the resignation of Prime Minister Edi Rama… Opposition parties in Albania have repeatedly expressed their dissatisfaction with the current government through protests and demonstrations, arguing that the administration is incapable of implementing reforms in the country… Albania, a candidate for European Union membership, continues to face unemployment, economic difficulties, and public dissatisfaction, despite receiving loans from international financial institutions.

05/04/2018

https://irna.ir/xjptjS



Albanian government opponents demand resignation of prime minister

Belgrade-IRNA- Thousands of Albanian government opponents held a massive demonstration in Tirana on Saturday evening demanding the resignation of Prime Minister Edi Rama… The Albanian government's opponents in the demonstrations accused the Prime Minister and the Interior Minister of incompetence in running the country, saying they had caused financial corruption and criminal activities to grow in the country.

27/05/2018

https://irna.ir/xjpSrG



Protests by angry students in Albania

Thousands of Albanian students held demonstrations on Tuesday to protest high tuition fees, warning that if their demands were ignored, they would intensify their protests… The demonstrators' main demands included halving current tuition fees, increasing the education budget, and ensuring greater student participation in decision-making processes… Rising tuition costs, poor educational quality, and the lack of sufficient infrastructure in public universities have angered Albanian students… The current deadlock in Albania's higher education system stems from government reforms introduced in 2015… The University of Tirana, the oldest university in Albania, faces the most severe problems in technical infrastructure, libraries, dormitories, and study halls…

11/12/2018

https://irna.ir/xjrCDy



Anti-government demonstrations in Albania

Albanian opposition leaders have once again held a demonstration in the capital Tirana, demanding the resignation of the prime minister and early parliamentary elections… The opposition has accused the left-wing Socialist Party of Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama of corruption, cabinet incompetence and organized crime, accusations that the government has strongly denied.

22/03/2019

https://irna.ir/xjsDr4



Albanians have called for the prime minister to resign

According to IRNA, protesters gathered in front of the Prime Minister's office, accusing him of incompetence in governing the country, economic mismanagement, and failure to address unemployment… The opposition accuses Prime Minister Edi Rama's left-wing Socialist Party of financial corruption, government incompetence, and involvement in organized crime—allegations strongly denied by the government…

04/04/2019

https://irna.ir/xjsKZT



The President of Albania cancels upcoming elections

Tehran – IRNA – The BBC website reported today that the President of Albania has decided to cancel the local elections scheduled for June 30, following months of anti-government protests and demonstrations... The protesters have accused Albanian Socialist Prime Minister Edi Rama of election fraud and corruption and are demanding his resignation and early national elections. The protesters also want a transitional government and have refused to negotiate with the Prime Minister.

09/06/2019

https://irna.ir/xjtrPS



Protesters in Albania again call for Pm's ouster

Pro-EU protesters in Albania have once again held demonstrations demanding the dismissal of the country's Prime Minister. Opposition leaders fear that if the current government continues, Albania will not be able to join the European Union.

09/07/2019

https://irna.ir/xjtNwf

Unlike the preceding period (2015–2017), in the articles from 2018–2019 relating to Albania's domestic political developments, IRNA portrays Albania as a politically unstable country, facing economic difficulties, with high levels of unemployment, and marked by widespread corruption and electoral fraud. From the perspective of media

discourse, it is noteworthy that the majority of articles from this period addressing political instability feature in their headlines the opposition's demand for the resignation of the Prime Minister, whom they accuse of corruption, incompetence in governance, and electoral manipulation. It is important to emphasize that the accusations of the Albanian opposition were already part of the opposition rhetoric during the years 2015–2017, but they did not dominate IRNA's media coverage in that period. This indicates that the highly negative coverage of Albania's domestic political situation during 2018–2019 is linked to the new international political context created by the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA, the support for the MEK as an Iranian opposition force, and related developments.

An indication of this shift is that the opposition demonstrators calling for the dismissal of Prime Minister Edi Rama are described in IRNA's articles as "pro-EU protesters," with the added claim that "opposition leaders fear that, if the current government continues, Albania will be unable to join the European Union." In the broader regional geopolitical context, this framing aligns with the fact that the EU was still steadfast in its support for the Iran nuclear deal (JCPOA), for a number of reasons—including economic interests and the need to secure energy supplies. "Looking at data compiled by Eurostat for the 24-month period following sanctions relief in 2016 (*e.i.; 2016-2018*), monthly EU exports to Iran rose 47%, while EU imports from Iran shot up 560%, driven by the purchase of Iranian mineral oils, including crude oil. At the time, European companies were keenly aware of the opportunities presented by sanctions relief, given the size of the Iranian market, and moved proactively to work on investment deals in various sectors including energy, manufacturing, the chemical and pharmaceutical industries, and infrastructure" (Bianco, 23 May 2022).

Undoubtedly, the culminating event of this period, which exposed the fragility of relations between Albania and Iran even after the phase of "warming" (2015–2017), was the expulsion on December 19, 2018, of the Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Albania, Gholamhossein Mohammadnia, along with another diplomat of the same embassy, on grounds of threatening national security. This event attracted particular attention not only in the local press and Albanian public opinion but also in the international arena, accompanied by several strong messages of support from the President of the United States, Donald Trump, and from some of the highest-ranking figures of the U.S. administration at the time, such as the Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, and the President's National Security Advisor, John Bolton.

In the context of this study on Albania's relations with the Middle East, it is important to note that this decision of the Albanian Government received immediate backing also from Israel, Saudi Arabia, and several other states of the Middle East region (as previously mentioned in this study). In the same context, it should also be emphasized that the decision to expel Ambassador Mohammadnia and another Iranian diplomat received immediate support from the opposition Democratic Party of Albania, both from its then-chairman, Lulzim Basha, and from its current leader, Sali Berisha, who even described the move as 'delayed'. Berisha stated: "The expulsion of the Iranian diplomats, a right but delayed decision! Dear friends, the media report that the government has decided to expel the ambassador and another Iranian diplomat. This decision comes after a dangerous, conspiratorial activity, incompatible with their diplomatic status, directed against the Iranian Mujahideen who live as political asylum seekers in our country and who are staunch opponents of the theocratic regime of the ayatollahs. In this context, it

can be said that their removal is entirely justified, though long delayed" (Gazeta Shqiptare, December 20, 2018).

This unified stance of both the governing majority and the Albanian opposition regarding Iran would reappear in subsequent meetings between high-level U.S. officials and representatives of the MEK in Albania, where both representatives of the ruling Socialist Party and those of the opposition Democratic Party and Republican Party took part.

IRNA covered this development with intense media coverage, with six articles between December 20 and 22, 2018, dominated by an extremely negative tone, placing the event in the context of a conspiratorial narrative, where the Albanian government is described as "victim to an unwanted action against Iranian diplomats in continuation of the scenario-building by the US, the Zionist regime and some terrorist groups". Here are some examples:



Foreign Ministry Spokesperson: Albania falls victim to US scenario and Zionist regime

Tehran- IRNA- The spokesman for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran said: Albania has fallen victim to an unwanted action against our diplomats in continuation of the scenario-building by the US, the Zionist regime and some terrorist groups. Some European media outlets reported on Albania's decision to expel the Iranian ambassador and an Iranian diplomat from that country... The first to welcome this decision were Pompeo and Bolton, the US Secretary of State and National Security Advisor... Albania's excuse for this action was stated to be "violation of diplomatic status."...and "engaging in activities that endanger the security of the country".

20/12/2018

https://irna.ir/xjrHQz



Qasemi: Albania government's action is unacceptable and condemned

Tehran - IRNA - The Foreign Ministry spokesman, condemning the unacceptable action of the Albanian government in expelling two Iranian diplomats, stated: This action and scenario was formulated under pressure from the US government and the Zionist regime's security service, in cooperation with some anti-Iranian terrorist groups, and with false and inaccurate claims, and was implemented in order to destroy and affect Iran-Europe relations

20/12/2018

https://irna.ir/xjrHSv



Trump thanks Albania's anti-Iran action

Tehran - IRNA - US President Donald Trump on Thursday praised and thanked the Albanian government for Tirana's condemnable action in expelling two Iranian diplomats… According to an Associated Press report from Tirana, Trump sent a letter to Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama expressing gratitude and wrote: “I appreciate your steadfast efforts to stand up against Iran, to counter that country’s destabilizing activities, and to silence dissenting voices across the world.”

IRNA, 20/12/2018

https://irna.ir/xjrHX9



Pompeo praises Albania's move to expel Iranian diplomats

New York - IRNA - The US Secretary of State, in a phone call with his Albanian counterpart, praised the expulsion of two Iranian diplomats, continuing the anti-Iranian strategy and using the terrorist group's agents as bait to make false claims against Iran… According to IRNA, Robert Palladino, Deputy Spokesperson for the US State Department, announced the news on Sunday, adding that Michael Pompeo and Ditmir Bushati commended the Albanian government's action to expel two Iranian diplomats, including the Iranian ambassador to Albania, for what has been called a response to an Iranian-sponsored plot to carry out a terrorist attack in Albania... With Donald Trump coming to power and defining an anti-Iranian strategy and taking advantage of forces opposing the Islamic Republic of Iran, the leaders of the Hypocrites (MEK) have been moving around a lot in the White House. And with the coming to power of Trump's National Security Advisor John Bolton, who used to give paid speeches at the Hypocrites (MEK-s) annual gathering, the role of this group against the Iranian people has increased… The leaders of this group, led by the Zionist and Saudi regimes, using their agents and making false claims about Iran's intention to carry out terrorist operations, none of which have occurred, are providing propaganda fodder for the White House so that they can force the Europeans, who did not support the US withdrawal from the JCPOA and are trying to ignore their sanctions, to take action against Iran.

22/12/2018

https://irna.ir/xjrJMC



Al-Saud's enthusiasm over expulsion of Iranian diplomat in Albania

Tehran - IRNA - An official in the Saudi Foreign Ministry on Saturday, continuing its anti-Iranian actions, expressed delight at Albania's action to expel two Iranian diplomats from the country… The source added: Saudi Arabia has repeatedly stressed the dangers of Iran's support for terrorism and called for the international community to deal seriously with this country.

22/12/2018

https://irna.ir/xjrJMV



In an exclusive interview with IRNA: Iran's ambassador narrates conspiracy in Albania to damage Tehran-Europe relations

Tehran - IRNA - Gholamhossein Mohammadnia, Iran's ambassador to Albania, who returned to Iran claiming diplomatic violations by Tirana, says: Albania's action in expelling two Iranian diplomats was an American-Zionist scenario and was intended to harm Iran-Europe relations… According to IRNA's report on Wednesday, Mohammadnia believes that Albania's action was part of a series of measures taken in connection with Iran-EU relations. Especially on the eve of providing a special European financial mechanism for Iran and preserving the JCPOA. The Albanian government, due to its low capacity and resistance, could not resist this scenario and fell victim to the American and Zionist scenario… "For the first time in the history of bilateral relations, the Albanian Foreign Minister visited Iran, and for the first time, the two news agencies IRNA and the Albanian state news agency signed a cooperation memorandum, and the economic delegation of the Iranian Chamber of Commerce traveled to Albania and signed a cooperation agreement with the Albanian parties. Even in the field of sports, officials of the Albanian Football Federation traveled to Iran and signed an agreement... On the other hand, the majority of the Albanian population is Bektashi Muslims, and a significant part of them are friends of the Ahl al-Bayt (AS) and have religious affiliations with Iran.

02/01/2019
https://irna.ir/xjrQ3S

These statements by the Iranian ambassador—who was expelled from Albania as persona non grata—reinforce precisely the conspiratorial framing through which Iran interprets this event. Although, at the end of his statement, he summarizes in one paragraph all the "efforts" to elevate bilateral relations during 2015–2017, his derogatory depiction of the Albanian government as having "low capacity and resistance" shows a lack of sincerity and suggests a dual posture on the Iranian side in these efforts—especially given that they produced virtually no concrete results over three years.

Likewise, his distortion of reality when he claims that "the majority of the Albanian population are Bektashi Muslims, and a significant part of them are friends of the Ahl al-

Bayt and have religious affiliations with Iran" is a clear indicator of Iran's attempt to "patronize" Albania's Muslim–Shi'a communities by presenting them as "the majority within Albania's religious demography and as religiously affiliated with Iran". In fact, these communities neither constitute the majority of Albania's population, nor is there any historical evidence linking them to Iran, whose Shi'a doctrine differs fundamentally from that of the Bektashis or other sects such as the 'Halwati' in Albania—differences shaped over centuries of sectarian divisions within Shi'a Islam.

Another typical case of media framing is the political use that IRNA made of its coverage of a natural disaster: the earthquake of November 26, 2019, in Albania, which caused over 50 deaths, many injuries, and extensive material damage. After reporting the event in a November 30 article titled "Albania earthquake kills 50", which merely provided details on the destruction caused by the earthquake and the history of earthquakes in Albania, IRNA published, on December 2, another article titled "Earthquake destroys 'Hypocrites' (MEK) headquarters in Albania". This article stood out for two sentences with profoundly political–propagandistic connotations: specifically, "*a severe earthquake that struck Albania last week destroyed the Hypocrites (MEK) barracks and killed several members of the terrorist group*" and "*According to the report, unlike its treatment of ordinary wounded civilians, the Albanian police transferred the injured from the Ashraf 3 camp to special hospitals with particular protocol and formalities*".



Earthquake destroys "Hypocrites" (MKO) headquarters in Albania
02/12/2019
https://irna.ir/xjwq9J

In sum, the period 2018–2019 reflects a clear and sustained securitization of Albania in Iranian media, spearheaded by narratives centered on the MEK. The bilateral relationship, became increasingly adversarial, characterized by mutual accusations and diplomatic disengagement. The discursive emphasis on the MEK's presence, combined with portrayals of Albania as a hub of instability and foreign influence, established a hostile media framework that would persist and expand in subsequent years.

Cyber Conflict and Diplomatic Breakdown (2020–2022): Between 2020 and 2022, Iranian media discourse on Albania—most notably through IRNA (Islamic Republic News Agency)—underwent a significant transformation, evolving into what can be described as a fully securitized and ideologically adversarial narrative. The portrayal of Albania moved beyond prior criticisms of Western alignment to characterize the country as an active and complicit node in a broader geopolitical and cyber-based confrontation with the Islamic Republic of Iran. The peak of this transformation occurred in September 2022, when Albania severed diplomatic ties with Iran, citing a series of cyberattacks conducted by Iranian state-linked actors. The Iranian response, as captured by IRNA's intensified coverage, was swift and vehement: categorical denial of the charges,

attribution of blame to the United States and Israel, and an insistence that Albania was merely executing orders on behalf of Western security alliances, particularly NATO and U.S. intelligence agencies.

IRNA's media coverage of Albania for the year 2020 begins with the expulsion of two additional Iranian diplomats, Mohammad Ali Arz Peimanemati and Ahmad Hosseini Alast, who were declared "persona non grata" and ordered to leave Albania immediately. This news also made headlines in both Albanian local media and international outlets.

A press release of the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania on January 15 2020, stated:

> Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs decided today that the diplomatic representatives of the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Albania, Mr. Mohammad Ali Arz Peimanemati and Mr. Seyed Ahmad Hosseini Alast, to be declared persona non grata, for conducting activities incompatible with their status and the principles of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. The two representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran were requested to leave the territory of the Republic of Albania immediately" (Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, January 15, 2020).

Meanwhile, VOA reported:

> Confidential sources within the Albanian government told VOA the two diplomats are being expelled for activity endangering Albania's national security. They said that cultural attache Seyed Ahmed Hosseini Alast had previously held high positions with Iran's Revolutionary Guard and that Mohamed Peimanemati had been a member of the operational unit of Iran's Intelligence Agency, MOIS. The source charged that he was responsible for terrorist acts in European Union countries" (Kostreci, January 15, 2020).

The Albanian media outlet 'Top Channel', in an article titled "Who was Soleimani's man hiding in Tirana as Iran's cultural attaché" (January 16, 2020), wrote in relation to Seyed Ahmed Hosseini Alast:

> Under the guise of a cultural attaché, he was also appointed director of the Sadi Shirazi Cultural Foundation, a foundation that has operated in Albania since 1996 and which, according to its statute, aims to promote Iranian culture in Albania and Albanian culture in Iran. This foundation also publishes a magazine, which was also directed by the Iranian intelligence service operative. In addition to its publications, it is believed that this foundation finances online media in Albania which follow an ideological line close to the Ayatollah regime in Iran and often attack Albania's decision to host members of the Iranian opposition, the MEK.

Referring to IRNA articles analyzed in this study, Seyed Ahmed Hosseini Alast was present in many of the cultural and religious activities in Albania during the period under

review. This expulsion of the two Iranian diplomats was reported by IRNA in the following article:



Albania's non-diplomatic action against Iranian diplomats

Tehran- IRNA- The Albanian Foreign Ministry announced on Wednesday the expulsion of two Iranian diplomats, claiming that the two individuals were involved in activities unrelated to diplomatic status… In December 2018, the Albanian government expelled two other Iranian diplomats for "violating diplomatic status" by disrupting unspecified illegal activities that threatened the country's security... Since 2013, Albania has received about 3,000 members of the Hypocrites (MEK) Organization, who were previously based in Iraq, at the request of the United States and the United Nations... In the years following the Islamic Revolution, the terrorist group of the Hypocrites (MEK) fled Iran and moved to Iraq, where they were welcomed and sheltered by Saddam Hussein, the country's former dictator.

16/01/2020

https://irna.ir/xjwTNf

Viewed from a media framing perspective, IRNA offers no substantive information about the activities of the two diplomats declared persona non grata, nor does it explicitly deny their engagement in actions deemed incompatible with their diplomatic status. Instead, it inserts three paragraphs about the MEK's presence in Albania and the Organization's history—information that is not directly relevant to the news item itself.

From this moment onward, the issue of MEK becomes the central focus of IRNA's coverage relating to Albania. Thus, in an article dated February 10, 2020, titled "Independence and freedom are the greatest achievements of the Islamic Revolution", IRNA reports that the deputy head of the Passive Defense Organization, Major General Gholam Ali Heydari, during a ceremony in Ardestan commemorating the 41st anniversary of the Islamic Revolution, stated: "The enemy does not remain idle; through cyberspace and the media it is waging a soft war, ostensibly sustaining its puppet power

and seeking to intimidate Iran by deploying aircraft carriers and terrorist teams; or, with Saudi financial and media support, equipping all anti-revolutionary groups with cyber capabilities so they can drive a wedge between Iran and Iraq—enabling the Hypocrites (MEK), who assassinated 17,000 Iranians, to conduct cyber operations from Albania to fracture the resistance front."



Independence and freedom are the greatest achievements of the Islamic Revolution
10/02/2020
https://irna.ir/xjxbZY

In the context of media framing, it should be noted that during this period IRNA did not publish statements from high-ranking Iranian officials regarding MEK in Albania, that could further aggravate already strained relations. Instead, such references were incorporated, as in the case above, into statements by local figures during various speeches, or in reports from foreign media outlets. One such instance is an article of February 19, 2020, titled "New York Times reporter reveals Hypocrites' (MEK's) camp in Albania", in which IRNA refers to New York Times journalist Patrick Kingsley.



New York Times reporter reveals Hypocrite's (MEK-s) camp in Albania

Tehran - IRNA - A reporter for the American newspaper New York Times in Berlin, Germany, recently prepared a report on his visit to the Hypocrites (MEK) camp near Tirana, the capital of Albania, and exposed the group… In his article, Kingsley referred to the camp as barracks and wrote: Contrary to the claims of the group's officials, who claim that nearly 2,500 people live in the camp, he saw only 200 people… He further mentioned the issue of the acceptance of members of this (terrorist) group by the Albanian government, writing: "Ditmir Bushati, the then Albanian Foreign Minister, declared the acceptance of these people as a kind of favor to Washington"… Kingsley's report continued: The group is said to have paid tens of thousands of dollars to former adviser John Bolton and Trump's personal lawyer Rudy Giuliani to attend and speak at a meeting of their members; two individuals who described the MEK as the most legitimate opposition group to the Iranian government.

19/02/2020

https://irna.ir/xjxhD2

It's noteworthy that in his original article, titled "*Highly secretive Iranian rebels are holed up in Albania. They gave us a tour*" (New York Times, 16/02/2016), describing the history of the relocation of MEK members from "Camp Ashraf" in Iraq to Albania, Kingsley writes:

> But in 2009, American troops ceded responsibility for the M.E.K. to the Iraqi government. Led by politicians sympathetic to Iran, the Iraqi authorities tacitly allowed Iran-allied militias to attack the group. American and United Nations diplomats began searching for a safer country to house the group. After intensive lobbying by a bipartisan group of lawmakers, the American government also removed them from a list of terrorist organizations in 2012. A year later, they were finally welcomed by Albania. The Albanian government hoped its hospitality would curry favor with Washington, according to the foreign minister between 2013 and 2019, Ditmir Bushati.

From this broader historical context of the original article, however, IRNA's article paraphrases only the final sentence, stating: "Ditmir Bushati, the then Albanian Foreign Minister, declared the acceptance of these people as a kind of favor to Washington."

Moreover, an apparently "minor" translation slip conveys the false impression that Rudy Giuliani and John Bolton "were paid by the MEK" for their speeches in Albania. In his New York Times article, Kingsley writes:

> The group's loudest allies include Rudolph W. Giuliani, the president's personal lawyer, and John R. Bolton, his former National Security Adviser. Both have received tens of thousands of dollars for speaking at the group's conferences, where these influential Americans describe the People's Jihadists as Iran's most legitimate opposition.

Thus, Kingsley neither mentions nor implies that Giuliani and Bolton received money from the MEK—yet the sentence underlined above was paraphrased in the IRNA article as follows: "*This group has paid tens of thousands of dollars to former national security adviser John Bolton and Trump's personal lawyer Rudy Giuliani to attend and speak at their members' meetings*".

It is clear that in this case we are not only dealing with "media framing" in the sense of information selection and its placement within a particular context, but with a deliberate distortion of meaning through "translation".

On 24 August 2020, IRNA published a cultural news item related to Albania—the first of its kind after many months. The article, titled "The short film 'The Speaker' was accepted at the Tirana Film Festival in Albania", reported on an Iranian student short film that had been accepted to compete in the "Tirana Film Festival"—online, due to the situation created by the Coronavirus pandemic.



The short film "The Speaker" was accepted at the Tirana Film Festival in Albania
24/08/2020
https://irna.ir/xjzjHZ

On 7 October 2020, IRNA published an article titled “The Hard Work of the Foreign Policy Apparatus in Iran”, in which MEK members are referred to as آلبانی‌نشین‌ها (*albani neshinha*)—“those who reside in Albania” (or “Albanian residents”), a term that would later become a coinage in subsequent media coverage. They are described as a source of offensive attacks, with the claim that “the domestic [Iranian] people unintentionally fall into their trap”.

In the context of media framing, by employing a conspiratorial narrative that designates the United States, Israel, and some Arab states such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE as hostile, the article—while speaking about Iranian diplomacy— employs a harsh and undiplomatic tone toward the leaders of these countries, calling them “the most evil people” (شقی‌ترین افراد [*shaki tarine afrad*]) and referring to the American administration as the “US terrorist regime” (رژیم تروریستی آمریکا [*rezhim-e terroristi Amrika*]).

`Such an excess in the use of harsh and arrogant hate speech seems to exceed every limit of professional media ethics—even for domestic consumption—particularly in an article that discusses diplomacy. Here are some quotations from the article to illustrate this extremely harsh language:



The Hard Work of the Foreign Policy Apparatus in Iran

Tehran- IRNA- Anyone can make mistakes and can be exposed to criticism, but what happens against the foreign policy apparatus is insults, destruction, and mostly, troublemaking. It can be said with confidence that the origin of many of these attacks is "those who reside in Albania" (آلبانی‌نشین‌ها), while the domestic people (i.e.: people that live in Iran) unintentionally fall into their trap… In many cases, instead of confronting foreign enemies, most of the energy of the Minister and the staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is spent on eliminating and reversing internal sabotage and eliminating the harmful effects of the positions, behavior and ill-considered actions of some domestic real and legal figures. If we consider our country's diplomats as soldiers on the front line in the fight against the most evil people such as Trump, Pompeo, Netanyahu, bin Salman and bin Zayed and neutralizing their conspiracies, not only do they not receive natural and appropriate support and assistance, but in many cases they are stabbed in the back…

07/10/2020

https://irna.ir/xjByPy

In the context of this study, it should be noted that such "harsh language" was not employed toward the Albanian authorities—since they were routinely portrayed as "victims" of this "conspiracy", who merely commit "mistakes"—a rhetoric which, although not as harsh, is perhaps even more derogatory.

IRNA often employs such derogatory language also toward the leaders of the MEK. An example of this derogatory language is the article of 13 October 2020, titled "Rajavi the Walking Dead".



Rajavi The Walking Dead

Tehran – IRNA – In recent months, news and reports have been published in the media and social networks regarding the death of "Massoud Rajavi", the leader of **the hypocrites' terrorist group**, all of which, citing some appearances, claim that he has been killed. These reports were enough to draw attention once again to the unknown fate of the leader of the **hypocrites' sect** and once again arouse public curiosity… On July 12 of last year, during their annual meeting, elements of the hypocrites group installed a billboard in the grounds of the Manz Albania camp, known as Ashraf 3, a place that the Americans had prepared for them in Europe, in Albania, after the expulsion of the **MKO** by the Iraqi government, in which Massoud Rajavi's picture can be seen next to pictures of prominent historical figures of Iran such as Sattar Khan, Bagher Khan, Mirza Kochak Khan, and one or two of the early leaders of the **Mojahedin-e Khalq Organization**…

13/10/2020

https://irna.ir/xjBCc4

In the context of media framing, it should be noted that this is one of the rare articles in which IRNA uses the three terms by which the MEK is known or "labeled" in Iran. Two of these terms, which are most commonly used by IRNA, are "گروهک تروریستی منافقین [garuhak-e terroristi-ye monafiqin], i.e., "the terrorist group of Hypocrites", and "فرقه منافقین [ferqe-ye monafiqin], i.e., "the Sect of Hypocrites". The third term used is in fact the organization's proper name, by which it is also widely recognized in the international arena, namely "سازمان مجاهدین خلق" [sazman-e mojahedin-e khalq], i.e., "People's Mojahedin Organization" (abbreviated as MKO), also known in its shortened form as "مجاهدین خلق" [Mojahedin-e Khalq] (abbreviated as MEK). This latter term is used here by IRNA only once, in a historical context, when it states: "و یکی دو تن از رهبران اولیه سازمان مجاهدین خلق" – "and one or two of the early leaders of the Mojahedin-e Khalq Organization".

In the same vein, the image used in the article places the MEK logo against the backgdrop of the U.S. and U.K. flags; the logo itself contains the name "مجاهدین خلق" (Mojahedin-e Khalq), while the tag placed beneath the image is labeled "the terrorist group of Hypocrites" , "گروهک تروریستی منافقین" [garuhak-e terroristi-ye monafiqin],– these two different "designations" for the identification of the same image are a clear indication of IRNA's dualism in media framing.

This dualism – though "not linguistic" – reappears in the subsequent article, dated 2 November 2020, titled "Unity Conference: The Starting Point of a New Strategy for Islamic Unity". Although its central theme is "Islamic Unity", the article inserts the same "conspiracy narrative" of an "American–Zionist–Saudi" plot. This time, however, it is not linked solely to Iran but also to other parts of the Islamic world, such as Syria, attributing the conflict there and the emergence of extremist groups involved in it to this "imaginary conspiracy". This is, in fact, a distinctly stigmatizing-sectarian rhetoric, disguised under the guise of combating extremism, which becomes evident in this passage of the article: "The recent war of the Takfiris against Syria, where the United States, the Zionist regime, imperialist countries and the Saudi Wahhabis have turned tens of thousands of Muslims around the world into extremists and sent them to Syria as Takfiri soldiers against the Syrian government, is a great lesson for Islamic scholars that the solution to confronting the Takfiris is Islamic unity".

In the context of media framing, IRNA introduces this rhetoric through the words of "a university professor and historian of Ottoman history (Dr. Jazexhi), in the webinar 'North America Region'". According to IRNA, this professor mentions during his speech that he is from Albania, and draws an association between extremist movements or conservative Islamic currents in the Middle East and the MEK:

> Dr. Jazexhi said: The lesson we learn from the Takfiris in Syria, or the issue we face in Albania regarding the presence of the extremist and terrorist group, the Mujahedin-e Khalq, or the terrorist organization of the Hypocrites, which is unfortunately hosted by my country, shows the Muslim Ummah the danger posed by these groups that do not accept Islamic unity and want to impose their extremist views on the rest of the world.

By contrast, Iran—where a Shi'ite theocracy rules—is presented in the article as the guide of the Islamic world and as a "supporter of Sunni Muslims in the Balkans, in Syria, and in Palestine":

> He [Dr. Jazexhi] continued: The Islamic Republic of Iran, which supports the Sunni Muslims of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Albania, Syria and Palestine, is a great lesson for the rest of the Muslim Ummah, so that people can understand that the lies and propaganda of the Takfiris against Islamic unity are fake. The government of the Islamic Republic of Iran has continuously shown the rest of the Muslim community that it does not matter whether you are Sunni or Shia – what matters is that you are Muslim and we are all religious brothers and sisters.

In this analysis, my aim is not to dwell on the veracity of these statements, nor to provoke academic debate on the issue, but rather to highlight this model of media framing that IRNA, as well as other media outlets in Iran, employ in relation to the statements or opinions of Albanian scholars—and not only—by contextualizing them in the service of a hegemonist-religious policy.



Unity Conference: The Starting Point of a New Strategy for Islamic Unity
02/11/2020
https://irna.ir/xjBPmc

In 2021, IRNA began its media coverage on Albania with an article dated January 18, 2021, titled "Hypocrites' (MKO's) cooperation with Albanian mafia poses threat to

citizens of that country". In this article, was published an interview with political correspondent Seyyed Reza Qazvini Ghorabi, who, according to IRNA, stated that the cooperation of the MEK with the Albanian mafia represents a threat to the citizens of this country, adding: "Albanian journalists speak of the serious possibility that this group has access to hundreds of thousands of weapons that were stolen from Albanian army barracks more than two decades ago"—without mentioning the name of any journalist or media outlet. He then jumps to the conclusion that: "The MEK group's acquisition of these weapons and its dealings with Albanian mafia groups could pose a real threat to the citizens of this country and the Balkans, and could even have negative effects on Albania's EU membership process or delay this process".

Such a "cause-and-effect logic," not based on facts but only on journalistic insinuations of a "serious possibility", is a form of media framing that borders on disinformation. Consequently, it distorts Albania's image, which the article explicitly associates with the presence of the MEK in the country. Meanwhile, this lengthy article of around 900 words in Persian does not bring a single verifiable fact, but only insinuations regarding its subject matter.



Hypocrites' (MEK's) cooperation with Albanian mafia poses threat to citizens of that country
18/01/2021
https://irna.ir/xjCzt9

Another article from 2021 related to the MEK is that of 7 April 2021, titled "Facebook removes hundreds of Hypocrites (MEK) accounts". This report, which IRNA claims is from the Associated Press, states that "the social network Facebook removed hundreds of accounts linked to the MEK in Albania, as members of the group used fake accounts, photos and profiles to post criticism of the Iranian government". The piece, however, offers no concrete evidence or specific details to substantiate these claims.



Facebook removes hundreds of Hypocrites' (MEKs) accounts
07/04/2021
https://irna.ir/xjDrQ9

In 2021, IRNA's media coverage of religious activities in Albania was again almost entirely absent, and the only news item that appears to have attracted IRNA's attention concerning Albanian Muslims was the article of 19 April 2021, entitled "Assailant injures five worshippers in Albania." The report recounts a knife attack by a young man against Muslim worshippers while they were praying in a mosque in Tirana. This incident also drew significant attention in the Albanian media and, according to investigations, the perpetrator of the attack was a person with mental health disorders. Subsequently, a decision was taken to close the investigation and to impose the measure of "compulsory medical treatment in a medical institution" (Shqiptarja.com, July 26, 2021).

In the context of media framing, it is noteworthy that IRNA chose to conclude this news item with a detail about Albania's religious demography, stating: "Albania has a population of 2.8 million, the majority of whom are Muslim, with a small minority of Catholic and Orthodox Christians living in the country". This may be interpreted as an allusion that the incident could have had a religious background. However, no such insinuation is made explicitly in the article.



Assailant injures five worshippers in Albania
19/04/2021
https://irna.ir/xjDzj8

It is worth emphasizing that, between May 2021 and May 2022, the MEK-in-Albania theme abruptly disappears from IRNA's coverage. Although the agency continued to publish extensive articles about the MEK—including reports on the organization's annual gathering in Paris—it no longer mentioned Albania as the group's base of operations, despite the fact that its members remained at the Manëz camp in Albania. This shift can be explained in part by the beginning of President Joe Biden's term (2021–2025), during which Iran–United States relations were shaped by efforts to revive the 2015 nuclear agreement, alongside ongoing regional tensions, sanctions, cyberattacks, and proxy conflicts. Early in Biden's presidency, U.S. officials signaled an interest in returning to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), (CFR,

cfr/timeline/us-relations-iran-1953-2023; Lake, January 22, 2021)—a clear example of how U.S. foreign policy influences Iran–Albania relations (thus corroborating the study's hypothesis; elaborated further below).

During this period, Albania appears in IRNA primarily as a factor within broader regional political developments: the Russia–Ukraine conflict, joint exercises under NATO, its tenure as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council and related voting positions, the repatriation of families of ISIS fighters, and the reception of Afghan refugees. These developments are presented across several articles, including:

- "U.S.-Europe joint exercise with transparency claims" (14/05/2021).
- "Five non-permanent members of the UN Security Council elected" (12/07/2021).
- "Albanian ISIS families detained in Syria return home" (01/08/2021).
- "U.S. consultations with Albania to temporarily resettle Afghan refugees" (20/08/2021).
- "U.S. concerned about China-Albania relations establish military base in Tirana" (08/01/2022).

In this period, the conspiratorial narrative of the "U.S.–Israel–Saudi Arabia plot" also disappears almost entirely. Even though the United States is constantly mentioned in reports concerning Albania, in the framework of its North Atlantic partnership or regional developments, IRNA's rhetoric in these reports is devoid of harsh language toward American authorities or policies. As mentioned above, this was a year of diplomatic efforts to revive the JCPOA, from which the U.S. had withdrawn in 2018 during the first term of President Donald Trump – therefore, IRNA substantially toned down its harsh rhetoric towards the United States.

Conversely, IRNA publishes almost no articles with directly Albania-related economic, cultural, or religious ("soft-power") content in this period. The exceptions are two cultural notes: a brief 4 September 2021 item, "Iranian films compete in Argentina, India, Albania and the U.S." (which provides no details about the events), and a 6 December 2021 scholarly essay, "Is the Persian language a 'migrant-receiving' or 'migrant-sending' language?", a lengthy study with ten subsections on Persian's influence across world languages and cultures. Subsection seven, "Croats, Serbs, and Albanians Host Persian Words," contains two paragraphs about Persian lexical influence in Albanian, with etymological illustrations; the piece is therefore only tangentially related to Albania.

The MEK issue in Albania resurfaces abruptly in a 21 May 2022 article titled "Martyrs' remembrances play a prominent role in preventing distortion of holy defense." Although the article is not directly about Albania, it asserts that "the elderly members of the infernal group of Hypocrites (MEK) are currently producing and launching a round-the-clock media offensive against the revolution and the people from special rooms in Albania."



Martyrs' remembrances play a prominent role in preventing distortion of holy defense
21/05/2022
https://irna.ir/xjJtGy

This article was published by IRNA just one month before former U.S. Vice President Mike Pence's participation in a MEK meeting in Albania—an event that marked a turning point after more than a year of "silence." The development triggered reactions in Iran that sharpened IRNA's tone and revived the "conspiracist narrative of a plot against Iran"—a rhetorical escalation that, this time, would precede the subsequent cyberattacks and the severing of diplomatic relations.

On June 24, 2022, IRNA published an article titled "Trump's deputy meets with the terrorist group of Hypocrites in Albania." Although sourced from the American network Fox News, IRNA framed the report within the Islamic Republic's position, reinstating—after more than a year—the conspiratorial narrative according to which the MEK "gathers extremist American politicians and its hired supporters every year with false promises and sometimes money laundering, and seeks its survival through lobbying". The article further asserted that "the terrorist group of Hypocrites (MEK), which has an office in Washington, has sought a tougher U.S. stance toward Iran" and "opposes the possible re-entry of the United States into the JCPOA".

Of course, it is irrational to believe that a group like the MEK—with the status of asylum seekers, restricted movement, and continuous surveillance—would be in a position to lobby "with false promises and even money laundering" in order "to hire supporters and gather American politicians". This is a form of media framing aimed at IRNA's domestic audience in Iran. Nevertheless, it is clear that what truly concerns IRNA and the Islamic Republic is in fact the obstruction of efforts for "the possible re-entry of the United States into the JCPOA"—as I emphasized in the discussion of U.S.–Iran relations at the beginning of the Biden presidential mandate.

Alongside the "conspiratorial narrative" about the influence of the MEK, this article also reintroduces the language of hatred regarding President Trump and his aides: "The meeting of the extremist vice president of former U.S. President Donald Trump, whose hands are stained with the blood of martyr General Qassem Soleimani, with the Hypocrites (MEK) terrorists is not far-fetched…".



Trump's deputy meets with terrorist group MKO in Albania
24/06/2022
https://irna.ir/xjJNzT

On 24 June 2022, IRNA published another article titled "The life and death of society is in the hands of the judiciary / The most righteous men should be the custodians of the judiciary". On this occasion, the MEK was mentioned by a cleric—the representative of the Supreme Leader in the province and the Friday Imam of Ardabil, Ayatollah Ameli. Although the central theme of the article was the judicial system in Iran, the report contained four subtopics, the second and most extensively covered being: "The crimes of the MEK must be recounted for the younger generation."

Here, according to IRNA, the senior Shi'ite cleric "explained the dimensions of the presence of former U.S. Vice President Mike Pence in a meeting of the Hypocrites (MEK)

and said: Yesterday, on the eve of 'Haft Tir'[6] remembrance, in Albania, Trump's Vice President Mike Pence appeared among the Hypocrites (MEK) in disgrace and delivered offensive remarks against Iran. When he was Trump's vice president, he encouraged Trump to withdraw from the JCPOA with his sinister wishes and announced that America's withdrawal from the JCPOA was equivalent to the fall of Iran, but he took his wish with him and failed".

I would like to remind here that in Iran's theocratic system, senior clerics hold not only religious authority but also extended control over the state, in accordance with the principle of Velayat-e faqih. "Velayat-e faqih—or guardianship of the Islamic jurist—is the system of governance that has underpinned Iran's political order since the country's 1979 Islamic Revolution. At its most basic, the theory of velayat-e faqih, which is rooted in Shi'a Islam, justifies the rule of the clergy over the state. The concept of velayat-e faqih transfers all political and religious authority to the Shi'ite clergy and makes all of the state's key decisions subject to approval by a supreme clerical leader, the 'Vali-e faqih' (guardian Islamic jurist). The supreme clerical leader (the faqih) provides guardianship (velayat) over the nation and, in doing so, ensures the top-down Islamization of the state" (Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, March 29, 2019). As the article notes, Ayatollah Ameli was "the representative of the Supreme Leader in the province of Ardabil".

In the context of media framing, delivering this message in IRNA through the sermon of a senior Shi'ite cleric appears to have been intended to sensitize the Iranian public to anticipated tensions relating to the MEK (and, consequently, to Albania), but

[6] On 28 June 1981 (*7 Tir 1360 in the Iranian calendar; Persian:* هفت تیر, *Hafte Tir*), a powerful bomb went off at the headquarters of the Islamic Republican Party (IRP) in Tehran, while a meeting of party leaders was in progress. Seventy-four leading officials of the Islamic Republic of Iran were killed, including Chief Justice Ayatollah Mohammad Beheshti, who was the second most powerful figure in the Iranian Revolution (after Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini). Two days later, on 30 June, the People's Mujahedin of Iran was accused by Khomeini of being behind the attack

without involving official statements from the Iranian government or diplomatic authorities, which at the time were engaged in efforts to bring the United States back into the JCPOA, from which it had withdrawn in 2018. As the quotation above shows, this issue was also explicitly referenced by the senior Shi'ite cleric in his sermon.



The life and death of society is in the hands of the judiciary/ The most righteous human beings should be the custodians of the judiciary
24/06/2022
https://irna.ir/xjJNLp

In another article, also dated 24 June 2022, titled "Gharibabadi reacts to Mike Pence's presence at Hypocrites (MEK) group meeting", IRNA intensifies its harsh rhetoric in covering this issue by publishing a tweet from the Deputy for International Affairs of the Judiciary and Secretary of Human Rights (in the Ministry of Justice–Iran), Kazem Gharibabadi, who stated: "Mike Pence's meeting with the Hypocrite terrorists of (MEK) is emblematic of the U.S. regime's support of terrorism and its ill-wishes for the Iranian people, 17,000 of whom have been assassinated by this bloodthirsty & notorious terrorists".

To this tweet, IRNA added: “Mike Pence attended the meeting of the Hypocrites (MEK) terrorist group in Albania yesterday and also met with ‘Maryam Rajavi,’ the leader of this group. He had also spoken at an event of this terrorist group last year”.

It is noteworthy that this reaction, although harsh, did not come from Iran’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but from an official of the Ministry of Justice, responsible for human rights and international affairs.



Gharibabadi reacts to Mike Pence's presence at Hypocrites (MEK) group meeting
24/06/2022
https://irna.ir/xjJNPj

Two days later, in an article titled “Minister of Intelligence: The names of the martyrs of the 7th of June will always remain in history”, IRNA reported a speech by the Minister of Intelligence, Seyyed Ismail Khatib, in which he was quoted as saying: “The black-faced terrorists living in Albania have never been and will never be safe from the fire of revenge for the 12,000 martyrs of their crimes; even though they place themselves more and more at the disposal of the heads of official and state terrorism such as Trump, Mike Pence, and Pompeo every day”.

The use of the term “living/residents in Albania” (آلبانی نشین), by the Iranian Minister of Intelligence is not coincidental—it appears to convey the message that Iran’s intelligence services were paying particular attention to MEK members residing in Albania, especially following Mike Pence’s visit.



Minister of intelligence: The names of the martyrs of the 7th of June
25/06/2022
https://irna.ir/xjJPcV

Nevertheless, these statements, although coming from senior figures of the establishment in Iran, did not convey direct messages to the American administration of the time, while IRNA’s media coverage about Albania continued to focus on Albania’s partnership within NATO, its EU accession perspective, and its role in regional developments. Examples include the article of July 2, 2022 titled “NATO seeks to establish base in Albania” and that of July 19, 2022 titled “EU agrees to start negotiations for Membership of Albania and Northern Macedonia”.

An interesting case in IRNA-s coverage during this period was the trial of the Iranian national Hamid Nuri by a Swedish judicial panel, in which he was sentenced to life imprisonment for crimes against humanity in connection with the mass executions of political prisoners in Iran in 1988—a trial in which testimonies from MEK members residing in Albania were also presented. Although the judicial process was conducted in

the court of the Albanian city of Durrës, in IRNA's media coverage of this event (an event, that was not limited to the individual Hamid Nuri but touched upon the Iranian regime itself) Albania was mentioned only as the place where the trial took place. Meanwhile, IRNA published a separate article with the statement of Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which held the Swedish government responsible for this development, without mentioning the Albanian authorities.



Sweden's move to deprive Hamid Nouri of basic rights
11/07/2022
https://irna.ir/xjJX2Q

On July 22, 2022, IRNA published an article on the cyberattacks against Albania—the first in a series of articles related to cyber-warfare that IRNA would release over a one-month period, up to 20 August 2022. The article, titled "Albania targeted by massive cyberattacks ahead of annual meeting of the terrorist group of Hypocrites (MEK)," situates the news of the cyberattacks within the context of the forthcoming MEK summit in Albania: "Albania is hosting the annual meeting of the Hypocrites (MEK) group this week, while a massive cyberattack on the country's government agencies has brought online public services to a standstill in recent days".

The article portrays Albania as a vulnerable country where the government has been confronted with "criticism from the opposition" for "jeopardizing the security of citizens' data": "*The vulnerability of Albania's government portals has been criticized by opposition parties, who have pressured the government for jeopardizing the security of citizens' data*". It further hints that the possible source of these attacks might be Russia, linking the cause to Albania's EU accession process: "*Local media accused Moscow of carrying out the cyberattack, as the European Union began negotiations with Albania for membership in the union*". In light of subsequent developments, this seems to be an "alibi" that pre-emptively deflects attention from possible Iranian involvement.

It is worth noting that on the very same day, 22 July 2022, IRNA also published another article titled "Russia expands the list of unfriendly countries", in which Albania was listed among Russia's "unfriendly" states. In this report, it is stated: "According to IRNA, the United States, Canada, European Union countries, the United Kingdom, Ukraine, Montenegro, Switzerland, **Albania**, Andorra, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Norway, San Marino, North Macedonia, Japan, South Korea, Australia, Micronesia, New Zealand, Singapore and Taiwan are among the countries on the list of unfriendly countries".

At the same time, IRNA insisted on situating the event within the context of the MEK summit, adding a separate subtitle: "Strict security measures in Albania ahead of the annual meeting of Hypocrites (MEK)", which begins with the announcement of the U.S. Embassy for U.S. citizens in Albania: "The U.S. Embassy in Albania issued a warning message about the country's citizens traveling to Albania to attend the annual meeting of the MEK, which will be held on Saturday and Sunday in the suburb of 'Draç' (Durrës), 33 km from Tirana".

In its concluding paragraph, IRNA frames the settlement of the MEK in Albania within the "conspiratorial narrative" as a U.S. project, carried out with the approval of NATO members: "After the expulsion of the Hypocrites (MEK) group from Iraq, the Hypocrites (MEK) group migrated to Albania on the orders of the U.S. and in coordination with other NATO members, so that it could continue its espionage and sabotage activities against the Iranian people from there."



Albania targeted by massive cyberattacks ahead of annual summit of the terrorist group of Hypocrites (MEK)
22/07/2022
https://irna.ir/xjK429

On the same date, 22 July 2022, IRNA published another report on the event, entitled "Massive hack of Albania's online services systems / Hypocrites (MEK) summit postponed", which stated: "The postponement of the summit reflects the inability to hold a ceremony 2,000 kilometers far from Iran's borders".



Massive hack of Albania's online services systems/ Hypocrites (MEK) summit postponed
22/07/2022
https://irna.ir/xjK46x

Five days later, on 27 July 2022, IRNA published an article titled “Sheltering the Hypocrites (MEK) group is against international law”. This statement came during a session of the Islamic Consultative Assembly[7], on 4 Mordad 1401 A.P. (25 July 2022), from Mohammad Hassan Asferi, an Iranian MP, who, according to IRNA: “While

[7] The Islamic Consultative Assembly, also called the Iranian Parliament, the Iranian Majles or ICA, is the unicameral national legislative body of Iran.

commemorating the proud memory of Operation Mersad[8], reminded the Albanian government: The Hypocrites organization (MEK) is a terrorist group and sheltering and providing them with facilities is against international law".

The fact that this statement was delivered in commemoration of an event linked to the MEK, and by a Member of Parliament—not by representatives of the Iranian government or its diplomatic corps—shows that the Iranian authorities were seeking to avoid a direct diplomatic confrontation with Albania during this period, while nevertheless sending a hint or signal to domestic public opinion in Iran about the possible emergence of such a confrontation.



Sheltering the Hypocrites (MEK) group is against international law
27/07/2022
https://irna.ir/xjK672

In the same commemorative context, IRNA published another piece titled "Operation Mersad inflicted heavy casualties on the Hypocrites (MEK)." According to IRNA, IRGC General Hossein Ali Yousef Alizadeh stated:

[8] Operation Mersad (*Persian:* عملیات مرصاد, *'Operation Ambush'*) also called 'Operation Foroughe Javidan' (*Persian:* عملیات فروغ جاویدان, '*Operation Eternal Light', MeK's codename*) were among the last major military operations of the Iran–Iraq War. In July 1988, 7,000 militants from the Peoples Mojahedin Organization of Iran (MEK) launched a major military offensive with the goal of capturing key cities such as Kermanshah. Operation Mersad began on 26 July 1988 and lasted only a few days, whereby the Iranian Armed Forces defeated MEK forces.

> The hypocrites (MEK) had never, from the time of their emergence until that moment, shown such great ambition to overthrow the Islamic Republic. Their attempt to realize this malicious intention resulted in heavy casualties for them… This enmity persists: the group, now based in Albania, has established a cyber-war operations room where it produces texts and digital content to confront the ideals and values of the Islamic Revolution… the roots of the hypocrites and their formation lie in U.S. sponsorship; these terrorist movements seek to overthrow the Islamic Republic and bring down its flag, isolating the Imam and the concept of the Supreme Leader… Unlike the previous government, which pursued dialogue with the West and negotiations that ultimately yielded no results, the thirteenth 'people's government' is grounded in the discourse of resistance… The government believes in resistance and steadfastness, and in refusing to tether the nation's fate to the outcome of negotiations; its officials are determined and committed to their duty…

This hardline posture by an IRGC general—explicitly linking the MEK to Iran's negotiations with international actors—aligns with the broader orientation of the thirteenth government of the Islamic Republic under President Ebrahim Raisi, and implicitly signals skepticism about, if not a foreshadowing of, the failure of renewed negotiations.



Operation Mersad inflicted heavy casualties on the hypocrites (MEK)
28/07/2022
https://irna.ir/xjK6wH

In the same context, on 20 August 2022, IRNA published an article titled "Cyberspace has been brought up so that no one dares to defame the achievements of the revolution / The enemy has no influence in the IRGC". In this article, IRNA reported that at a conference commemorating Journalist Day, during a meeting with journalists in

Zanjan province, the Deputy for Public Relations and Spokesman for the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, Ramadan Sharif, stated:

> Today, cyberspace has been created in such a way that no one dares to talk about and defame the achievements of the Islamic Revolution… We are not exposed to any particular attack in terms of military and defense, because the enemy knows what reaction he will face if he takes action, so he has made an effort to set up an organized attack on public opinion and to cause a lack of hope in our people and youth… Messages that reflect a false image of the country are mainly produced by those who failed in the security and military fields – the same ones who are sitting in Albania today and are trying to inject despair and hopelessness into our society by pumping messages with multiple computers.

Such a statement, coming from the very spokesman of the IRGC, is a clear sign that the Revolutionary Guard was engaged in cyber-warfare whose primary target were the members of the MEK in Albania.



Cyberspace has been brought up so that no one dares to defame the achievements of the revolution/ The enemy has no influence in the IRG
20/08/2022
https://irna.ir/xjKjDZ

This sudden return to a "hardline" stance by Iran under the presidency of Ebrahim Raisi is connected with the fading of hopes for a U.S. return to the JCPOA. Therefore, this hardline rhetoric directed at the domestic audience in Iran can be considered as a kind of preparation of the domestic public opinion in Iran for a new period of confrontation with the West (in which MEK's activity, rather than posing a real threat to the Islamic Republic, seems to be used as a pretext to lend legitimacy to this approach of the new

Iranian government)—but, on the other hand, also as a preparation of public opinion for the strengthening of Iran's alliances with Russia and China.

This approach is clearly expressed in another IRNA article, dated 26 August 2022, titled "Gulestan's Friday Prayer Imam: Government to take big steps to solve people's problems", in which Imam Mahmoud Noorpour (Khamenei's representative in Gulestan Province), referring to the MEK in Albania, is quoted as saying:

> The enemies and the hypocrites thought that by martyring influential figures of the system such as Ayatollah Beheshti… the system would fall, but by the grace of God, this revolution has survived and will continue to survive, and the avenging God has disgraced and destroyed the murderous hypocrites, so much so that today they have become a handful of isolated old men and are spending the last days of their wicked lives in Albania… By God's grace, the 13th government[9], despite the severe problems and shortcomings inherited from the previous government[10], has been able to bring great successes to the country in the domestic and international arenas in this one year, including standing up to the unjust demands of Western countries, especially the criminal America, by not attaching the country's affairs to the JCPOA, and (including) an active diplomacy in the international arena and strategic interactions with Russia and China and eastern and neighboring countries, containing the coronavirus, and increasing oil exports.



Gulestan's Friday Prayer Imam: Government is taking big steps to solve people's problems
26/08/2022
https://irna.ir/xjKnwg

Nevertheless, in this Persian-language media coverage by IRNA, that is primarily addressed to the domestic audience in Iran, Albania and its government are in no instance subjected to direct media attacks up until the moment of the severance of diplomatic

[9] Presidential mandate of Ebrahim Raisi
[10] Presidential mandate of Hasan Ruhani

relations. In fact, on 26 August 2022, IRNA published a cultural article titled "'Rise Up' in the Student Section of Albania Film Festival," followed by another similar article titled "'Touch Me Not' to appear at Tirana and Bolton festivals" (29 August 2022), in which the 'Tirana International Film Festival' is described as a highly important artistic event.

The severance of diplomatic relations:

On 7 September 2022, Albania announced the severance of diplomatic relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran. In its media coverage of this event and its aftermath, IRNA shifted its tone, employing harsh rhetoric toward Albania and the Albanian state; a rethoric that primarily reflected the position of the Iranian government. The rolling, hour-by-hour coverage began with the 15:03 article titled "The Prime Minister of Albania announced the severance of his country's relations with Iran", in which IRNA wrote: "The Albanian Prime Minister announced today that his country has severed its relations with Iran, while making baseless accusations against Iran… He claimed that this strong response is fully proportionate to the severity of the cyber-attack that threatened the country's systems and infrastructure".

To downplay the magnitude of the event, IRNA added further: "Earlier, the Albanian English-language newspaper 'Tirana Times' also announced in a tweet that Albania had severed diplomatic relations with Iran… This newspaper's tweet continued, making a baseless claim against Iran: Iran is accused of having recently carried out a cyberattack on Albanian administrative institutions and its embassy in Albania has 24 hours to end its activities… The Tirana Times tweet provided no additional details". This framing is used by IRNA to suggest that the news is an unfounded "media fabrication", evidently aiming to blunt the immediate impact of the announcement.

Within the same frame, IRNA appended commentary on the MEK in Albania—a motif that recurred, in various forms, in nearly all reports over the following two days: "After the expulsion of the terrorist group of Hypocrites (MEK) from Iraq, on orders from the United States and in coordination with other NATO members, this group migrated to Albania so that it could continue its espionage and sabotage activities against the Iranian people from there… The Hypocrites (MEK) held an annual meeting in Tirana, inviting anti-Iranian figures, until this year's meeting was canceled for security reasons." The aim is to situate Albania's decision within a conspiratorial narrative—unsupported by evidence—according to which the Albanian government's move was part of a U.S.-led "plot" coordinated with NATO members.



The Prime Minister of Albania announced the severance of his country's relations with Iran
07/09/2022/15:03
https://irna.ir/xjKvnQ

At 17:25 on the same date, IRNA published an article titled "Unfounded U.S. accusations against Iran over cyberattack on Albania", in which it stated: "The White House on Wednesday made an unfounded accusation that the United States holds Iran responsible for the July 15 cyberattack and subsequent hacking operations in Albania…

According to IRNA, citing Reuters, the White House claimed that it holds Tehran responsible for its actions against its North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) ally".

In reference to the statement issued by Adrian Watson, spokesperson for the U.S. National Security Council, IRNA reported:

> Adrian Watson, a spokesperson for the U.S. National Security Council, said on Wednesday that the United States has concluded that Iran is responsible for the attack… He added: "For weeks, the U.S. government has worked with private sector partners to support Albania's efforts to mitigate, recover and investigate the July 15 cyberattack that destroyed government data and disrupted government services to the public"… He continued by making this accusation: "We have found that the Iranian government carried out this reckless and irresponsible cyberattack and is responsible for the hacking and disclosure operations that followed.

This statement caused a particular concern for IRNA/Iran—it no longer came from supporters of President Trump, such as Mike Pence, but from the U.S. National Security Council, that is, from the administration of President Biden in office.



Unfounded U.S. accusations against Iran over cyberattack on Albania
07/09/2022/17:25
https://irna.ir/xjKvrb

Meanwhile, at 21:34 (local time), IRNA published an article on the statement of Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding the event, titled "Ministry of Foreign Affairs strongly condemns Albania government's anti-Iran action…" It is noteworthy that this statement was not published in full and in direct speech, but only partially and in indirect speech —where Albania's decision to sever diplomatic relations with Iran is described as

"based on baseless claims and an ill-considered and shortsighted move in international relations".

The article states: "The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, rejecting the baseless claims made by the Albanian government against the Islamic Republic of Iran, considered the country's decision to sever political relations with our country based on such baseless claims to be an ill-considered and shortsighted move in international relations".

Subsequently, the article conveys Iran's position of denial regarding the cyberattacks against Albania, but in "ambivalent" language, by saying:

> On Wednesday, in response to the anti-Iranian action by the Albanian government, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs referred to the principled positions of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the field of cyberspace in multilateral and international forums in order to formulate rules and regulations in this area, and emphasized that the Islamic Republic of Iran, as one of the countries targeted by cyberattacks on its vital infrastructure, rejects and condemns any use of cyberspace as a tool to attack the vital infrastructure of other countries.

Despite the strong stance toward the decision of the Albanian government, the article emphasis in particular the influence of what it calls "third parties," thereby reviving the "conspiratorial narrative":

> The statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, rejecting the unproven claims against the Islamic Republic of Iran, emphasized that the type of action and role played by third parties in fabricating and developing these claims against the Islamic Republic of Iran indicates the influence of countries that support terrorism and create sedition in this regard… The statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, referring to the organized media and political movements immediately after the announcement of the Albanian government's decision, emphasized that the immediate issuance of the U.S. government's statement and the Zionist media's welcoming of this decision indicate the existence of a pre-designed plan to create a political atmosphere against the Islamic Republic of Iran.



Ministry of Foreign Affairs strongly condemns Albania government's anti-Iran action
07/09/2022/21:34
https://irna.ir/xjKvvk

At 22:49 (local time), IRNA published an article titled “The Truss government's first position on Iran was dedicated to Albania’s accusation”, referring to the stance of the British government under Prime Minister Liz Truss, who had assumed office one day earlier, on 6 September 2022. IRNA described the British accusations as unfounded, stating: “The British Foreign Office issued a statement on Wednesday evening, repeating the baseless accusations against Iran regarding the cyberattack on Albania and claiming that the country holds Iran responsible for the hacking operation of July 15”.

Even so, IRNA appears to relay the Foreign Office statement in full, noting that the UK:

> The British Foreign Office states that the country condemns Iran for the cyberattack against the Albanian government that caused the loss of data and disruption of essential government services, including paying for municipal services, booking medical appointments and registering students. … According to the assessment of the UK’s National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC), cyber actors linked to Iran are almost certainly responsible for a series of cyberattacks against Albanian government infrastructure since July 15, which have had a significant impact on online public services and other government websites.

IRNA also quotes British Foreign Secretary James Cleverly, who “reiterated the allegations,” stating: “Iran’s reckless actions showed a clear disregard for the Albanian people and severely limited their ability to access essential public services. The UK stands by its valued partner and NATO ally. We join Albania and other allies in exposing Iran’s unacceptable actions.”



The Truss government's first position on Iran was dedicated to Albania’s accusation
07/09/2022/22:49
https://irna.ir/xjKvw3

8 September 2022 marks IRNA's most extensive media coverage of Albania during the entire period under study, with seven separate articles—six of them related to the cyberattacks and the severance of diplomatic relations.

The first article, published at 04:43, titled "New Anti-Russian Western claims at Security Council meeting and Moscow's denials"—an article clearly pro-Russian and anti-Western—mentions Albania several times as being associated with the West, and particularly with the United States, in the accusations against Moscow. The article states:

> The UN Security Council convened a meeting on Wednesday evening local time at the request of the United States and Albania on the war in Ukraine. The West, continuing its policies by making anti-Russian claims, accused Moscow of forcibly transferring Ukrainian people, which Russia strongly denied… The U.S. ambassador to the UN's claims were also echoed by representatives of the UK, France and Albania, but Vassily Nebenzia, the Russian ambassador and permanent representative to the UN, called the accusations baseless and rejected them... Nebenzia dismissed allegations of Western "purges and screening," saying: "Today's meeting, held at the request of the United States and Albania, could become a new turning point in the disinformation campaign against Russia and its Western supporters.

Without delving into this long article's substantive claims—since it does not directly concern Albania's internal affairs—it is worth underscoring that, as the quotations show, Albania is framed as marching in step with major Western powers in accusing Russia.



New Anti-Russian Western claims at Security Council meeting and Moscow's denials
08/09/2022/04:43
https://irna.ir/xjKvxT

The second article of 8 September 2022, published at 05:27 a.m., titled “Kanani: U.S. and U.K. have no right to accuse Iran”, conveys the reaction of Iran’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding the American and British accusations concerning the cyberattack against Albania, through the statements of its spokesman, Nasser Kanani, who, according to IRNA, “rejected and strongly condemned the baseless accusations of the U.S. National Security Council and the British Foreign Office against the Islamic Republic of Iran regarding the alleged cyberattack on Albania on Thursday morning”. He stated:

> The U.S. and U.K., which had previously remained silent in the face of numerous cyberattacks against the Islamic Republic of Iran’s infrastructure, even against nuclear facilities, and even directly or indirectly supported such actions, have no right to make such accusations against the Islamic Republic of Iran… The Islamic Republic of Iran, as a country that has been repeatedly subjected to cyberattacks, is an important part of responsible international efforts to confront the threat of cyberattacks.

Kanani’s statements appear to contain a “dual message”: on the one hand, a denial of Iran’s involvement in these cyberattacks, and on the other, an assertion of Iran’s “legitimacy” to defend itself against cyberattacks—even through cyber means—while emphasizing that the U.S. and U.K., which, according to him (as quoted above), “had previously remained silent in the face of numerous cyberattacks against the Islamic Republic of Iran’s infrastructure”, have no moral ground to accuse Iran. Thus, what we see here is “playing a moral card” in response to an event that could carry serious consequences for Iran, such as the sanctions.



Kanani: U.S. and U.K. have no right to accuse Iran
08/09/2022/05:27
https://irna.ir/xjKvx3

This article was followed by another, published at 05:34 a.m., titled "White House supports Albania and unfounded accusations against Iran". IRNA frames the White House response as part of "the West's new scenario against Iran," opening with: "The White House spokesperson supported Tirana's anti-Iranian actions following the West's new scenario against Iran and the baseless accusations of the Albanian government", and emphasizing that: "White House spokesperson Karine Jean-Pierre claimed on Wednesday local time: We support the Albanian government's efforts to hold Iran accountable for the cyberattack".

In this article, IRNA gives particular attention to the possibility of invoking Article 5 of the NATO Charter, stating: "In response to a reporter's question about Article 5 of the NATO Charter in this regard, she said that each NATO member must independently decide how to respond to cyberattacks… The White House official added that there are procedures to be followed, so that NATO members must decide on regarding Article 5". This emphasis reflected Iran's concern about a possible strong reaction by NATO member states to the cyberattack against Albania, a NATO member.



White House supports Albania and unfounded accusations against Iran
08/09/2022/05:34
https://irna.ir/xjKvxX

On the afternoon of 8 September, at 16:43, IRNA published an article titled "Foreign Ministry reacts to violations of Iranian diplomats' rights in Albania", in which the spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated: "This behavior is contrary to international law and the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Rights, and the responsibilities arising from its violation lie with the Albanian government". According to IRNA, "Nasser Kanani expressed Iran's concerns in this regard following news published in some media outlets regarding inappropriate interaction between local authorities in Tirana and the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran and its members… Kanani further added: If the information cited by media sources is accurate, this behavior is contrary to international law and the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Rights, and the responsibilities arising from its violation are of the Tirana government".

It is important to note here that this statement, which refers to "behavior contrary to international law and the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Rights", is based on "news published in some media outlets", which are neither specified nor quoted—leaving considerable room for doubt about the veracity of these claims. Meanwhile, the title of the article ("Foreign Ministry reacts to violations of Iranian diplomats' rights in Albania")

gives the impression of an already established fact. This “semantic ambivalence” appears frequently in IRNA’s news reporting during this period.



Foreign Ministry reacts to violations of Iranian diplomats' rights in Albania
08/09/2022/16:43
https://irna.ir/xjKvLW

In the following article, published at 18:43, titled “NATO's statement on the alleged recent cyberattack against Albania”, IRNA wrote: “The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) on Thursday condemned the recent cyberattack on Albania, which Washington and Tirana claim was carried out by Tehran, in the wake of the West’s baseless accusations against Iran”.

The article then quotes two paragraphs from NATO’s statement regarding the event: “We strongly condemn such malicious cyber activities designed to destabilize and undermine the security of an ally and disrupt the daily lives of citizens… NATO Allies support Albania in strengthening its cyber defense capabilities to counter and repel such malicious cyber activities in the future”.

Although it considers the accusations against Iran for the cyberattacks unfounded, in this article IRNA does not employ harsh language towards NATO—an indication of Iran’s concern regarding the forthcoming decisions of the North Atlantic Alliance.



NATO's statement on the alleged recent cyberattack against Albania
08/09/2022/18:43
https://irna.ir/xjKvMX

At 19:51 on the same date, IRNA published another article, titled "White House official talks with Albanian PM about unfounded accusations against Iran", which stated:

> U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan spoke with the Albanian Prime Minister about baseless accusations against the Islamic Republic of Iran and expressed Washington's support for its NATO ally… The White House National Security Advisor added: "We continue to work with Albania on cybersecurity measures".

While continuing to consider the accusations against Iran for the cyberattacks as unfounded, it appears that Iran's primary concern is Albania's status as a NATO member— a fact highlighted in every IRNA article during this period.



White House official talks with Albanian PM about unfounded accusations against Iran
08/09/2022/19:51
https://irna.ir/xjKvNV

The last article of 8 September 2022, published at 23:23, titled “U.N. spokesman reacts to Albania accusations against Iran”, states: “The UN spokesperson, in response to the baseless accusations made by the United States and Albania against Iran, announced that the UN does not have independent information about the cyberattack on Albania”. By quoting the UN Spokesperson, this article stands in contrast, and appears as an attempt to downplay the firm stance taken by Western states and NATO in support of Albania. Further in this article, IRNA attempts to place the event in the broader context of a general global phenomenon: “At the same time, he (the UN spokesperson) said about cyberattacks that, given the increase in cyberattacks in recent years, UN member states should agree on a specific framework to mitigate the destructive effects of cyberattacks… The UN spokesperson continued that the harmful impacts of cyber warfare are now widely visible”.



U.N. spokesman reacts to Albania’s false accusations against Iran
08/09/2022/23:23
https://irna.ir/xjKvQy

The first article on September 9, 2022—published at 02:51 a.m., titled “Iran's U.N. envoy criticizes U.S. and British silence over cyberattacks against Tehran”—reports: “Iran’s U.N. Mission rejected the U.S. and U.K. accusations and asked why Washington and London remain silent, or even supportive, when Iran itself is the target of

cyberattacks." The piece draws primarily on the Mission's statement, which follows a strategy of counter-balancing, self-victimization, generalization, self-legitimation, and moralization. This is evident in several passages, including: "The Islamic Republic of Iran, as a victim of cyberattacks, condemns any cyberattack on civilian infrastructure in all its forms" (*victimization-generalization*); "The United States and Britain—having remained silent in the face of numerous cyberattacks on the Islamic Republic of Iran's infrastructure, including nuclear facilities, and having directly or indirectly supported such actions—lack the authority or legitimacy to level these accusations against Iran" (*counter-balance–moralization*); and "Iran, as a country that has been continuously subjected to cyberattacks, is an important participant in responsible international efforts to confront the threat of such attacks" (*self-legitimation*).



Iran's U.N. envoy criticizes U.S. and British silence over cyberattacks against Tehran
09/09/2022/03:51
https://irna.ir/xjKvR7

In the same vein of counter-balancing, victimization, generalization, self-legitimation, and moralization comes the article published at 18:50 on the same date, titled "Iran: Instead of assigning unfounded accusations, NATO should not harbor the Hypocrites (MEK)". It states: "The Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Brussels reacted to the anti-Iranian statement of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and stated

that instead of making baseless accusations against Iran, the organization and its members should refrain from sheltering the terrorist group of the Hypocrites (MEK) in their territories". In an attempt to delegitimize the accusations against Iran, the use of counter-balancing shifts into direct accusations against NATO, by stating:

> NATO and its members not only remained silent in the face of cyberattacks against Iran's infrastructure and nuclear facilities, but also directly or indirectly helped and supported these cyber sabotage actions. From this perspective, they are not in a position to make such accusations against Iran.

Although NATO's reaction relates specifically to the case of the cyberattacks against Albania, the article employs a generalizing discourse with terms such as "NATO and its allies" or "member states". Nonetheless, the tone used is straight forward and confrontational, as it becomes obvious in the following passage:

> NATO and its allies, who claim to fight international terrorism, have turned a blind eye to the fact that a terrorist sect has found a safe haven in NATO member states and turned them into operational headquarters to launch the widest range of destructive attacks imaginable against Iran… We call on NATO member states to match their words with actions and to refrain from harboring or supporting terrorist groups on their territories.



Iran: Instead of assigning unfounded accusations, NATO should not harbor the Hypocrites (MEK)
09/09/2022/18:50
https://irna.ir/xjKw2m

At 19:19, IRNA published an article titled “In continuation of baseless accusations against Iran, U.S. sanctions Iran's minister of Intelligence and the Intelligence Ministry”, saying:

> The U.S. Treasury Department announced that it has sanctioned the Iranian Minister and Ministry of Intelligence, in conjunction with baseless accusations against the Islamic Republic of Iran regarding the cyberattack on Albania… Continuing Washington’s baseless accusations in recent days about the alleged cyberattack on Albania by Iran, the U.S. agency claimed: In July 2022, cyber threats assessed to be sponsored by Iran and the Ministry of Intelligence disrupted the computer systems of the Albanian government, forcing the government to suspend online government services for its citizens.

Although it employs a rhetoric of denial with expressions such as “baseless accusations”, IRNA includes in the article full excerpts from the statement of the U.S. Treasury Department and its senior official, quoting:

> Brian Nelson, U.S. Undersecretary of the Treasury for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence, claimed: Iran’s cyberattack against Albania is a disregard for standards of peacetime behavior in cyberspace, which include avoiding damage to critical infrastructure for providing services to the public… We will not tolerate Iran’s malicious activities against the United States or our allies and partners.

By quoting the strongest statements of the American official, IRNA seems to openly employ a narrative of conflict and antagonism with the United States, aimed at legitimizing Iran’s position in the eyes of the domestic public. This becomes evident in the commentary that follows: “The Biden administration’s sanctions follow baseless accusations, while the U.S. imposed sanctions yesterday based on baseless accusations of sending Iranian drones to benefit Russia in the Ukraine war and also out of fear from the development of Iran’s drone industry”. This commentary links the event to the conflict in Ukraine, thereby seeking to place it in the broader context of an East–West confrontation. Mentioning the U.S. sanctions imposed on Iran by the Biden administration, after a period of relative calm, is a clear indication that hopes for a U.S. return to the nuclear agreement have faded, and that the rhetoric of conflict has re-emerged.



In continuation of baseless accusations against Iran
U.S. sanctions Iran's Minister of Intelligence and the Intelligence Ministry
09/09/2022/19:19
https://irna.ir/xjKw3v

On 10 September 2022, IRNA opened its Albania-related coverage with a 05:00 a.m. article titled "Iran Strongly Protests to Albania for Attacking Our Embassy in Tirana." It reported:

> The Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations, in a letter to Albania's Permanent Mission, condemned the Albanian government's violent actions against the diplomatic and consular premises of the Islamic Republic of Iran… The note of protest stated that the Islamic Republic of Iran strongly condemns all acts of violence against its diplomatic and consular premises in Tirana on 8 September 2022 by Albanian police forces, including the entry into Iranian diplomatic premises without authorization from the competent Iranian authorities, adding that The Islamic Republic of Iran reserves its right to use other means to peacefully resolve disputes regarding violations committed against our diplomatic and consular premises in Tirana.

As in IRNA's previous article on September 8 ("Foreign Ministry reacts to violations of Iranian diplomats' rights in Albania"), this article provides no details about the incident or its underlying causes. It is clear, however, that the protest note — "a copy of which was also sent to UN Secretary-General António Guterres"— was part of Iran's broader effort to delegitimize the Albanian government's decision to sever diplomatic relations and to damage its international image, particularly within the United Nations.



Iran strongly protests Albania for attacking our embassy in Tirana
10/09/2022/ 05.00 a.m.
https://irna.ir/xjKw5W

In the same vein came the 5:21 a.m. article titled "Letter to the UN Secretary-General regarding Albania's fabricated claims – Iran warns against any provocative and unjustified anti-Iranian actions under the guise of baseless claims", where, according to IRNA: "In a letter to Antonio Guterres, Iran's ambassador and permanent representative to the United Nations warned against any provocative and unjustified actions carried out under the guise of baseless claims, stating that Iran, as one of the targets of cyber-attacks, considers Albania's claims to be fabricated and unfounded".

In his message, Iran's UN ambassador returned to the rhetoric of "victimization", presenting Iran as a victim of Israeli cyber-attacks, backed by the United States, stating:

> The Islamic Republic of Iran has long been the main target and victim of cyber-infrastructure attacks that have disrupted the provision of public and government services. The Stuxnet and DoCoMo attacks on Iran's peaceful nuclear facilities, as well as recent attacks on industrial infrastructure such as the steel and petrochemical industries, are examples of these cyber-attacks. The Zionist regime has also repeatedly admitted its involvement in these criminal attacks, which have received unwavering support from the United States.

This rhetoric of victimization aimed, in fact, to provide legitimacy to what he termed Iran's "inherent right to respond". The article states:

> While warning against any provocative and unjustified action carried out under the cover of baseless claims, the Islamic Republic of Iran reserves its inherent right to respond, in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations, to any threat, attack, or illegal action that targets its interests, vital and civilian infrastructure, as appropriate and whenever it deems necessary.

In the same context, he casts “shadows of doubt” by suggesting that the cyber-attack against Albania might have been orchestrated by members of the MEK in order to attribute it to Iran, thus placing the event within a “conspiratorial narrative”. As stated in the article:

> In this letter, the Iranian ambassador to the UN referred to the possibility of cyber operations, attacks, and sabotage activities designed by the terrorist group of the Hypocrites (MEK) with the aim of attributing these sabotage actions to Iran, and said that this terrorist organization, supported by the Israeli regime, is capable of planning and carrying out cyber attacks on the infrastructure of other countries from within the territory of Albania, and so far this terrorist group has carried out several cyber terrorist attacks against Iranian infrastructure with the help and support of some countries.

This “conspiracy narrative” was used as an indirect way of accusing Albania at the United Nations of allowing its territory to be used as a launching point for cyber-attacks against Iran, thereby granting Iran “its inherent right to respond as appropriate and whenever it deems necessary”.



In a letter to the UN Secretary-General regarding Albania’s fabricated allegations, Iran warned against any provocative and unjustified anti-Iranian actions carried out under the pretext of baseless claims
10/09/2022/05:21
https://irna.ir/xjKw5T

Five minutes later, at 05:26 a.m., IRNA published another article, “Iran strongly condemned the United States for repeatedly sanctioning its Ministry of Intelligence.” It reported that the spokesperson for Iran’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs “condemned the

U.S. Treasury's repeated sanctions against Iran's Intelligence Ministry and its minister." In his statement, he "framed" the measures as part of a U.S. government "scenario" in which "Tirana has fallen victim," while depicting the MEK as "tools of the United States." As he put it:

> The immediate U.S. declaration of support for the Albanian government's false accusation against the Islamic Republic of Iran, followed by Washington's rapid imposition of repeated sanctions on Iran's Intelligence Ministry and its minister—based on the same false and unproven claim—clearly shows that the designer of this scenario is not the Albanian government but the U.S. government, and Tirana has fallen victim to a scenario crafted by Washington against the Islamic Republic of Iran… For years, the United States has imposed upon the Albanian government and people the hosting of a terrorist cult which, with comprehensive U.S. backing, has been trained and equipped in cyberspace. This criminal organization continues to serve as a U.S. instrument for terrorist acts, cyberattacks, and psychological warfare against the Iranian state and people.

Notably, in contrast to earlier statements, Albania is depicted here as "the victim of a scenario" in which "the United States has imposed hosting a terrorist cult on the Albanian government and people …"— suggesting Tehran's effort to avoid further escalation with Tirana. At the same time, however, IRNA cites another statement that appears to serve as a warning to Albania:

> Kanani emphasized that Albania's hosting of a terrorist cult and the U.S. support and instrumentalization of a group whose hands are stained with the blood of more than 17,000 Iranian officials and citizens, constitute a clear case of organized backing for terrorism against Iran. The Islamic Republic of Iran will use all its capacities within the framework of international law to protect the rights of the Iranian people and defend itself against these sinister conspiracies.

This juxtaposition exemplifies a recurring duality in IRNA's coverage, expressed through a "conspiratorial narrative": on the one hand, delegitimizing sanctions in the eyes of the domestic audience; on the other, preparing that same audience for their continued—and, in Tehran's view, inevitable—imposition.



Iran strongly condemned the United States for repeatedly sanctioning its Ministry of Intelligence

10/09/2022/05:26

https://irna.ir/xjKw63

The article titled “The Albanian government again claims cyber-attack by Iranian sources”, published on September 10, 2022, at 19:33, states: “Albania’s Interior Ministry claimed on Saturday that one of its border systems was attacked by the same Iranian source that recently led to the severance of political relations between the two countries”. In this article, IRNA subsequently provides a retrospective overview of the developments during the three days following the severance of diplomatic relations, placing greater emphasis on the reactions of NATO and the United States rather than those of Albania. Notably, it does not employ harsh or threatening language in relation to the latest statements of Albania’s Interior Ministry. This does not appear to be unintentional, but rather a message that reinforces “the idea of Albania as a victim of an external Western conspiracy”.



Albania accuses Iran again; The Albanian government again claims cyber-attack by Iranian sources
10/09/2022/19:33
https://irna.ir/xjKwtn

The last article of September 10, 2022, titled "Marandi: Iran seeks deal to defend its rights", was published at 23:28. In this article, Mohammad Marandi, an Iranian expert and political affairs analyst, in an interview with Al-Mayadeen Network, discusses the position of the European Troika (the United Kingdom, Germany, and France) regarding the JCPOA agreement. According to him: "The Islamic Republic of Iran has not violated the nuclear deal or withdrawn from it, and the three European countries are following the policies of the White House". According to IRNA:

> The three European countries — the UK, France, and Germany — issued a joint statement claiming that Iran had failed to take advantage of a crucial diplomatic opportunity. They accused Iran, without evidence, of expanding its nuclear program beyond any acceptable civilian justification... At the end of this statement, the European Troika, while blaming Iran for the lack of progress in the Vienna negotiations and, without mentioning the Biden administration's failure to make an appropriate decision, claimed: "Given Iran's failure to finalize the deal on the table, we are consulting with our international partners on the best ways to address Iran's continued escalation and lack of cooperation with the IAEA (*International Atomic Energy Agency*) regarding its safeguards obligations under the NPT (*Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty*)."

This marks a clear shift in the stance of the European Troika and the United States regarding Iran's seriousness toward the JCPOA agreement.

Meanwhile, a specific question in the interview referred to “Severing Iran–Albania Relations”, to which the Iranian expert replied: “There is a terrorist group in Albania that is supported by the United States and they are the ones who have attacked Iran”. It is noteworthy that the issue of the MEK in Albania is contextualized here in the frame of an interview that essentially concerns the fate of the JCPOA—a case of “media-framing” that appears designed to provide a counterbalance to the European Troika’s position on the nuclear deal.



Marandi: Iran seeks deal to defend its rights
10/09/2022/23:28
https://irna.ir/xjKwxk

From this point onward, IRNA’s coverage begins to prioritize the imposition of sanctions on Iran and the fate of the JCPOA, increasingly situating news related to Albania within that frame. Thus, on September 11, 2022, IRNA published an article titled “Second Deputy Chairman of the National Security Commission of the Parliament: New sanctions against Iran confirm U.S. lack of understanding of the logic of negotiations,” reporting that the Commission’s deputy chair, Abbas Moqtadaei, stated: “America never opened a new chapter for improvement in the negotiations process and even confirmed

its lack of deep understanding of the international scene with new sanctions against some of the country's officials."

This rhetoric of mistrust toward U.S. policy—cast in a quasi-philosophical and religious register—has been characteristic of Iranian foreign policy over the past four decades. What renders this article analytically salient for our study is the explicit insertion of developments involving Albania into that narrative. As Moqtadaei asserted:

> The immediate U.S. announcement of support for the Albanian government's false accusation against the Islamic Republic of Iran and the subsequent rapid action by Washington in reiterating and repeatedly sanctioning the Ministry and Minister of Intelligence of the Islamic Republic of Iran by resorting to the same false and unproven accusation, clearly shows that the designer of this scenario is not the Albanian government, but the U.S. government, and Tirana has fallen victim to the scenario designed by Washington against the Islamic Republic of Iran.

This statement is quasi-identical to the earlier statement by analyst Marandi in the preceding article—demonstrating that it is not merely an individual opinion, but rather an official stance aligned with the broader stance of Iranian foreign policy. This constitutes clear evidence that Iranian foreign policy toward Albania is closely related and dependent on Albania's relations with the Western Countries, especially the U.S.



Second Deputy Chairman of the National Security Commission of the Parliament: New sanctions against Iran confirm U.S. lack of understanding of the logic of negotiations
11/09/2022
https://irna.ir/xjKwjv

On 12 September 2022, IRNA published three articles related to Albania. The first, released at 1:46 a.m., titled "U.S. supports Albania's re-accusation against Iran," stated:

> Following Albania's renewed accusations against Iran, and the conspiracies of the 'Hypocrite' terrorist group (MEK) to sever relations between the Albanian government and Iran, the U.S. State Department has once expressed its support for this baseless accusation…According to IRNA, Ned Price, the U.S. State Department spokesperson, claimed on Sunday (local time) that: "the September 9 cyberattack followed the July 15 cyberattack against Albania, and we strongly condemn it"... He added, "We will continue to work with Albania and other partners to strengthen their cyber defenses and hold the perpetrators of these attacks accountable."

The article then offers a retrospective overview of developments since the announcement of the severance of diplomatic relations.



U.S. supports Albania's re-accusation against Iran
12/09/2022/01:46
https://irna.ir/xjKwYw

In the second article of the same date, published at 10:25 a.m., titled "The European Troika's statement was an incorrect and ill-considered position/America is obliged to issue a visa for the President" – which reports a press conference by the spokesperson of the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nasser Kanaani, where the main topic was the European Troika's position on Iran and the fate of the JCPOA – Albania is mentioned in a particular context— the Iran's relations with Saudi Arabia.

It is worth noting that at this moment, amid the escalation of tensions with the West, Iran was seeking to ease conflicts with its Arab neighbors in the region, particularly with

Saudi Arabia, which, like Albania, had severed diplomatic relations with Iran in 2016, following the attacks against the Saudi Embassy in Tehran and the Saudi Consulate in Mashhad by “uncontrolled crowds”.

In this context, according to IRNA: “In response to a reporter's question about Saudi Arabia's recent approach and support for the Albanian government's action to sever relations with Iran, Kanani stated: The countries of the region need to adopt measures to strengthen peace and tranquility in the region, and this issue requires stability and a basis for economic development”.

It’s noteworthy that, as outlined in the chapter on Al-Arabiya, Saudi Arabia expressed strong support for Albania at the time of the cyber-attacks and the severance of diplomatic relations with Iran.



The European Troika's statement was an incorrect and ill-considered position / America is obliged to issue a visa for the President

12/09/2022/10:25

https://irna.ir/xjKx4B

The article published at 17:44 on the same date, titled “Letter from the families of the martyrs of the terror in the country: The MEK's acceptance is not hospitality but the

Albanian Government's deception", is the most negative and harshly worded article concerning Albania.

In this article are mentioned the names of the highest-ranking personalities of the Albanian government and state over a ten-year period, starting from 2012 when the agreement for the resettlement of MEK members in Albania was reached. These personalities are labeled in the article as supporters of the MEK and, according to IRNA, by doing so they have "endangered the interests of the Albanian people". The article states:

> … The families of the martyrs of the terror in our country, reacting to the Albanian government's support for the Hypocrites (MEK) terrorist group, in an open letter to the people of Albania – pointing out that nearly 10 years have passed since the secret deal between the U.S. government and the Albanian government to accept members of the Hypocrites' (MEK') terrorist group – wrote: "Just when, as a result of the efforts of the Iraqi government and people, the pressures to expel the Hypocrites (MEK) from this country had increased, and no country, not even the United States, was willing to accept members of this notorious group on its soil, it was the Albanian authorities who, finally, under Washington's pressure and receiving only $20 million dollars, became the only country in the world that was willing to accept this risk and, aware of the problems it would cause for the security and people of Albania, accepted more than 2,000 members of a terrorist paramilitarie group on its soil.

It is clear that the aim of publishing a letter "from the families of the victims of the so-called terrorist activities of the MEK", is to legitimize Iran's harsh stance toward the MEK—not as an opposition organization to the regime in Iran, but as "a terrorist organization", for whose actions the families of the "victims of this terrorism" were seeking justice. This narrative is framed as a "popular demand" within Iran, in the form of a letter "addressed to the Albanian people" (خطاب به مردم آلبانی). Such a strategy appears intended to sidestep direct government statements, thereby avoiding an overtly intergovernmental confrontational, while in fact clearly reflecting the stances of the Iranian regime itself, which have been articulated in different forms across various IRNA articles.

This becomes even more evident in the continuation of the article, where a "contrast/duality" is drawn between "the commitment that Albania had made to Iranian authorities…" and "the Albanian government knowingly paving the way for further activities of the MEK and the planning of actions by its terrorist cells inside Iranian soil". The article states:

> Contrary to the commitment that Albania had made to Iranian authorities during the visit of its Foreign Minister to Tehran in early January 2016, unfortunately, from the very beginning of this terrorist group's entry into Albanian soil, its anti-Iranian actions began, and Albania became a center for the interference of this terrorist group and countries hostile to Iran, and the Albanian government knowingly paved the way for further activities of the MEK and the planning of actions by its terrorist cells inside Iranian soil, known as insurgent centers.

From the use of the term "the Albanian government" (دولت آلبانی), the letter then shifts to the term "the Albanian authorities" or "the Albanian officials" (مقامات آلبانیایی), thereby encompassing all central institutions of the Albanian executive and legislature, as follows:

> Albanian officials, from members of parliament to party leaders and even the president, in violation of their commitments, in a clear interference in Iran's internal affairs and support for a notorious terrorist group, are continuously meeting with the leader of this group inside Durrës camp. This volume of communications, in addition to increasing speculation about the payments and financial assistance of the MEK to these individuals, shows that Tirana has clearly defined itself in the line of the enemies of the people of our country, without a clear understanding of Iran's ability to respond.

This is not a random choice; by framing all high institutions of Albania's executive and legislative during 2012–2022, the intended conclusion is that, (as stated in the article): "*Tirana has clearly defined itself in the line of the enemies of the people of our country, without a clear understanding of Iran's ability to respond*". Such a statement could be perceived as a form of pressure, seeking to legitimize Iran's "right" to sponsor activities against "the enemies of the people of our country".

To reinforce the narrative of "the enemies of the people of our country", IRNA quotes another part of "the letter of the families of the victims of the MEK", which,

summarizing the key developments related to MEK and Albania–Iran diplomatic relations between 2016 and 2022, lists by name Albania's top state and political figures:

> The presence of Albanian parliamentarians and politicians at the Hypocrites' (MEKs) gathering in Paris in July 2016; the visit of former U.S. Congresswoman Linda Chavez to the Hypocrites' (MEKs) camp in Tirana in February 2017; the meeting of U.S. Senator John McCain with the group's leader in Tirana in April 2017; the visit of three Republican U.S. senators to the camp in Tirana in August 2017; the visit of the Deputy Speaker of the Albanian Parliament and several MPs to the camp in December 2018; the participation of former Albanian Prime Minister Pandeli Majko and Republican Party leader Fatmir Mediu in the Hypocrites' (MEKs) gathering in Paris in July 2018; the expulsion of the Iranian ambassador in December 2018; the visit of several Albanian parliament members to the Hypocrites' (MEKs) camp in February 2019; the presence of a senior Albanian minister and the deputy leader of the Democratic Party at the camp in March 2019; the visit of President Ilir Meta and his national security adviser to the camp in September 2019; the anti-Iranian and pro-Hypocrites' (MEKs) speech of Prime Minister Edi Rama at the UN General Assembly in September 2019; the support of former Prime Minister Sali Berisha for the U.S. assassination of General Qassem Soleimani in January 2020; the expulsion of two Iranian diplomats from Tirana in January 2020; the renewed expression of support for the Hypocrites (MEK) by Edi Rama in the same month; the visit of former U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to the Hypocrites' (MEKs) camp in Tirana and his anti-Iranian statements in May 2020; the visit of former U.S. Vice President Mike Pence to the Hypocrites' (MEKs) camp in June 2020—and numerous other instances—all demonstrate why the Iranian people rightly believe that the Albanian government has deliberately chosen a path of hostility and collaboration in planning and conducting acts of sabotage against our country.

This pressure/threat becomes even more explicit in the following statement concerning the severance of diplomatic relations:

> The families of the victims of terror in Iran, regarding the Albanian government's announcement to sever political relations with Iran – which they consider to be a continuation of the process of influencing and exerting pressure on the Albanian government by some countries, as well as the terrorist group of the Hypocrites (MEK) – believe that the Albanian political authorities, without considering the long-term interests of their citizens, are hastily turning Albania into a security crisis center for Europe, the Balkans, and Iran…

The message of pressure/threat is then directly addressed to Albanian citizens themselves: "*As part of the community of terror victims in the world, our expectation from you, the citizens of Albania, is to be aware of the threats and consequences of the presence of terrorists in your country. No country in the world should become a dumping ground for terrorists*..."

This open preassure on the citizens of the Republic of Albania—who were the first to be affected by the cyberattacks through the blocking of online services—appears designed to foster dissatisfaction among the population with the Albanian state and

government, but in fact contains an “implied threat” intended to create panic among these citizens. It is worth mentioning here that a similar wave of “pressure messages” continued for several months across social networks such as Telegram, through the publication of hacked materials—even though the Iranian authorities never claimed responsibility for these messages, nor for the cyberattacks; nonetheless, the tone and content of these messages strongly resemble those conveyed in this article.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that, in the graphic image of this article, a world map is shown, with Iran highlighted in red, while over the Mediterranean region where Albania is located a red target circle is superimposed, bearing the inscription: “Iran, victim of terrorism” (ایران، قربانی تروریسم).

I would like to point out that this article is the climax of IRNA’s media reaction to the event. In the following days, the intensity of news coverage related to this issue decreases, as does the harshness of the statements.



Letter from the families of the martyrs of the terror in the country: The Hypocrites’ (MKO's acceptance is not hospitality but the Albanian Government's deception
12/09/2022/17:44
https://irna.ir/xjKxhW

On September 13, 2022, IRNA published two other articles with regard to the event. In the article released at 18:31, titled “Blinken talks with Albania's PM and supports anti-Iranian accusations”, IRNA states: “US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken spoke with

Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama and supported the baseless anti-Iranian accusations and claims", adding that "The US Secretary of State said: We will not tolerate cyber-attacks that target the United States or our NATO allies", The article is almost "telegraphic" in nature and does not contain aggressive or derogatory language.



Blinken talks with Albania's PM and supports anti-Iranian accusations
13/09/2022/18:31
https://irna.ir/xjKxLJ

In the 18:41 on the same date, in an aricle titled "National Cyberspace Center in response to baseless accusations of cyber-attacks on Albania: Iran's cyberattack on Albania is unfounded", a counterbalancing and defensive posture is evident. According to IRNA:

> This Center, in response to the baseless and false accusations that have been circulated, issued a statement declaring: Despite being confronted with intense political and media agitation following the raising of these groundless allegations, we are nevertheless witnessing the deadly silence of those claimants regarding the incidents and destructive cyberattacks against the critical infrastructure of independent states. Hereby, the double standards regarding cyberattacks against the critical infrastructure of states are condemned, and it is expected that other countries, through appropriate responses, denounce such destructive actions. It is indeed surprising that this political and media onslaught has been carried out by states which themselves have harbored cybercriminals and terrorist groups, who have openly and proudly declared and assumed their role and responsibility in destructive cyber activities against the Iranian nation…

This stance is nothing but an 'echo' of the official position of the Iranian authorities regarding the event.



National Cyberspace Center in response to baseless accusations of cyber-attacks on Albania: Iran's cyberattack on Albania is unfounded
13/09/2022
https://irna.ir/xjKxLL

On September 14, 2022, IRNA published three articles that mentioned Albania, though with a different emphasis. The first, released at 06:24, titled “U.S. claim regarding Russia’s interference in other countries’ elections,” reported: “The declassified information did not specify particular countries; however, a government source familiar with the findings claimed that Russia spent approximately $500,000 to support Albania’s center-right Democratic Party in the 2017 elections.”



U.S. claim regarding Russia’s interference in other countries’ elections
14/09/2022
https://irna.ir/xjKxQn

Later, on the same date, IRNA published another article, titled “Continuing Washington’s dual policy of sanctions and diplomacy, the U.S. sanctions 10 Iranian individuals and two institutions over alleged cyberattacks”, where this development is linked to events in Albania, noting:

> The U.S. Department of the Treasury previously announced sanctions against Iran’s Minister and Ministry of Intelligence, along with baseless accusations against the Islamic Republic of Iran in connection with the cyberattack on Albania… All the individuals and entities included in the new sanctions are affiliated with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).

Within the article’s broader context, the JCPOA is also invoked, saying:

> The Biden administration speaks of a diplomatic approach and a return to the JCPOA, yet it has taken no effective practical steps to rejoin the 2015 agreement. Instead, it continues to pursue the failed ‘maximum pressure’ policies against Tehran, echoing baseless accusations by opponents of the Islamic Republic of Iran and imposing sanctions on various pretexts in order to force its demands on Iran— describing them as a diplomatic approach combined with pressure.



In continuation of Washington's dual policies of sanctions and diplomacy
U.S. sanctions 10 Iranian individuals and two institutions for alleged cyberattacks
14/09/2022/19:29
https://irna.ir/xjKydF

In this same vein, one hour later, at 20:38 local time, IRNA published and article titled “U.S. accuses three Iranians of carrying out malicious computer activities,” in which Albania is mentioned only within the contextual summary of events that preceded the imposition of these sanctions.



U.S. accuses three Iranians of carrying out malicious computer activities
14/09/2022/20:38
https://irna.ir/xjKyfw

This sudden decline in the intensity of coverage of the severance of diplomatic relations is followed by a four-day period of silence, between September 15 to September 18, 2022. Thereafter, Albania is mentioned only within the framework of articles related to the MEK, or in connection with developments in the international arena.

Thus, on September 18, 2022, IRNA published an article titled "The International Labor Organization (ILO) investigates forced marriage in the Hypocrites (MEK) group". According to IRNA, in a letter addressed to the Director General of the International Labor Organization and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the "Association for the Protection of Terrorism Victims" (of Iran) stated:

> … We also share with you the suffering of thousands of people affected by slavery, forced labor, and forced marriage in the organization of the hypocrites terrorist group (MEK), which began in 1985 in Iraq with the support of former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein and continues to this day in the country of Albania as an organized crime, constituting a fundamental violation of human rights. The phenomenon of forced divorce should also be added to these violations…

The article concludes: "A copy of this letter has been sent to the Ministries of Justice, Foreign Affairs, and Prosecutors of Iran and Albania, as well as to other authorities concerned with the issue in the international arena, in order to follow up and help resolve the matter". This article is another example of conveying "governmental

positions" through the letters of so-called "civil society organizations" addressed to international institutions, as a way of avoiding direct debate at the intergovernmental or interstate level.



The International Labor Organization (ILO) investigates forced marriage in the hypocrites' group (MEK)
18/09/2022
https://irna.ir/xjKzct

In the same vein, the article of 20 September 2022, titled "Terror Martyrs' Families Appeal to Ayatollah Raisi: The President Should Carry the Voices of Terror Victims to the International Community," states:

> The families of the martyrs of terror—emphasizing the need to pursue the extradition and prosecution of the leaders of the terrorist group of the Hypocrites (MEK) for the killing of thousands of citizens and for treason during the imposed war against the Iranian nation—called on the President to convey the voices of terror victims to the international community during his presence at the United Nations… The US and the West removed the Hypocrites (MEK) from their terrorist lists so that, after a while, the ground could be prepared for their transfer from Iraq to third countries. After being expelled from Iraq and settling in Albania, the Hypocrites (MEK), with the support of the United States and the Zionist regime, continued to plot against our country; the official and open establishment of armed terrorist cells—'rebel centers'—is part of the new crimes of the Hypocrites (MEK).

It should be noted that this article is linked to the visit of Iran's President, Ebrahim Raisi, to New York, where he addressed the General Debate of the 77th Session of the United Nations General Assembly (New York, 20–26 September 2022).



Terror martyrs' families appeal to Ayatollah Raisi: The President to bring the voices of terror victims to the ears of the international community
20/09/2022
https://irna.ir/xjKBgp

Meanwhile, Iran was swept by a wave of large protests following the death of Mahsa Amini, attributed to violence by Guidance Patrol officers—an allegation denied by the Iranian authorities. A series of IRNA articles portrayed this wave of protests as externally instigated, including MEK. An example is the article dated 29 September 2022, titled "Tehran Governor: We Will Distinguish the Misled and Unwitting from the Rioters," in which Tehran's Governor, Mohsen Mansouri, stated:

> In the recent events, we are facing a 'war of factions' in the media sphere. At times, the enemy published up to 100 posts on hostile networks in a single night, and those who have worked in the media know what logistics such a volume of posts requires… Many of the tweets undermining the country's security were designed and produced in Saudi Arabia and Albania, and many rioters admitted that they were paid to foment disorder, and we will certainly deal with them.



Tehran Governor: We will separate the accounts of the deceived and unsuspecting people from the rioters
29/09/2022
https://irna.ir/xjKFf5

In the same vein, on September 30, 2022, in the article "Important Statement by the Ministry of Intelligence on recent incidents in the country", IRNA wrote that "…the main part of the mission, attention and strength (of the Ministry of Intelligence) were focused on monitoring and tracking the main organizers and instigators behind the scenes, ranging from foreign countries to the terrorists residing in Albania and other hostile groups and sects nurtured by colonialism and their domestic loyalists".

In an article of October 1, 2022, titled "Behind the scenes of the recent turmoil according to statistics", with the special subtitle "There is always a hypocrite involved", it was writen: "The terrorist group of the Hypocrites (MEK), which has recorded the killing of more than 17,000 citizens of our country in blind assassinations, especially in the early years of the victory of the Islamic Revolution, was one of the front-runners in recent days who not only tried to carry out psychological operations to hashtag using its loyal forces in Albania, but also tried to organize rioters inside the country using deceived elements and its infantry".



Behind the scenes of the recent turmoil according to statistics
01/10/2022
https://irna.ir/xjKFMT

It is worth noting that in these reports, although the MEK is mentioned as being involved in the unrest in Iran, IRNA makes no reference whatsoever to the Albanian authorities — apparently, Iran sought to de-escalate the tension that followed the cyberattacks and the severance of diplomatic relations, avoiding a direct confrontation with NATO. For a five-day period, IRNA did not publish any articles about Albania.

On October 5, 2022, IRNA published the article "Albania does not invoke Paragraph 5 of NATO Charter against Iran", which stated:

The Albanian government has decided to refrain from activating Article 5 of the military organization's charter against Iran following an alleged cyber-attack by Iranian hackers on the infrastructure of this European NATO member country… Rama (the Albania PM) said that his country considered a request to activate Article 5 of the NATO Charter following the cyber-attacks of July this year (2022), which could have drawn all member states into a confrontation with Iran… He added that Albania ultimately decided not to take the step, rather than risk escalating the crisis and alienating its powerful allies…

Further in this article, IRNA mentioned the fact that "Article 5 has only been invoked once, a few days after the September 11 attacks on the United States", and that "NATO's charter requires member states to come to the aid of a (member) country that invokes the article, although each country can determine the extent of its response."



Albania does not invoke Paragraph 5 of NATO Charter against Iran
06/10/2022
https://irna.ir/xjKHm8

The publication of this article shows a certain "relief" of Iran, as it seemed that Iran's greatest concern following the events of September 2022 was the reaction of Albania's Euro-Atlantic allies, particularly the possible activation of Article 5 of NATO. After this article, IRNA's coverage of Albania became highly peripheral—that is, Albania was no longer part of IRNA's headlines.

Nevertheless, on October 8, 2022, in the article "What do they want from Iranian embassies?", on the wave of protests in front of Iranian embassies in several European countries, reference was also made to the expulsion of Iran's diplomatic corps from Albania in September 2022, stating: "On September 7th of this year, the Albanian government expelled the staff of the Iranian embassy in Tirana, the country's capital, and gave them 24 hours to leave the country. The Albanian government's excuse is the accusation of a cyber-attack on the country's digital infrastructure…"

Nonetheless, this was not a dedicated article, and Albania's case was only one among several mentioned in a broader context.



What do they want from Iranian embassies?
12/10/2022
https://irna.ir/xjKJSK

In the same vein comes the article of October 19, 2022, "Iran condemns all violence against diplomatic and consular missions in Europe", where, according to IRNA:

> Iran's ambassador and deputy mission to the UN condemned any violence against the diplomatic and consular missions of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Europe during the recent incidents… Following the recent incidents in Iran, a number of diplomatic and consular sites and diplomats of the Islamic Republic of Iran in some European countries, including Denmark, Norway, Belgium, England, Germany, Bulgaria, the Netherlands, Italy, and Sweden, were violently attacked… He added: "We also express our strong protest against the unauthorized and forcible entry into the Iranian diplomatic and consular building in Tirana on September 8, 2022, by the Albanian police forces after the unilateral severance of bilateral relations by the government of this country.

Nevertheless, this was not a dedicated article: Albania was mentioned here only as one of eleven European states cited in this broader context.



Iran condemns any acts of violence against its diplomatic and consular missions in Europe
19/10/2022
https://irna.ir/xjKMY5

Due to the significant decline in the frequency of news coverage concerning Albania after this period, this is the last article analyzed in this study regarding the Iranian state media, IRNA.

In conclusion: For over a decade, IRNA's Albania dossier is event-indexed and tightly coupled to the state of play between Tehran and the West. When diplomacy looks promising, Albania recedes or appears as a cultural partner; when confrontation escalates, Albania is re-cast as a Western proxy and a platform for "terrorist" and cyber operations. Three frames structure the narrative on Albania—cultural diplomacy, geopolitical alignment (JCPOA included), and the MEK—with the third gradually subsuming the others and supplying the vocabulary for delegitimization.

The chronology unfolds in four arcs. From 2012 to 2014, Albania figures as a soft-power venue: cultural festivals, religious commemorations and polite diplomatic notes dominate, and even the first reports of MEK relocation are informational. After the JCPOA signing (July 2015), coverage about Albania intensifies and diversifies—IRNA highlights media MOUs, academic exchanges, Shi'ite ties and aspirational trade talk—yet concrete economic outcomes remain thin and "cooperation against extremism" operates as euphemism for the MEK. After the U.S. withdraw from the JCPOA, the emergence of the MEK as the main Iranian opposition group advocating regime change and the expulsion of Iranian diplomats from Albania on grounds of engaging in activities considered in violation of their diplomatic status, securitization (2018–2019) takes hold: Albania's protests and corruption scandals are curated to imply fragility and foreign manipulation; the 2018 expulsions of Iranian diplomats from Albania are framed as a U.S.–Israeli plot; a cyber subframe depicts Albania as a MEK-run "bot farm." The final arc (2020–2022) fuses cyber conflict with diplomatic rupture. The tone hardens (e.g., 'the

hypocrites residing in Albania' – '*monafeqin, Ālbanī-neshinhā'*), and a 2021 silence aligns with efforts to revive the JCPOA. In mid-2022, Pence's visit, the July cyberattacks and Tirana's September break trigger rolling coverage that cycles through denial, victimhood, counter-accusation and NATO involvement concerns – IRNA notes with relief that Albania declines to invoke Article 5 of NATO. Recurrent techniques—delegitimizing labels; selective omission; "deliberate flows" in the translation, citation, or paraphrasing of articles borrowed from other media outlets; dualism about Albania's capacity for independent action—reveal a discourse aimed primarily at domestic legitimation.

The end of 2022 marks an abrupt decline in IRNA's media interest in covering events related to Albania.

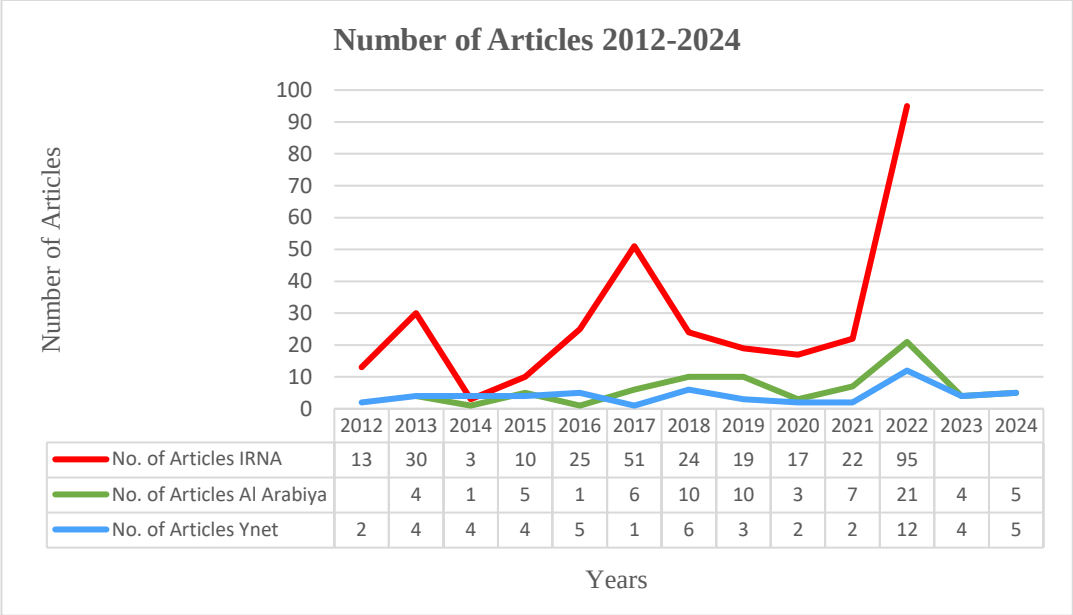
VIII. CONCLUSIONS

This study aimed to address the central research question: — ***How do foreign policy dynamics and media narratives interplay in the construction of Albania's image in the relations with Middle Eastern states for their domestic audiences?*** — by closely reading three influential media outlets: Al Arabiya (Pan-Arab, Saudi-owned), Ynet (mainstream Israeli), and IRNA (Iran's state news agency). Across the corpus (Al Arabiya, 2013–2024; Ynet, 2005–2024; IRNA, 2012–2022), the findings converge on a clear pattern: Albania's media image is not a free-standing portrait but a function of each state's strategic identity, alliance structure, and moment-to-moment foreign-policy priorities. In other words, *media frames on Albania are indexed to foreign policy*—through selection of topics, sourcing hierarchies, and interpretive cues that align with government preferences and/or elite consensus.

The quantitative trend in Figure 4 supports these qualitative conclusions. IRNA's yearly number of articles fluctuates during the period taken into analysis. For instance, the number of articles jumps from 12 in 2012 to 30 in 2013, then declines to just three in 2014, before climbing again to a peak of 51 in 2017 (the apex of cultural and "religious diplomacy"). After declining to 24 articles in 2018, the number surges to 95 in 2022—the year marked by the cyberattacks on Albanian government systems and the severance of diplomatic relations. In contrast, Al Arabiya's coverage of Albania remains consistently low between 2013 and 2017, rises in 2018 and 2019, drops during 2020–2021, and then jumps to 21 articles in 2022, before levelling off again in 2023–2024. Ynet shows a consistently modest baseline (2-6 articles annually) with a clear spike to 12 articles in 2022. The concurrent peaks observed in 2022 across all three media outlets empirically anchor H4 (coverage intensifies and polarizes during global or regional

crises), showing that when geopolitics becomes salient, reporting volume rises and the framing centres on the critical juncture, conditioned by its dynamics.

Figure 4: Number of Articles on Albania in Al Arabiya, Ynet and IRNA-2012-2024



	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
No. of Articles IRNA	13	30	3	10	25	51	24	19	17	22	95		
No. of Articles Al Arabiya		4	1	5	1	6	10	10	3	7	21	4	5
No. of Articles Ynet	2	4	4	4	5	1	6	3	2	2	12	4	5

Taken together, the three cases under examination provide a solid empirical basis for testing the four hypotheses advanced in this dissertation:

H1 "Closer or more cooperative bilateral relations lead to more favorable portrayal of Albania in the local media": is robustly supported. In Al Arabiya, Albania's alignment with U.S./NATO and economic partnerships with Saudi Arabia produced a persistently sympathetic framing focused on cooperation opportunities, such as tourism, public investments etc. Ynet likewise portrayed Albania as a reliable partner: a country that rescued Jews during the Holocaust (the *Besa* narrative), a NATO member, an active partner in counter-terrorism and cyber defence, and an attractive destination for outbound Israeli tourism. Conversely, IRNA's coverage illustrates the other side of the hypothesis. For instance, during the period surrounding the signing of the JCPOA, in IRNA's portrayal Albania was a venue for soft diplomacy; however, once the JCPOA increasingly came under question and its future grew uncertain, most notably after the exit of U.S.A

in May 2018, followed by the emergence of the crisis in bilateral diplomatic relations between Albania and Iran, the expulsion of Iranian diplomats, the cyberattacks against Albania, and the severance of diplomatic relations in 2022—portrayals turned negative. Across media outlets, variation in tone tracks variation in the bilateral relationship, as the elite model would predict.

H2 "*When Albania's policies align with a given state's adversaries (e.g., hosting the MEK from Iran's perspective), that state's media shifts to unfavourable—often sharply critical—coverage"* is also supported. It is visible in IRNA's MEK frame. Albania's positioning as the host country of the Iranian opposition group in exile MEK (*Mujahedin-e Khalq*) – which Tehran has for decades labelled as "the terrorist group of hypocrites", redefined IRNA's portrayal on Albania from peripheral partner to Western proxy, with the country cast as a location for "harbouring terrorist" and "subversive cyber activity" and, at times, as a "pawn victim" for a "U.S.-Israeli-Saudi plot against Iran". However, as mentioned earlier, the tone and intensity has varied depending on other events, especially the JCPOA or the supportive stance of NATO for Albania as a member state, after the cyber-attacks attributed to Iran-linked entities. On the other hand, because Albania did not align with the adversaries of Saudi Arabia or Israel during the period studied (and beyond), the "negative intersection" branch of H2 is not triggered in the coverage of those two media outlets; nonetheless, the IRNA case is sufficient to sustain the hypothesis in line with realist expectations and the elite/indexing model of media behaviour.

H3 "*Media portrayals on Albania are more favorable if the given state is aligned with Albania's major strategic partner(s) (e.g., U.S., NATO)"* is confirmed and helps explaining the distinctions in media coverage on Albania across the three media outlets

examined in this study. Where a state's strategic outlook converges with Albania's U.S./NATO alignments, coverage becomes sympathetic and aspirational—Albania is framed as trustworthy and reliable, compliant with international norms, and open for partnership (as in the case of media portrayal of Albania in Al Arabiya and Ynet). Where a state's strategic outlook opposes Western primacy (as in Iran's/ the Islamic Republic's "resistance" discourse), the same alignments become cues for negative framing. Constructivist dynamics amplify this effect: Ynet integrates Holocaust memory and *Besa* into a moral identity script that binds Albania to Israel's community of recognition; IRNA embeds Albania in an identity script of sovereignty under siege to Western "hegemony." A state's alignment is therefore not merely material but also narratively constitutive.

H4 "*Coverage intensifies and polarizes during global or regional crises, amplifying official foreign policy narratives toward Albania"* is strongly supported across all three cases and is clearly visualized in Figure 4. Salience spikes and tonal polarity increases at inflection points: Albania's refusal to host Syria's chemical-weapons destruction (2013) served to construct a sovereignty and agency frame in Al Arabiya's coverage; Ynet's media coverage of 2016 ISIS plot targeting the Israeli football team at the Israel–Albania qualifier solidified Ynet's security partnership frame, emphasizing cooperation and shared threat perception, portraying Albania as a reliable ally in counterterrorism; the 2018-2020 expulsions of Iranian diplomats and the 2022 cyberattacks and severing of relations produced synchronized bursts across all three outlets—Al Arabiya and Ynet emphasizing solidarity and official responses; IRNA shifting to denial, counter-accusation, and legally framed protest. These crisis cycles demonstrate how foreign-policy events "bound" media narratives by narrowing the range

of acceptable interpretations and elevating official voices, consistent with agenda-setting and indexing dynamics in international news.

Beyond hypothesis testing, the comparative reading clarifies the *mechanisms* that link foreign policy to media framing. *First,* the choice of sources mirrors the evolving dynamics surrounding particular themes or events. Al Arabiya's discontinuation of NCRI news sourcing in MEK-related reporting since 2021—following the Biden administration's inauguration—and the complete absence of MEK coverage on Albania after late 2022 reflect a new editorial orientation aligned with broader geopolitical shifts. The MEK no longer represented a priority interest as an "Iranian opposition group in exile"; meanwhile, Saudi Arabia's stance toward Iran began to "soften" in an effort to avoid further regional escalation. Consequently, Albania started to be portrayed more and more as a Balkan–European country with potential for expanding Saudi Investments. Ynet's use of Israeli officials and security service sources in reporting on disrupted terrorist plots and cyber cooperation situates Albania within Israel's national security epistemic framework. By amplifying clerical sermons, statements from "families of martyrs," and letters from quasi-NGOs, IRNA reinforces hard-line positions with a populist undertone, thereby bolstering official narratives while maintaining diplomatic manoeuvrability. *Second,* framing repertoires are predictable and durable. Al Arabiya's coverage cycles through the themes of sovereignty, security, and economy; Ynet blends Europeanization, tourism and travel, art and literature, moral values-hospitality and securitization; IRNA moves from "Soft power" (cultural, economic, religious diplomacy) to a MEK-cantered securitization discourse and, in 2022, to a global cyber confrontation framing. *Third,* identity markers matter. By invoking the Albanian code of honour, Besa, associated with the rescue of Jews during World War II, and by highlighting the Jerusalem

Prize awarded to the renowned Albanian writer Ismail Kadare, Ynet positions Albania within a moral community grounded in shared ethical and historical values; IRNA's labelling of the MEK as "the group of terrorist hypocrites residing in Albania" (*Garuhake terroristie monafeqin, Ālbanī neshin hā*) externalizes domestic dissent and reframes Albania's hospitality as complicity in anti-Iranian activity; Al Arabiya's coverage of investment and tourism during 2019–2024 integrates Albania into the Gulf's outward-looking, connectivity-first regional vision..

These mechanisms also reveal the limits of "mirror" theories of the press. None of the three outlets simply reflects Albania's internal realities; each *refracts* them through its strategic lenses. Domestic contestation in Albania appears in Ynet as episodic or exotic (e.g., blood feuds; the National Theatre dispute), in Al Arabiya as background to a forward-leaning economic narrative, and in IRNA as evidence of Western manipulation or instability— each framing serving the outlet's audience and state-linked priorities. The interplay the research question targets—between foreign policy dynamics and media narratives—is therefore reciprocal but asymmetric: policy sets the boundary conditions and media frames Albania within these boundaries.

In conclusion, the dissertation's comparative content analysis substantiates the four hypotheses. Answering the research question directly: When bilateral partnerships strengthen, Albania's coverage becomes more favourable; when relations deteriorate, the coverage becomes less favourable and even negative; and in times of crisis media coverage intensifies. The media's representation of Albania thus serves as a prism through which one can interpret the domestic and foreign policy dynamics of Saudi Arabia, Israel and Iran. That is precisely why its image shifts when the foreign-policy lighting changes—and why studying those shifts yields insight not only into Albania's external

branding, but into how Middle Eastern media ecosystems translate state priorities into durable public common sense.

ANNEXES

Annex 1.: List of Articles in Al Arabiya (2013-2024)

No.	Title in Arabic	Title English	Date	Link
1.	71 عنصراً من المعارضة الإيرانية يغادرون العراق	71 Iranian opposition members leave Iraq	22/06/2013	https://www.alarabiya.net/iran/2013/06/22/71-عنصرا-من-المعارضة-الإيرانية-يغادرون-العراق
2.	الألبانيون يتظاهرون ضد تفكيك "كيمياوي" الأسد في بلادهم	Albanians demonstrate against the dismantling of Assad's "chemical" in their country	13/11/2013	https://www.alarabiya.net/arab-and-world/syria/2013/11/13/الألبانيون-يتظاهرون-ضد-تفكيك-كيمياوي-الاسد-في-بلادهم
3.	ألبانيا ترفض تدمير "الكيمياوية" السورية على أراضيها	Albania refuses to destroy Syrian "chemical" on its territory	15/11/2013	https://www.alarabiya.net/arab-and-world/syria/2013/11/15/ألبانيا-ترفض-تدمير-كيمياوي-سوريا-على-أراضيها-
4.	الألبان يرفضون تلويث بلادهم بـ"كيمياوي الأسد"	Albanians refuse to contaminate their country with “Assad's chemical”	15/11/2013	https://www.alarabiya.net/arab-and-world/syria/2013/11/15/الألبان-يرفضون-تلويث-بلادهم-بـ-كيمياوي-الأسد-
5.	رغم غيابها عن المونديال.. ألبانيا حاضرة في البرازيل	Despite her absence from World Cup Albania is present in Brazil	19/06/2014	https://www.alarabiya.net/sport/international-sport/2014/06/19/رغم-غيابها-عن-كأس-العالم-ألبانيا-حاضرة-بقوة-في-البرازيل
6.	إيطاليا تسعى للقبض على 3 متهمين بالإرهاب	Italy is going to arrest 3 terrorism suspects	25/03/2015	https://www.alarabiya.net/arab-and-world/2015/03/25/إيطاليا-تسعى-للقبض-على-3-متهمين-بالإرهاب
7.	الحمل بأنثى جريمة لا تغتفر في بعض دول البلقان	Pregnancy with a female is an unforgivable crime in some Balkan countries	03/05/2015	https://www.alarabiya.net/last-page/2015/05/03/الحمل-بأنثى-جريمة-لا-تغتفر-في-بعض-دول-البلقان
8.	ربع سكان الخليج يفضلون الإقامة في الفنادق الفاخرة	A quarter of Gulf inhabitants prefer to stay in luxury hotels	08/05/2015	https://www.alarabiya.net/aswaq/travel-and-tourism/2015/05/07/ربع-سكان-الخليج-يفضلون-الإقامة-في-الفنادق-الفاخرة

9.	مسؤولون في سن الشباب..وإنجازات كبيرة	Young Officials... and Great Achievements	18/05/2015	https://www.alarabiya.net/arab-and-world/2015/05/18/صغار-بالسن-وصلوا-الى-السلطة-وأفلحوا-أكثر-من-الكبار
10.	السعوديون إلى ألبانيا من دون تأشيرة لمدة 5 أشهر	Saudis to Albania without a visa for 5 months period	18/08/2015	https://www.alarabiya.net/saudi-today/2015/08/18/السعوديون-إلى-ألبانيا-من-دون-تأشيرة-لمدة-5-أشهر
11.	الأمم المتحدة تنقل "مجاهدي خلق" من العراق إلى أوروبا	UN moves MEK from Iraq to Europe	10/09/2016	https://www.alarabiya.net/arab-and-world/iraq/2016/09/10/-مجاهدي-خلق-غادرت-العراق-بالكامل-إلى-أوروبا-
12.	جون ماكين يزور "مجاهدي خلق" في ألبانيا	John McCain Visits MEK in Albania	15/04/2017	https://www.alarabiya.net/iran/2017/04/15/جون-ماكين-يزور-مجاهدي-خلق-في-ألبانيا
13.	إيران تحتج على لقاء جون ماكين بقادة مجاهدي خلق	Iran protests John McCain's meeting with MEK leaders	17/04/2017	https://www.alarabiya.net/iran/2017/04/17/إيران-تحتج-على-لقاء-جون-ماكين-بقادة-مجاهدي-خلق
14.	رجوي: لا حل للقضاء على داعش إلا بإسقاط نظام طهران	Rajavi: There is no solution to eliminate ISIS except by toppling the Tehran regime	01/07/2017	https://www.alarabiya.net/iran/2017/07/01/-دعوات-لإسقاط-نظام-إيران-بمؤتمر-المعارضة-بباريس
15.	وفد من مجلس شيوخ أميركا يلتقي زعيمة المقاومة الإيرانية	U.S. Senate Delegation Meets Iranian Resistance Leader	13/08/2017	https://www.alarabiya.net/iran/2017/08/13/وفد-من-مجلس-شيوخ-أميركا-يلتقي-زعيمة-المقاومة-الإيرانية
16.	بالصور.. 17 وزيرة للدفاع حول العالم	In pictures. 17 female Defence Ministers Around the World	04/09/2017	https://www.alarabiya.net/last-page/2017/09/04/بالصور-وزيرات-الدفاع-حول-العالم
17.	منظمة "مجاهدي خلق" الإيرانية تختار قيادة جديدة	PMOI/MEK Chooses New Leadership	06/09/2017	https://www.alarabiya.net/iran/2017/09/06/منظمة-مجاهدي-خلق-الايرانية-تختار-قيادة-جديدة
18.	ارتفاع "تاريخي" لطلبات اللجوء في فرنسا	'Historic' rise in asylum applications in France	08/01/2018	https://www.alarabiya.net/arab-and-world/2018/01/08/ارتفاع-تاريخي-لطلبات-اللجوء-في-فرنسا
19.	المعارضة: مخابرات إيران مسؤولة عن تفجيرات بأوروبا	Opposition: Iran's intelligence is responsible for bombings in Europe	09/08/2018	https://www.alarabiya.net/iran/2018/08/09/المعارضة-مخابرات-إيران-مسؤولة-عن-تفجيرات-بأوروبا

20.	الشرطة الألبانية تطارد مسلحا قتل 8 أفراد من عائلته	Albanian police chase gunman who killed 8 members of his family	11/08/2018	https://www.alarabiya.net/arab-and-world/2018/08/11/الشرطة-الألبانية-تطارد-مسلحا-قتل-8-أفراد-من-عائلته
21.	جاليات إيران تطالب بتحرك دولي لمواجهة إرهاب النظام	Iran's diaspora demand international action to confront regime terrorism	15/12/2018	https://www.alarabiya.net/ira/n/2018/12/15/جاليات-ايران-تطالب-بتحرك-دولي-لمواجهة-ارهاب-النظام
22.	ظريف يستنكر حظر تويتر لموالين.. ورد معارض "ضربني وبكى	Zarif denounces Twitter ban for loyalists… and a member of opposition replied, "He hit me and cried"	17/12/2018	https://www.alarabiya.net/ira/n/2018/09/17/ظريف-يستنكر-حظر-تويتر-لموالين-ورد-معارض-ضربني-وبكى-
23.	أميركا تؤيد قرار ألبانيا طرد إيرانيين.. "يجب أن نتحد"	America supports Albania's decision to expel Iranians. "We must unite"	20/12/2018	https://www.alarabiya.net/arab-and-world/american-elections-2016/2018/12/20/بومبيو-يجب-على-العالم-أن-يتحد-لمعاقبة-ايران
24.	ترمب يشكر رئيس وزراء ألبانيا لطرده دبلوماسيين إيرانيين	Trump thanks Albanian PM for expelling Iranian diplomats	20/12/2018	https://www.alarabiya.net/ira/n/2018/12/21/ترمب-يشكر-رئيس-وزراء-ألبانيا-لطرده-دبلوماسيين-ايرانيين
25.	ألبانيا تطرد دبلوماسيين إيرانيين بتهمة تهديد الأمن	Albania expels Iranian diplomats for threatening security	20/12/2018	https://www.alarabiya.net/ira/n/2018/12/20/ألبانيا-تطرد-ديبلوماسيين-ايرانيين-بتهمة-تهديد-الأمن-
26.	البحرين ترحب بقرار ألبانيا طرد دبلوماسيين إيرانيين	Bahrain welcomes Albania's decision to expel Iranian diplomats	21/12/2018	https://www.alarabiya.net/arab-and-world/2018/12/21/البحرين-ترحب-بقرار-ألبانيا-طرد-دبلوماسيين-ايرانيين-
27.	تأييد سعودي لقرار ألبانيا طرد دبلوماسيين إيرانيين	Saudi Arabia backing Albania's decision to expel Iranian diplomats	22/12/2018	https://www.alarabiya.net/sa/udi-today/2018/12/22/تأييد-سعودي-لقرار-ألبانيا-بطرد-دبلوماسيّين-ايرانيّين
28.	الملك سلمان يشهد توقيع اتفاقيتي تعاون مع ألبانيا	King Selman witnesses signing of two cooperation agreements with Albania	06/02/2019	https://www.alarabiya.net/sa/udi-today/2019/02/06/الملك-سلمان-يشهد-توقيع-اتفاقيتي-تعاون-مع-ألبانيا
29.	بالصور.. دونالد ترمب نجم معرض فني في ألبانيا	In pictures. Donald Trump star of an art gallery in Albania	26/02/2019	https://www.alarabiya.net/last-page/2019/02/26/بالصور-دونالد-ترمب-نجم-معرض-فني-في-ألبانيا-

30.	الاتحاد الألباني يقيل الإيطالي بانوتشي من منصبه	Albanian federation dismisses Italian Panucci from post	23/03/2019	https://www.alarabiya.net/sport/international-sport/2019/03/23/الاتحاد-الألباني-يقيل-الايطالي-بانوتشي-من-منصبه
31.	ألبانيا تستضيف مؤتمر "مجاهدي خلق" بحضور محامي ترمب	Albania hosts MEK conference in the presence of Trump lawyers	12/07/2019	https://www.alarabiya.net/iran/2019/07/12/ألبانيا-تستضيف-مؤتمر-مجاهدي-خلق-بحضور-محامي-ترمب
32.	ألبانيا.. شخصيات دولية تدعم الإيرانيين لإسقاط النظام	Albania… International figures support Iranians to topple regime	12/07/2019	https://www.alarabiya.net/iran/2019/07/12/ألبانيا-شخصيات-دولية-تدعم-الايرانيين-لاسقاط-النظام
33.	"مجاهدي خلق" تدعو لاستعادة إيران من ولاية الفقيه	MEK calls for Iran to be restored from '*Velayat-e faqih*'	13/07/2019	https://www.alarabiya.net/iran/2019/07/13/--مجاهدي-خلق-تدعو-لاستعادة-ايران-من-ولاية-الفقيه
34.	قصة بالفيديو لأغرب خناقة بين صاحب مطعم وزبائن مشاهير	Video story of the strangest fight between a restaurant owner and celebrity customers	21/08/2019	https://www.alarabiya.net/social-media/2019/08/21/قصة-بالفيديو-لأغرب-خناقة-بين-صاحب-مطعم-وزبائن-مشاهير
35.	معارضة إيران تتأهب لانهيار النظام.. من المؤهل للحكم؟	Iran's opposition is bracing for regime collapse. Who is eligible for power?	29/08/2019	https://www.alarabiya.net/iran/2019/08/29/معارضة-ايران-تتأهب-لانهيار-النظام-من-المؤهل-للحكم؟
36.	حصيلة زلزال ألبانيا.. 105 جرحى و100 هزة ارتدادية	The outcome of the Albanian earthquake. 105 injured and 100 aftershocks	22/09/2019	https://www.alarabiya.net/arab-and-world/2019/09/22/حصيلة-زلزال-ألبانيا-105-جرحى-و100-هزة-ارتدادية-
37.	ألبانيا تحبط عملية إرهابية خطط لها في إيران	Albania thwarts planned terror operation devised in Iran	23/10/2019	https://www.alarabiya.net/arab-and-world/2019/10/23/ألبانيا-تحبط-عملية-ارهابية-خطط-لها-في-ايران-
38.	فلاي دبي تتيح حجز الرحلات في الاتجاهين بهذا التوقيت	Flydubai offers two-way flights at this time	24/05/2020	https://www.alarabiya.net/aswaq/travel-and-tourism/2020/05/24/فلاي-دبي-تتيح-حجز-الرحلات-في-الاتجاهين-بهذا-التوقيت
39.	مغنية بريطانية تشعل البلقان بتغريدة وخريطة.. "فخورة بعرقي	A British singer ignites the Balkans with a Tweet and a map… "Proud of my ethnicity"	22/07/2020	https://www.alarabiya.net/social-media/2020/07/22/مغنية-بريطانية-تشعل-البلقان-بتغريدة-وخريطة-فخورة-بعرقي-

40.	حليب الحمير.. بين الوقاية من كورونا ومستحضرات التجميل	Donkey's milk… between corona prevention and cosmetics	18/12/2020	https://www.alarabiya.net/last-page/2020/12/18/اقبال-متزايد-على-حليب-الحمير-في-ألبانيا-في-ظلّ-الوباء-
41.	النظام السوري يترنح بين الخطف والتحايل على "قيصر"	The Syrian regime is teetering between kidnapping and circumventing "Caesar"	01/01/2021	https://www.alarabiya.net/politics/2021/01/17/النظام-السوري-يترنح-بين-الخطف-والتحايل-على-قيصر-
42.	ألباني يحاول إشعال النار في نفسه خلال صلاة العيد	Albanian tries to set himself on fire during Eid prayers	13/05/2021	https://www.alarabiya.net/last-page/2021/05/13/ألباني--يحاول-اشعال-النار-في-نفسه-خلال-صلاة-العيد
43.	مؤتمر المعارضة الإيرانية في ألبانيا يبحث أزمة بقاء النظام	Iranian opposition conference in Albania discusses regime survival crisis	11/07/2021	https://www.alarabiya.net/iran/2021/07/11/مؤتمر-المعارضة-الايرانية-في-ألبانيا-يبحث-أزمة-بقاء-النظام
44.	بمشاركة دولية.. مؤتمر للمعارضة الإيرانية يُختتم اليوم في ألبانيا	With international participation… Iranian opposition conference concludes today in Albania	12/07/2021	https://www.alarabiya.net/iran/2021/07/12/بمشاركة-دولية-مؤتمر-للمعارضة-الايرانية-يُختتم-اليوم-في-ألبانيا
45.	وزير الشؤون الإسلامية يزور ألبانيا لتعزيز التعاون بنشر الوسطية	The Minister of Islamic Affairs Visits Albania to Enhance Cooperation on Spreading Moderation	25/10/2021	https://www.alarabiya.net/saudi-today/2021/10/25/وزير-الشؤون-الاسلامية-يزور-لألبانيا-لتعزيز-التعاون-في-نشر-الوسطية
46.	مجزرة 1988 بإيران.. نقل محاكمة نوري إلى ألبانيا لأسبوعين	The massacre of 1988 in Iran… Nuri trial moved to Albania for two weeks	10/11/2021	https://www.alarabiya.net/iran/2021/11/10/مجزرة-1988-بايران-نقل-محاكمة-نوري-الى-ألبانيا-لأسبوعين
47.	إيرانيون يتظاهرون في السويد.. مع محاكمة قاضي الإعدامات	Iranians demonstrate in Sweden… with the trial of the death penalty judge	11/11/2021	https://www.alarabiya.net/iran/2021/11/11/ايرانيون-يتظاهرون-في-السويد-مع-محاكمة-قاضي-الاعدامات
48.	بعد اختراقها تلفزيون إيران.. "مجاهدي خلق" تتعرض لهجوم إلكتروني	After hacking Iran's television, the Mujahedin-e Khalq comes under a cyberattack	29/01/2022	https://www.alarabiya.net/iran/2022/01/29/بعد-اختراقها-تلفزيون-ايران-مجاهدي-خلق-تتعرض-لهجوم-الكتروني

49.	زيلينسكي من أمام برلمان ألبانيا: قاطعوا روسيا وأبعدوها	Zelensky in front of the Albanian parliament: boycott Russia and keep it afar.	03/05/2022	https://www.alarabiya.net/arab-and-world/2022/05/03/زيلينسكي-من-أمام-برلمان-ألبانيا-قاطعوا-روسيا-وأبعدوها
50.	بعد تحذير أميركي.. ألبانيا تمنع عقد مؤتمر للمعارضة الإيرانية	After an American warning... Albania cancels an Iranian opposition conference	23/07/2022	https://www.alarabiya.net/iran/2022/07/23/بعد-تحذير-أميركي-ألبانيا-تمنع-عقد-مؤتمر-للمعارضة-الايرانية
51.	صندوق الاستثمارات العامة السعودي يبحث فرص استثمار في ألبانيا بـ 300 مليون دولار	Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund discusses 300 million investment opportunities in Albania	28/07/2022	https://www.alarabiya.net/aswaq/economy/2022/07/28/صندوق-الاستثمارات-العامة-السعودي-يبحث-فرص-استثمار-في-ألبانيا-بـ-300-مليون-دولار
52.	شركة أميركية ترجح ضلوع إيران في هجوم إلكتروني بألبانيا	US company suspects Iran involved in Albania cyber attack	04/08/2022	https://www.alarabiya.net/iran/2022/08/04/شركة-أميركية-ترجح-ضلوع-ايران-في-هجوم-الكتروني-بألبانيا
53.	ألبانيا توقف روسيين وأوكرانياً لتجسسهم على منشأة عسكرية	Albania arrests two Russians and a Ukrainian for spying on a military facility.	21/08/2022	https://www.alarabiya.net/arab-and-world/2022/08/21/ألبانيا-توقف-روسيين-وأوكراني-لتجسسهم-على-منشأة-عسكرية
54.	بعد هجوم إلكتروني.. ألبانيا تقطع العلاقات مع إيران	After a cyber-attack… Albania severs ties with Iran	07/09/2022	https://www.alarabiya.net/iran/2022/09/07/ألبانيا-تأمر-الدبلوماسيين-الايرانيين-بمغادرة-البلاد-خلال-24-ساعة
55.	نائب ألباني: لدينا أدلة تؤكد تورط إيران في الهجوم السيبراني	Albanian MP: We have evidence confirming Iran's involvement in the cyber attack	07/09/2022	https://www.alarabiya.net/iran/2022/09/07/نائب-ألباني-لدينا-أدلة-على-تورط-ايران-في-الهجوم-السيبراني
56.	دبلوماسيون إيرانيون يتلفون وثائق قبل مغادرتهم ألبانيا	Iranian diplomats destroy documents before leaving Albania	07/09/2022	https://www.alarabiya.net/iran/2022/09/08/دبلوماسيون-ايرانيون-يحرقون-وثائق-قبل-ساعات-من-مغادرتهم-ألبانيا
57.	بعد الهجوم الإلكتروني الإيراني.. الناتو يدعم ألبانيا	After the Iranian cyber attack... NATO supports Albania	08/09/2022	https://www.alarabiya.net/iran/2022/09/08/بعد-الهجوم-الالكتروني-الايراني-الناتو-يدعم-ألبانيا
58.	السيناتور مينينديز: يجب معاقبة إيران بسبب هجومها على ألبانيا	Senator Menendez: Iran must be punished for its attack on Albania	09/09/2022	https://www.alarabiya.net/arab-and-world/iraq-elections/2022/09/09/السيناتور-الديموقراطي-بوب-مينينديز-يجب-

				معاقبة-ايران-بسبب-هجومها-على-ألبانيا-
59.	السعودية تدين الهجمات السيبرانية الإرهابية ضد ألبانيا	Saudi Arabia condemns terrorist cyber attacks against Albania	09/09/2022	https://www.alarabiya.net/saudi-today/2022/09/09/السعودية-تدين-الهجمات-السيبرانية-الارهابية-ضد-ألبانيا
60.	أميركا تفرض عقوبات على إيران بسبب هجوم إلكتروني على ألبانيا	U.S. imposes sanctions on Iran over cyberattack on Albania	09/09/2022	https://www.alarabiya.net/arab-and-world/american-elections-2016/2022/09/09/أميركا-تفرض-عقوبات-على-ايران-بسبب-هجوم-الكتروني-على-ألبانيا
61.	إيران تدين عقوبات أميركية على خلفية هجوم إلكتروني استهدف ألبانيا	Iran condemns US sanctions over cyberattack on Albania	10/09/2022	https://www.alarabiya.net/iran/2022/09/10/ايران-تدين-عقوبات-أميركية-على-خلفية-هجوم-الكتروني-استهدف-ألبانيا
62.	مايكروسوفت تكشف جرائم مجموعة "فوسفورس" الإيرانية للقرصنة	Microsoft exposes the crimes of the Iranian hacking group "Phosphorus"	10/09/2022	https://www.alarabiya.net/iran/2022/09/10/مايكروسوفت-تكشف-جرائم-مجموعة-فوسفورس-الايرانية-للقرصنة-
63.	ألبانيا تعلن تعرضها لهجوم إلكتروني ثان من إيران	Albania announces second cyberattack from Iran	10/09/2022	https://www.alarabiya.net/arab-and-world/2022/09/10/ألبانيا-تعلن-تعرضها-لهجوم-الكتروني-ثان-من-ايران
64.	السيناتور أرنست: إدارة بايدن لم تفرض عقوبات رادعة ضد إيران	Senator Earnest: Biden administration did not impose deterrent sanctions against Iran	10/09/2022	https://www.alarabiya.net/iran/2022/09/10/السيناتور-أرنست-ادارة-بايدن-لم-تفرض-عقوبات-رادعة-ضد-ايران
65.	من هم القادة السيبرانيون للحرس الثوري؟ تفاصيل مثيرة	Who are the IRGC cyber commanders? Exciting details	12/09/2022	https://www.alarabiya.net/iran/2022/09/12/من-هم-القادة-السيبرانيين-للحرس-الثوري-الايراني؟-تفاصيل-مثيرة
66.	لابيد: إيران تشكل تهديدا مشتركا لكل من إسرائيل وألبانيا	Lapid: Iran poses a common threat to both Israel and Albania	23/10/2022	https://www.alarabiya.net/arab-and-world/2022/10/23/لابيد-ايران-تشكل-تهديدا-مشتركا-لكل-من-اسرائيل-وألبانيا
67.	الاتحاد الأوروبي يسعى لتوثيق العلاقات مع البلقان بوجه موسكو	EU seeks closer ties with Balkans against Moscow	06/12/2022	https://www.alarabiya.net/arab-and-world/2022/12/06/الاتحاد-الأوروبي-يسعى-لتوثيق-العلاقات-مع-البلقان-بوجه-موسكو

68.	السجن 10 سنوات لإيراني أدين بـ"الإرهاب" في ألبانيا	10 years in prison for an Iranian convicted of "terrorism" in Albania	15/12/2022	https://www.alarabiya.net/iran/2022/12/15/السجن-10-سنوات-لايراني-أدين-بـ-الارهاب-في-ألبانيا
69.	ألبانيا تحتجز ناقلة نفط روسية.. وتعتقل 22 من طاقمها	Albania seizes Russian oil tanker. It arrests 22 of its crew	22/02/2023	https://www.alarabiya.net/arab-and-world/2023/02/22/ألبانيا-تحتجز-ناقلة-نفط-روسية-وتعتقل-22-من-طاقمها
70.	للعربية: "بالوكو" ألبانيا تنتج 100% من طاقتها عبر مصادر متجددة	Balluku for Al-Arabiya: Albania produces 100% of its energy through renewable sources	02/03/2023	https://www.alarabiya.net/aswaq/special-stories/2023/03/02/-بالوكو-للعربية-ألبانيا-تنتج-100-D8%9C%-من-طاقتها-عبر-مصادر-متجددة
71.	رئيسة وزراء إيطاليا تعرض دفع فاتورة لمطعم في ألبانيا .. لهذا السبب.	Italian Prime Minister Offers to Pay Restaurant Bill in Albania... Here's Why	18/07/2023	https://www.alarabiya.net/aswaq/travel-and-tourism/2023/08/18/رئيسة-وزراء-ايطاليا-تعرض-دفع-فاتورة-لمطعم-في-ألبانيا-لهذا-السبب
72.	المصرية للاتصالات توقع مذكرة تفاهم مع شركة مجرية لبناء كابل بحري للربط مع ألبانيا	Telecom Egypt signs a memorandum of understanding with a Hungarian company to build a submarine cable to connect with Albania.	04/10/2023	https://www.alarabiya.net/aswaq/companies/2023/10/04/المصرية-للاتصالات-توقع-مذكرة-تفاهم-مع-شركة-مجرية-لبناء-كابل-بحرى-بين-مصر-وألبانيا
73.	الرئيس الألباني: أعد السعوديين بحراسة استثماراتهم في بلادي	The President of Albania: I promise the Saudis to protect their investments in my country.	02/03/2024	https://www.alarabiya.net/saudi-today/2024/03/02/الرئيس-الألباني-أعد-السعوديين-بحراسة-استثماراتهم-في-بلادي
74.	رئيس وزراء ألبانيا: إعفاء السعوديين من تأشيرة الدخول اعتبارا من الأسبوع المقبل	Albanian Prime Minister: Saudis will be exempt from entry visas starting next week	02/03/2024	https://www.alarabiya.net/aswaq/economy/2024/03/02/رئيس-وزراء-ألبانيا-اعفاء-السعوديين-من-تأشيرة-الدخول-اعتبارا-من-الأسبوع-المقبل
75.	شقق فاخرة على قاعدة عسكرية حساسة.. جارد	Luxury apartments on a sensitive military base...	17/03/2024	https://www.alarabiya.net/last-page/2024/03/17/شقق-فاخرة-على-قاعدة-عسكرية-حساسة-جارد-كوشنر-يستثمر-بصربيا

	كوشنر يستثمر بصربيا. صهر الرئيس الأميركي السابق كشف نيته الاستثمار في مجال العقار والسياحة في ألبانيا وصربيا	Jared Kushner invests in Serbia The former US president's son-in-law revealed his intention to invest in real estate and tourism in Albania and Serbia.		
76.	محمد السليني في ألبانيا للتحدث عن علاقة البلاد الغريبة بالاتحاد السوفييتي سابق	Mohammed Alselini is in Albania to talk about the country's strange relationship with the former Soviet Union	31/06/2024	https://www.alarabiya.net/programs/alrehla/2024/07/31/محمد-السليني-في-ألبانيا-للتحدث-عن-علاقة-البلاد-الغريبة-بالاتحاد-السوفييتي-سابق
77.	إيفانكا ترامب تحلم بمنتجعات فخمة على جزيرة ألبانية معزولة	Ivanka Trump dreams of luxury resorts on a secluded Albanian island	09/08/2024	https://www.alarabiya.net/last-page/2024/08/09/إيفانكا-ترامب-تحلم-بمنتجع-فخم-في-جزيرة-ألبانية-معزولة

Annex 2.: List of Articles in Ynet (2005-2024)

Nr.	Title in Hebrew	Title in English	Date	Link
1.	על אלבניה להמשיך ברפורמות הכלכליות"	Albania should continue its economic reforms	17.05.2005	https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3086797,00.html
2.	לתפוס את הבלתי נתפס	To catch the unimaginable	28.05.2008	https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3548561,00.html#google_vignette
3.	מסע לאלבניה: מוסלמים שאוהבים יהודים	A Journey to Albania: Muslims Who Love Jews	18.02.2009	https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3672632,00.html
4.	נאט"ו מתרחבת לבלקן: אלבניה וקרואטיה צורפו	NATO expands into the Balkans: Albania and Croatia joined	01.04.2009	https://www.ynet.co.il/article/3695862#google_vignette
5.	הערים הסמויות מן העין של אלבניה	The hidden cities of Albania	13.05.2009	https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3884899,00.html
6.	אסמעיל קדארה זכה בפרס נסיך אסטוריה	Ismail Kadare Wins the 'Prince of Asturias Prize'	05.07.2009	https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3741586,00.html#google_vignette
7.	אלבניה להודו: החזירו לנו את גופת אמא תרזה	Albania to India: Return Mother Teresa's body to us	17.10.2009	https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3791214,00.html
8.	איראן רכשה טילים מאוקראינה בעזרת אלבניה	Iran purchased missiles from Ukraine with the help of Albania	14.12.2009	https://www.ynet.co.il/article/3819650#google_vignette
9.	אלבניה: גאווה מקומית, כפרים ונהרות	Albania: Local Pride, Villages and Rivers	27.04.2011	https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,73

				40,L-4054687,00.html
10.	ללא מדינה וללא המנון, אבל בדרך להגשמת חלום	Without a state and without an anthem, but on the path to fulfilling a dream	29.07.2012	https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4261499,00.html
11.	100 שנות אלבניה: 18 טון עוגה וחנינה לכבשים	100 years of Albania: 18 tons of cake and amnesty for sheep	28.11.2012	https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4313069,00.html
12.	אלבניה: 700 עובדים בשדות קנאביס אושפזו	Albania: 700 workers in cannabis fields hospitalized	02.11.2013	https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4448396,00.html
13.	למרות סירוב אלבניה, הארגון לאיסור נשק כימי יוציא הנשק משטח סוריה	Despite Albania's refusal, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons will remove the weapons from Syrian territory	16.11.2013	https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4453992,00.html
14.	עכו: חלוץ נבחרת אלבניה חתם בקבוצה	Akko: Albania national team striker signed for the team	01.02.2014	https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4483481,00.html
15.	היסטוריה במעוז הגברים: 5 שרות בנאט"ו	History in the Men's Bastion: 5 NATO femail Ministers	27.02.2014	https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4493155,00.html
16.	הרמת משקולות: זהב לרוסיה ואלבניה	Weightlifting: Gold for Russia and Albania	09.04.2014	https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4508313,00.html
17.	בירת המריחואנה של אירופה בקרב הישרדות	Europe's marijuana capital in a battle for survival	08.06.2014	https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4531632,00.html
18.	איסמעיל קאדרה הוא חתן פרס ירושלים	Ismail Kadare is the winner of the 'Jerusalem Prize'	14.01.2015	https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-

				4614995,00.html#google_vignette
19.	בואו לקרוא: יריד הספרים הבינ"ל נפתח	Let's read: The International Book Fair opens	08.02.2015	https://www.yediot.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4624297,00.html#google_vignette
20.	אלבניה: נתאחד עם קוסובו. סרביה: תופי מלחמה	Albania: We will unite with Kosovo Serbia: War Drums	07.04.2015	https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4645054,00.html
21.	פליטים היינו: נשיא אלבניה התרגש, אני התביישתי	We Were Refugees: The President of Albania was deeply moved, I felt ashamed	19.05.2015	https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4659276,00.html
22.	צפו בקהל הכי טוב ביורו	Look at the best football fans in the Euro	20.06.2016	https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4818071,00.html#google_vignette
23.	ראש ממשלה תרם לאובמה 80 אלף כדי שיצטלמו?	Did a Prime Minister donate 80 thousand to Obama just to take a photo?	05.07.2016	https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4824116,00.html
24.	לחיות כגבר ולזכות בחופש. הבתולות המושבעות	Living as a man and gaining freedom. The sworn virgins	03.08.2016	https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4836998,00.html
25.	אזהרת מסע: "דאעש תכנן לפגוע בנבחרת ישראל"	Travel Warning: ISIS Planned to Attack the Israeli National Team	08.11.2016	https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4876066,00.html
26.	המוח מאחורי ניסיון הפיגוע נגד נבחרת ישראל	The mastermind behind the attempted terrorist attack on the Israeli national team	11.11.2016	https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4877560,00.html
27.	המוסד יירט שיחת סקייפ שהובילה לתפיסת החוליה	The Mossad intercepted a Skype call that led to the capture of the squad	12.11.2016	https://www.ynet.co.il/article/4877798#google_vignette

28.	גם ישראל ברשימה: המדינות המובילות בצריכת קוקאין	Israel is also on the list: the leading countries in cocaine consumption	20.10.2017	https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-5031360,00.html
29.	הבלקנית הנסתרת: 10 סיבות למה אתם ממש חייבים חופשה באלבניה	The Hidden Balkanian: 10 Reasons Why You Really Need a Vacation in Albania	25.04.2018	https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-5240653,00.html
30.	אלבניה סטייל: היעד החדש של העונה	Albania Style: The New Destination of the Season	06.06.2018	https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-5278567,00.html
31.	איפה ישנים באלבניה?	Where to sleep in Albania?	02.07.2018	https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-5297588,00.html#google_vignette
32.	סיפור על פטרייה ורצח: בתוך היער יש מלחמה	A story about fungus and murder: there is a war inside the forest	07.08.2018	https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-5324437,00.html
33.	אלבניה גירשה את השגריר האיראני אחרי שיחה עם ישראל	Albania expels Iranian ambassador after talking to Israel	20.12.2018	https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-5429569,00.html
34.	המדינה שמכורה להימורים מבטיחה להיגמל	The country that is addicted to gambling promises to quit	28.12.2018	https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-5434696,00.html
35.	פאדיחה: המנון שגוי נוגן, השחקנים סירבו לשחק	Scandal: Wrong anthem was played, players refused to play	07.09.2019	https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-5583744,00.html
36.	רעידת אדמה באלבניה: 14 הרוגים ו-600 פצועים	Earthquake in Albania: 14 dead and 600 injured	26.11.2019	https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-5631926,00.html

37.	עשרות הרוגים באלבניה, ישראל עוזרת בחילוץ	Dozens killed in Albania; Israel helps with rescue	27.11.2019	https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-5632805,00.html
38.	אלבניה הרסה את התיאטרון הלאומי, עשרות נעצרו	Albania destroyed the National Theatre, dozens arrested	18.05.2020	https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-5732904,00.html
39.	משחק הפירמידה שכמעט החריב את אלבניה	The pyramid games that almost destroyed Albania	24.06.2020	https://www.ynet.co.il/economy/article/5751711
40.	הישראלית הראשונה במסדר הכבוד האלבני	The First Israeli to receive the Albanian Order of Honor	16.06.2021	https://www.ynet.co.il/activism/article/SJ8PBvdjd
41.	אלבניה: 4 תיירים רוסים נמצאו מתים בסאונה בריזורט יוקרתי	Albania: 4 Russian tourists found dead in sauna at luxury resort	17.10.2021	https://www.ynet.co.il/vacation/flights/article/syjn6ykhk
42.	הכי רחוק מבקינגהאם: בתי מלוכה שלא הכרתם	Farthest from Buckingham: Royal Houses You Didn't Know	18.05.2022	https://www.ynet.co.il/news/article/hjs11nn0lc
43.	אלבניה: הפרלמנט בחר את מפקד הצבא לנשיא המדינה	Albania: Chief of Staff, Bajram Begaj, Elected President by Parliament	04.06.2022	https://www.ynet.co.il/news/article/rjburxyo5#google_vignette
44.	מביש: אוהדי אלבניה קראו בוז במהלך ההמנון	Disgraceful: Albanian fans shouted contempt during the anthem	10.06.2022	https://www.ynet.co.il/sport/article/one412485#google_vignette
45.	כינוס של גולים איראנים באלבניה בוטל בגלל "איומי טרור"	Conference of Iranian Exiles in Albania Cancelled Due to “Terror Threats”	23.07.2022	https://www.ynet.co.il/news/article/s1gtwgkh5#google_vignette
46.	בתו של יועצו הקרוב של פוטין נהרגה בפיצוץ רכב ליד מוסקבה	The daughter of Putin's close advisor was killed in a car explosion near Moscow	20.08.2022	https://www.ynet.co.il/news/article/hjohgx1jo

47.	בגלל מתקפת סייבר: אלבניה מנתקת את היחסים עם איראן	Because of cyberattack: Albania cuts off relations with Iran	07.09.2022	https://www.ynet.co.il/news/article/bkh9xzlxj#google_vignette
48.	אלבניה במכתב חריף לאו"ם: "איראן סיכנה אזרחים וניסתה לשתק אותנו"	Albania in a sharp letter to the UN: Iran endangered citizens and attempted to silence us	09.09.2022	https://www.ynet.co.il/news/article/s1lroyoes
49.	ארה"ב: פוטין שילם בחשאי 300 מיליון דולר למפלגות ברחבי העולם	U.S.: Putin Secretly Paid $300 Million to Parties Worldwide	13.09.2022	www.ynet.co.il/news/article/hytkxs0ls#google_vignette
50.	נבחרת ישראל עלתה לדרג א' בליגת האומות לאחר 1:2 דרמטי על אלבניה	The Israeli national team was promoted to the first tier of the Nations League after a dramatic 2:1 victory over Albania	24.09.2022	https://www.ynet.co.il/sport/israelisoccer/article/hybk7d2bj#google_vignette
51.	איראן תקפה בסייבר, ישראל תעזור: ראש ממשלת אלבניה יגיע היום לארץ.	Iran launched a cyberattack, Israel will help: the Prime Minister of Albania will arrive in Israel today	23.10.2022	www.ynet.co.il/news/article/b1b5jiges#google_vignette
52.	לפיד וראש ממשלת אלבניה סיכמו על שת"פ בתחום הסייבר נגד תקיפות מאיראן	Lapid and Albanian Prime Minister agree on cyber cooperation against attacks from Iran	23.10.2022	https://www.ynet.co.il/news/article/ryuyatgei#google_vignette
53.	נקמות הדם שמאחורי הנופים הקסומים: מסע קודר בהרי האלפים בצפון אלבניה	The blood feuds behind the enchanting landscapes: a gloomy journey through the Alps in northern Albania	18.11.2022	https://www.ynet.co.il/vacation/worldtrips/article/hkggvu9bj#google_vignette
54.	מבוכה דיפלומטית: אלבניה חזרה בה מכוונתה למנות את ניקול ראידמן לקונסולית כבוד	Diplomatic embarrassment: Albania backtracks on intention to appoint Nicole Raidman as honorary consul	27.06.2023	https://pplus.ynet.co.il/rechilut/article/hjrz5uou2
55.	איטליה שילמה את החשבון של תיירים שברחו ממסעדה באלבניה: "הם אידיוטים"	Italy paid the bill of tourists who ran away from a restaurant abroad: 'They are idiots'	19.08.2023	https://www.ynet.co.il/news/article/s1akng033

56.	אלבניה הפתיעה את פולין, 1:2 להולנד על אירלנד	Albania surprised Poland, 2:1 for the Netherlands over Ireland	10.09.2023	https://www.ynet.co.il/sport/article/one444995
57.	אגמים, טרקים ואוכל טעים וזול: "ביקרנו במדינה מפתיעה באירופה"	Lakes, Treks, and Tasty Cheap Food: “We Visited a Surprising Country in Europe"	04.10.2023	https://www.ynet.co.il/vacation/worldtrips/article/hkhlqtdj6
58.	שני ישראלים עצורים באלבניה כבר חצי שנה בגלל קנאביס רפואי	Two Israelis have been detained in Albania for six months over medical cannabis	13.03.2024	https://www.ynet.co.il/news/article/yokra13838580
59.	בהשקעה של כמיליארד דולר: ג'ארד קושנר יהפוך זירות קרב באירופה לאתרי נופש	With an investment of about a billion dollars: Jared Kushner will turn European battlefields into vacation resorts	07.08.2024	https://www.ynet.co.il/economy/article/h1bo83eca
60.	לראשונה ב"כנף ציון": הרצוג יקדם עסקאות ביטחוניות בסרביה ואלבניה	For the first time in “Wing of Zion”, Herzog will promote Security deals in Serbia and Albania	10.09.2024	https://www.ynet.co.il/news/article/hyscora3a
61.	ראש ממשלת אלבניה להרצוג: נפתח לשכת מסחר בירושלים	Albanian Prime Minister to Herzog: We will open a Chamber of Commerce in Jerusalem	12.09.2024 Israel Hayom	https://www.israelhayom.co.il/news/geopolitics/article/16434076?heyday_src=heyday_search
62.	בהסכם שנוי במחלוקת: איטליה שולחת מבקשי מקלט לאלבניה, בדרך לגירוש	In a controversial agreement, Italy sends asylum seekers to Albania, on their way to deportation	14.10.2024	https://www.ynet.co.il/news/article/rkjwstqkjx
63.	כתב אישום נגד תומך דאעש בארה"ב: "סייע לארגון טרור - וקרא לפגוע בישראלים"	Indictment against ISIS supporter in the US: "He aided a terrorist organization - and called for harming Israelis”	23.11.2024	https://www.ynet.co.il/news/article/hja4cp0fje

Annex 3.: List of Articles in IRNA (2012-2022)

No.	Title in Persian	Title in English	Date	Link
1.	نمايشگاه عكس ايران در آلباني افتتاح شد	Photo Exhibition of Iran opens in Albania	26/01/2012	https://irna.ir/x7mFJK
2.	تحريم ها سكوي جهش ايران به سوي توسعه كشور است	Sanctions are the silence of Iran's leap towards the country's development	09/02/2012	https://irna.ir/x7mT5t
3.	دو سرباز آلبانيايي در افغانستان كشته و زخمي شدند	Two Albanian soldiers killed and wounded in Afghanistan	21/02/2012	https://irna.ir/x7n3JS
4.	آلباني به اعزام نيروي نظامي به افغانستان ادامه مي دهد	Albania continues to deploy troops to Afghanistan	22/02/2012	https://irna.ir/x7n4yZ
5.	رییس جمهوری آینده آلبانی انتخاب شد	Albania's new president elected	24/06/2012	https://irna.ir/xhVxcy
6.	نخست وزير آلباني كابينه خود را ترميم كرد	The Prime Minister of Albania reshuffled his cabinet	24/06/2012	https://irna.ir/xhVGp4
7.	ناوشكن آمريكايي در بندر دراچ آلباني لنگر انداخت	US destroyer docks at the port of Durrës, Albania	14/07/2012	https://irna.ir/xhVVZq
8.	بازيكن اهل آلباني به تيم فوتبال سپاهان پيوست	Albanian player joins Sepahan football team	23/07/2012	https://irna.ir/xhW48b
9.	فيلم ايراني 'ديليت' به جشنواره فيري آلباني راه يافت	Iranian film ' Delete ' arrives at The Fieri Albanian Festival	18/09/2012	https://irna.ir/xhWMn2
10.	يك زنداني سياسي پيشين آلباني خود را به آتش كشيد	An Albanian ex-political prisoner set himself on fire	11/10/2012	https://irna.ir/xhX6sk
11.	صربستاني ها در مخالفت با سفر كلينتون به بلگراد تظاهرات كردند	Serbians rally against Clinton's visit to Belgrade	31/10/2012	https://irna.ir/xhXkZx
12.	مراسم عزاداري عاشوراي حسيني در تيرانا برگزار شد	Ashura Hussaini's mourning ceremony was held in Tirana	26/11/2012	https://irna.ir/xhXFgs
13.	آيين شام غريبان شهداي كربلا در تيرانا برگزار شد	The supper of the martyrs of Karabla was held in Tirana	27/11/2012	https://irna.ir/xhXFjy

14.	آلباني، چهار نيروگاه برق آبي خود را به سرمايه داران خارجي فروخت	Albania sells four hydroelectric power plantes to foreign investors	17/01/2013	https://irna.ir/xhYgQZ
15.	مراسم روز ملي جمهوري اسلامي ايران در آلباني برگزار شد	National Day of the Islamic Republic of Iran held in Albania	09/02/2013	https://irna.ir/xhYyzr
16.	مرزهاي منطقه بالكان تغيير نخواهند كرد	The borders of the Balkan region will not be changed	23/02/2013	https://irna.ir/xhYJRc
17.	سيل در آلباني صدها خانواده را از خانه هايشان بيرون راند	Floods in Albania drove hundreds of families from their homes	15/03/2013	https://irna.ir/xhYYg7
18.	نگاهي به انتخابات پارلماني البانی براساس ساختار جديد مجلس اين كشور	A look at Albania's parliamentary elections based on the new structure of the country's parliament	21/06/2013	https://irna.ir/xj22gG
19.	سومين گروه منافقين از عراق به آلباني انتقال يافتند	Third group of Hypocrites (MEKs) transferred from Iraq to Albania	22/06/2013	https://irna.ir/xj22NQ
20.	انتخابات پارلماني آلباني آغاز شد - آيا بن بست سياسي پايان مي يابد؟	Albania’s parliamentary elections begin - will the political deadlock end?	23/06/2013	https://irna.ir/xj235D
21.	تيراندازي رقباي انتخاباتي در آلباني چهار كشته و مجروح بر جاي گذاشت	A shooting of electoral rivals in Albania left one dead and three wounded	23/06/2013	https://irna.ir/xj23c7
22.	ائتلاف حاكم و اپوزيسيون آلباني هر يك خود را پيروز انتخابات خواندند	The ruling coalition and the Opposition of Alban each called themselves the victory of the elections	24/06/2013	https://irna.ir/xj23vd
23.	پيشتازي حزب مخالف سوسياليست در انتخابات آلباني	The opposition Socialist Party's leading in the Albania elections	24/06/2013	https://irna.ir/xj23H3
24.	حزب سوسياليست آلباني، نخست وزير اين كشور را به قبول شكست در انتخابات فراخواند	Albania's Socialist Party calls on prime minister to accept defeat in elections	24/06/2013	https://irna.ir/xj23Hj

25.	انتخابات پارلماني و سرنوشت اروپايي آلباني	Parliamentary elections and Albania's European destiny	25/06/2013	https://irna.ir/xj244W
26.	نخست وزير آلباني شكست در انتخابات پارلماني را پذيرفت	Albanian Prime Minister Admits Defeat in Parliamentary Elections	27/06/2013	https://irna.ir/xj25d3
27.	پيام تبريک دکتر جهانگيری به نخست وزير آلبانی	Dr. Jahangiri's congratulatory message to the Prime Minister of Albania	04/09/2013	https://irna.ir/xjzKQH
28.	رييس جمهور آلباني رهبر حزب سوسياليست را براي تشكيل دولت مامور كرد	The President of Albania appointed the leader of the Socialist Party to form a government	10/09/2013	https://irna.ir/xj2T5h
29.	پارلمان آلباني به نخست وزير جديد اين كشور راي اعتماد داد	Albania’s parliament gave the vote of confidence to the country’s new prime minister	15/09/2013	https://irna.ir/xj2WRy
30.	تعامل بين مردم، پايه هاي دوستي ايران و آلباني را مستحكم تر مي كند	The interaction between the people makes the foundations of Iran's and Albania's friends stronger	02/10/2013	https://irna.ir/xj39vY
31.	پليس آلباني بيش از 1000 اثر هنري مسروقه را كشف و ضبط كرد	Albania police discovered and confiscated more than 1,000 stolen artworks	09/10/2013	https://irna.ir/xj3fVM
32.	كنفرانس منطقه اي مبارزه با فساد مالي در آلباني برگزار شد	Regional anti-corruption conference held in Albania	10/10/2013	https://irna.ir/xj3gpN
33.	روستايي در آلباني سالانه 900 تن مواد مخدر توليد مي كند	A village in Albania produces 900 tonnes of drugs a year	18/10/2013	https://irna.ir/xj3mnx
34.	رسانه ها در توسعه روابط دوستانه بين ملت ها و دولت ها نقشي مهم دارند	Medias play an important role in developing friendly relations between nations and governments	31/10/2013	https://irna.ir/xj3wDk
35.	شهروندان آلباني به خاطر امحاي سلاح هاي شيميايي	Albanian citizens protest against the danger of Syrian	14/11/2013	https://irna.ir/xj3H7G

	سوريه تظاهرات كردند	chemical weapons destruction		
36.	آلباني با انهدام تسليحات شيميايي سوريه در اين كشور مخالفت كرد	Albania opposes the destruction of Syria's chemical weapons in the country	16/11/2013	https://irna.ir/xj3HN4
37.	پليس آلباني بيش از 2 تن مواد مخدر كشف و ضبط كرد	Albanian police seized more than 2 tones drugs	18/11/2013	https://irna.ir/xj3Krm
38.	آلباني حمله تروريستي به سفارت ايران در بيروت را محكوم كرد	Albania condemns terrorist attack on Iranian embassy in Beirut	21/11/2013	https://irna.ir/xj3Mv5
39.	خبرگزاري آلباني از همكاري رسانه اي با ايرنا استقبال كرد	Albanian News Agency welcomes media cooperation with IRNA	26/11/2013	https://irna.ir/xj3RcT
40.	پيام تبريک رييس جمهور به مناسبت روز ملی آلبانی	President's congratulatory message on Albania's National Day	28/11/2013	https://irna.ir/xjzLJJ
41.	سفير ايران در آلباني: ايران به دنبال دستيابي به سلاح هسته اي نيست	Iran's ambassador to Albania: Iran is not looking for a nuclear weapon	02/12/2013	https://irna.ir/xj3W3f
42.	آلبانی:رهیافت جدید ایران در حل مساله هسته ای امیدوار کننده است	Albania: Iran's new approach to resolving the nuclear issue is promising	06/12/2013	https://irna.ir/xj3Yp9
43.	كشف بمب در زير خودروي مقام ارشد آلباني	Bomb discovered under the vehicle of senior Albania official	13/12/2013	https://irna.ir/xj44SN
44.	چاپ تقويم همراه با مناسبت هاي مذهبي اهل بيت (ع) در آلباني	Printing a calendar featuring the religious occasions of the Ahl al-Bayt in Albania	05/01/2014	https://irna.ir/xj4kMc
45.	عضوگیری القاعده در اروپا از طریق فیسبوک و یوتوب برای فعالیت‌های تروریستی	Al-Qaeda recruits in Europe through Facebook and YouTube for terrorist activities	24/02/2014	https://irna.ir/xj4zFs
46.	رییس جمهوری در دیدارِ سفیراکردیته جدید آلبانی در ایران: امیدوارم شاهد روابط	President of the Republic in the meeting with the new ambassador of Albania: I hope we will see	24/02/2014	https://irna.ir/xjzMHC

	نزدیکتری بین ایران و آلبانی باشیم	closer relations between Iran and Albania		
47.	تبيين و بررسي اشعار ايراني در آلباني	Explaining and Studying Iranian Poems in Albania	03/01/2015	https://irna.ir/xj8jTq
48.	تيم فوتبال اميد ايران مقابل آلباني به پيروزي رسيد	Iran's 'Hope' football team wins against Albania	20/01/2015	https://irna.ir/xj8wQm
49.	انفجار دو بمب پایتخت آلبانی را لرزاند	Two bomb blasts shake Albania's capital	10/02/2015	https://irna.ir/xj8M3Z
50.	يك ميليون شهروند آلباني در طي 25 سال كشورشان را ترك كردند	A million Albanian citizens have left their country in 25 years	27/02/2015	https://irna.ir/xj8Wvr
51.	تجلیل از شهرام ناظری در آلبانی	Celebrating Shahram Nazeri in Albania	08/03/2015	https://irna.ir/xj92Zx
52.	قهرمان سال جهان در میان سه وزنه بردار محروم آلبانی	World Champion of the Year among three banned Albanian weightlifters	04/04/2015	https://irna.ir/xj9fzc
53.	رئیس جمعیت مسلمانان آلبانی: امام خمینی(ره)عامل گرایش به اسلام بود	Head of the Albanian Muslim Community: Imam Khomeini (RA) was the factor behind the trend towards Islam	02/06/2015	https://irna.ir/xj9SqM
54.	قتل دو گردشگر چك در آلباني	Two Czech tourists murdered in Albania	04/07/2015	https://irna.ir/xjbcd9
55.	اتوبوس فوتباليست هاي تيم ملي صربستان در آلباني سنگ باران شد	Serbian national team football bus hit with stones in Albania	07/10/2015	https://irna.ir/xjcd35
56.	تظاهرات ضد دولتی در آلبانی با هدف تغییرات سیاسی	Anti-government demonstrations in Albania aimed at political change	22/12/2015	https://irna.ir/xjd47Y
57.	جان كري' براي ' ترغيب آلباني به انجام اصلاحات قضائي وارد تيرانا شد	John Kerry arrived in Tirana to encourage Albania to carry out judicial reforms	14/02/2016	https://irna.ir/xjdH9D

58.	رئیس رادیووتلویزیون آلبانی:ایرنا منبع دریافت خبر ما از کل منطقه خلیج فارس است	The Albanian Radio Television director: IRNA is the source of news from the Persian Gulf region	27/02/2016	https://irna.ir/xjdQV2
59.	ایرنا و رادیو و تلویزیون آلبانی همکاریهای خود را گسترش می دهند	IRNA and Albanian Radio Television expand cooperation	27/02/2016	https://irna.ir/xjdR2g
60.	دعوت آلبانی از بخش خصوصی ایران برای تولید مشترك و صادرات به بازار اروپا	Albania invites Iran's private sector to share production and exports to European market	03/03/2016	https://irna.ir/xjdThZ
61.	آلبانی جت های نظامی خود را به مزایده می گذارد	Albania's government is auctioning its old fighter jets for sale starting at €8,000.	12/03/2016	https://irna.ir/xjdZ5F
62.	9 آلبانیایی به اتهام جذب نیرو برای گروه های ترویستی زندانی شدند	9 Albanians jailed for recruiting terrorist groups	05/05/2016	https://irna.ir/xjfwYM
63.	مرکز ناتو در آلباني آغاز به کار مي کند	NATO center to start in Albania	14/05/2016	https://irna.ir/xjfCP
64.	يك زن در بمب گذاری دفتر حزب جمهوری اسلامی دست داشته است	A woman was involved in the bombing of the Office of the Islamic Republic Party	16/05/2016	https://irna.ir/xjfDTQ
65.	به دنبال استرداد عوامل انفجار دفتر حزب جمهوری هستیم	We seek the extradition of the perpetrators of the Republican Party office explosion	17/05/2016	https://irna.ir/xjfFhk
66.	تیم فوتبال قطر به آلباني باخت	Qatari team loses to Albania	30/05/2016	https://irna.ir/xjfNqq
67.	موگرینی خواستار اصلاحات قضایی در آلبانی شد	Mogherini calls for judicial reform in Albania	07/06/2016	https://irna.ir/xjfS3N
68.	رهبران سياسي آلباني درباره پيش نويس اصلاحات قضايي به توافق نرسيدند	Albania's political leaders fail to agree on drafting judicial reforms	08/06/2016	https://irna.ir/xjfSL7
69.	يورو 2016؛ شكست آلباني 10 نفره برابر سوئيس	Euro 2016: Defeat of Albania 1-0 against Switzerland	12/06/2016	https://irna.ir/xjfVJt

70.	وزير خارجه يونان: عده اي درصدد ايجاد اختلال ميان ما و آلباني هستند	Greek foreign minister: Some are trying to disrupt us and Albania	13/06/2016	https://irna.ir/xjfW9w
71.	نخستين پيروزی آلبانی در يورو به دست آمد	Albania's first Euro win	21/06/2016	https://irna.ir/xjfZXp
72.	پليس آلباني 19 مهاجر غير قانوني را بازداشت كرد	Albanian police arrested 19 illegal immigrants	24/07/2016	https://irna.ir/xjgp5M
73.	3 نفر در حادثه آتش سوزي يك بيمارستان آمريكايي در آلباني كشته شدند	Three people killed in a fire at an American hospital in Albania	28/07/2016	https://irna.ir/xjgqJK
74.	تازه ترين جزييات اخراج منافقين از بغداد/ آلمان و آلبانی مقصد اخراجی ها	The latest details of the expulsion of the Hypocrites (MEK) from Baghdad/ Germany and Albania the destination of the deportees	10/09/2016	https://irna.ir/xjgTVP
75.	رئيس جمهوری آلبانی :برای مبادلات اقتصادی و فرهنگی با ايران ارزش زيادی قائل هستم	The President of Albania: I value economic and cultural exchanges with Iran	19/10/2016	https://irna.ir/xjhjKd
76.	رژيم صهيونيستي به شهروندانش براي سفر به آلباني هشدار داد	The Zionist regime warned its citizens to travel to Albania	10/11/2016	https://irna.ir/xjhyJK
77.	رئيس پارلمان آلبانی: ايران جايگاه تاريخی و تمدنی بزرگ دارد	Albania's parliament speaker: Iran has a great historical and civilizational status	14/11/2016	https://irna.ir/xjhBK7
78.	آلباني سلاح كلاشنيكف را كنار مي گذارد	Albania lays down Kalashnikov weapon	22/11/2016	https://irna.ir/xjhHvV
79.	نخست وزير آلباني: اختلافات با يونان بايد با گفت و گو حل شوند	Albania’s Prime Minister: Disputes with Greece must be resolved with dialogue	24/11/2016	https://irna.ir/xjhJz6

80.	مدیرعامل انجمن نجات ایران: فعالیت کنونی گروهك منافقین جذب جاسوس است	Managing director of Iran’s Nejat Society: The Hypocrites’ Group (MEK’s) current activity is recruiting spies	13/12/2016	https://irna.ir/xjhVzb
81.	مراسم جشن ولادت رسول مکرم اسلام (ص) و امام جعفر صادق (ع) در تیرانا	The Ceremony of The Birth of the Prophet (pbuh) and Imam Xha'far al-Sadiq in Tirana	18/12/2016	https://irna.ir/xjhY5g
82.	مراسم یادبود مرحوم آیت الله هاشمي رفسنجاني در آلباني برگزار شد	The memorial ceremony of the late Ayatollah Hashemi Rafsanjani was held in Albania	13/01/2017	https://irna.ir/xjjggQ
83.	رییس اتاق ایران: توافق های مالیاتی به توسعه مناسبات تهران- تیرانا شتاب می دهد	Iran's Chamber of Commerce president: Tax agreements accelerate development of Tehran-Tirana relations	15/01/2017	https://irna.ir/xjjhst
84.	وزیرامورخارجه آلبانی:مصمم به رفع تمام موانع تجاری با ایران هستیم	Albania's Foreign Minister: We are determined to remove all trade barriers with Iran	15/01/2017	https://irna.ir/xjjhtw
85.	وزیر خارجه آلباني: شرایط براي تعمیق روابط با جمهوري اسلامي ایران فراهم شده است	Minister of Foreign Affairs of Albania: Conditions have been provided for the strengthening of relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran	15/01/2017	https://irna.ir/xjjhD6
86.	روحانی: دوره پسابرجام فرصت مناسبی برای تعمیق همکاری های ایران و آلبانی است	Rouhani: The post-JCPOA period is an appropriate opportunity to deepen cooperation between Iran and Albania	16/01/2017	https://irna.ir/xjjhT4
87.	در گفت و گو با ایرنا وزیر خارجه آلبانی: بخش بانکی کشور ما در پی ارتباط با ایران است	In an interview with IRNA, Albania’s foreign minister: Our country’s banking sector is seeking ties with Iran	16/01/2017	https://irna.ir/xjjhZv

88.	معاون رئيس‌جمهوري در ديدار با وزير خارجه آلباني: دوران پسا برجام، آماده ميزباني از سرمايه‌گذاران آلباني هستيم	Vice President meets with Albanian Foreign Minister: In the post-JCPOA era, we're ready to host Albanian investors	16/01/2017	https://irna.ir/xjjj8y
89.	سفر 5 رئیس دولت از منطقه بالکان به ایران، دستاورد سیاسی برجام است	5 heads of state travel from Balkan region to Iran, political achievement of JCPOA	18/01/2017	https://irna.ir/xjjkhY
90.	يك فعال اسلامی آلبانی: حکومت ایران همیشه حامی مسلمانان بوده است	Albanian Islamic activist: Iran's government has always been a supporter of Muslims	25/01/2017	https://irna.ir/xjjqbF
91.	برگزاري مراسم يادبود شهداي آتش نشان در مدرسه ايراني در آلباني	Memorial ceremony for firefighter martyrs at Iranian school in Albania	27/01/2017	https://irna.ir/xjjrpL
92.	رئیس انجمن دوستی ایران و آلبانی: نقش برجام در توسعه روابط تهران و تیرانا ارزشمند است	The President of the Friendship Association of Iran and Albania: The role of the JCPOA in the development of Tehran-Tirana relations is valuable	29/01/2017	https://irna.ir/xjjsjh
93.	سفير ايران در آلباني: آمريكا نمي تواند به تعهدات خود در قبال برجام عمل نكند	Iran's Ambassador to Albania: America cannot fail to fulfill its obligations to the JCPOA	07/02/2017	https://irna.ir/xjjwJc
94.	افق‌هاي خوبي در زمينه توسعه همكاري‌ها ميان ايران و آلباني وجود دارد	There are good prospects for developing cooperation between Iran and Albania	09/02/2017	https://irna.ir/xjjzN8
95.	برگزاری جشن سالروز پیروزی انقلاب اسلامی در آلبانی	Celebration of Islamic Revolution victory anniversary in Albania	12/02/2017	https://irna.ir/xjjCFk
96.	اجرای موسیقی اصیل ایرانی در آلبانی	Original Iranian Music in Albania	12/02/2017	https://irna.ir/xjjD95

97.	بزرگداشت شاعر برجسته کشور آلباني در تهران	Albania's distinguished poet in Tehran	14/02/2017	https://irna.ir/xjjF5t
98.	تبادل مستقیم اخبار ایران و آلبانی با همکاری ایرنا و آتا	Direct exchange of news between Iran and Albania with IRNA and ATA cooperation	21/02/2017	https://irna.ir/xjjJR9
99.	ايران و آلباني همكاري‌هاي خبري خود را گسترش مي‌دهند	Iran and Albania expand their news cooperation	21/02/2017	https://irna.ir/xjjK36
100.	مراسم گرامیداشت ولادت حضرت فاطمه (س) در آلبانی برگزار شد	A ceremony to commemorate the birth of Hazrat Fatima was held in Albania	20/03/2017	https://irna.ir/xjjYZ9
101.	بكتاشي هاي آلباني همزمان با دومين روز بهارولادت حضرت علي (ع) را جشن گرفتند	Albanian Bektashis celebrated the birth of Imam Ali (AS) at the same time with the second day of spring	23/03/2017	https://irna.ir/xjk24p
102.	آلباني قصد دارد براي مبارزه با داعش به عراق نيرو اعزام مي كند	Albania plans to send troops to Iraq to fight ISIS	30/03/2017	https://irna.ir/xjjP2f
103.	بكتاشيان آلباني در آستانه ميلاد حضرت علي (ع) مراسم مولودي خواني اجرا كردند	The Albanian Bektashis performed a Mevlud singing ceremony on the eve of The Birth of Hazrat Ali	04/04/2017	https://irna.ir/xjk6gw
104.	خشکسالی آلبانی را در تامین 80 درصد برق خود به خارج متکی کرد	Drought leaves Albania reliant on foreign sources for 80 percent of its electricity	09/04/2017	https://irna.ir/xjmk9g
105.	اپوزيسيون آلباني با برگزاري تظاهرات ضددولتي نخست وزير را به استعفا فرا خواند	Albanian opposition calls on prime minister to resign by holding anti-government demonstrations	24/04/2017	https://irna.ir/xjkhNP
106.	بازدید شهرداران کشورهای اسلامی از آرامگاه فردوسی	Mayors of Islamic Countries Visit Ferdowsi's Tomb	25/04/2017	https://irna.ir/xjkj29
107.	رئیس جمهوری جدید آلبانی انتخاب شد	Albania's new President elected	30/04/2017	https://irna.ir/xjkkVr

108.	تظاهرات ضددولتی در آلبانی	Anti-government demonstrations in Albania	14/05/2017	https://irna.ir/xjkvvK
109.	حضور ایرانیان مقیم آلبانی در انتخابات ریاست جمهوری	Iranians living in Albania participate in presidential elections	19/05/2017	https://irna.ir/xjkyXs
110.	برگزاري مراسم روز جهاني قدس در تيرانا آلباني	World Quds Day ceremony held in Tirana Albania	24/06/2017	https://irna.ir/xjkTjD
111.	مردم آلبانی برای انتخاب نمایندگان مجلس به پای صندوق های رای می روند	Albanians go to the polls to elect MPs	25/06/2017	https://irna.ir/xjkTHy
112.	آغاز نهمين انتخابات پارلماني آلباني پس از برقراري نظام چندحزبي	Albania's 9th parliamentary elections after the establishment of a multi-party system begin	25/06/2017	https://irna.ir/xjkV4q
113.	احتمال پيروزي حزب حاكم سوسياليست در انتخابات پارلماني آلباني	The possibility of the Socialist Ruling Party winning Albania’s parliamentary elections	26/06/2017	https://irna.ir/xjkVbK
114.	حزب حاکم سوسیالیست در انتخابات پارلمانی آلبانی پیروز شد	Socialist ruling party wins Albania parliamentary elections	26/06/2017	https://irna.ir/xjkVm5
115.	اعتراض یونان به آلباني	Greece protests against Albania	27/07/2017	https://irna.ir/xjmc7t
116.	هیئت بکتاشیون آلباني عازم ایران شد	Albania's Bektashi delegation leaves for Iran	01/08/2017	https://irna.ir/xjmfGY
117.	سراسقف كليساي ارتدكس آلباني از تبادلات مذهبي و فرهنگي بين مسيحيان آلباني و ايراني استقبال كرد	The Archbishop of Albanian Orthodox Church welcomes religious and cultural exchanges between Albanian and Iranian Christians	23/08/2017	https://irna.ir/xjmsFN
118.	آلباني، تدابير امنيتي براي جلوگيري از حملات تروريستي	Albania has increased security measures to prevent possible terrorist attacks	25/08/2017	https://irna.ir/xjmtqv

	احتمالي را افزايش داد			
119.	نماز عيد قربان در آلباني برگزار شد	Eid al-Adha prayers were held in Albania	01/09/2017	https://irna.ir/xjmxRV
120.	مراسم جشن عيد سعيد غدير خم در آلبانی برگزار شد	Eid Al-Ghadir Khumm celebration held in Albania	10/09/2017	https://irna.ir/xjmCck
121.	مراسم بزرگداشت حماسه عاشوراي حسيني در آلباني برگزار شد	A commemoration ceremony for the Epic of Ashura Hussaini was held in Albania	01/10/2017	https://irna.ir/xjmNyx
122.	نمايشگاه نقاشي هنرمندان ايراني درشهر فير آلباني افتتاح شد	Iranian artists' painting exhibition opens in The City of Fier, Albania	15/10/2017	https://irna.ir/xjmVmR
123.	عكاسان جوان شيرازي در نمايشگاه خطوط ناتمام آلباني شركت كردند	Young Shirazi's photografers attend Albania's unfinished lines exhibition	15/10/2017	https://irna.ir/xjmVB6
124.	عبور از روزنامه‌نگاري سنتي و ورود به عصر ديجيتال؛ موانع و چالش‌ها	Passing traditional journalism and entering the digital age, obstacles and challenges	29/10/2017	https://irna.ir/xjn48T
125.	روزنامه نگار آلبانيايی : ايران ابرقدرت فرهنگی است	Albanian journalist: Iran is a cultural superpower	31/10/2017	https://irna.ir/xjn4ZL
126.	برپايي نمايشگاه نقاشي هنرمندان ايراني در آلباني	Iranian Artists Painting Exhibition held in Albania	02/11/2017	https://irna.ir/xjn6b2
127.	استقبال آلبانيايي ها از انتشار مجله فرهنگي و علمي ايران در تيرانا	Albanians welcome the publication of Iranian Scientific and Cultural Journal in Tirana	10/11/2017	https://irna.ir/xjn9Hm
128.	سوگواري پايان ماه صفر و جانباختگان زلزله غرب ايران در آلباني	Mourning the end of the month ‘Sefer’ and the victims of the earthquake of west Iran in Albania	17/11/2017	https://irna.ir/xjndYb
129.	استقبال از همايش ايران شناسي در آلباني	Welcoming The Conference of Iranology in Albania	01/12/2017	https://irna.ir/xjnnt7
130.	نخست وزير آلباني: اكنون كه بالكان غربي در	Prime Minister of Albania: Now that the West Balkan is in good	06/12/2017	https://irna.ir/xjnqQS

	وضعيت خوبي قرار دارد، اتحاديه اروپا با مشكل مواجه است	shape, the EU is facing a problem		
131.	نمايندگان مجلس در آلباني به سوي نخست وزير كفش پرتاب كردند	MPs in Albania threw shoes at the prime minister	19/12/2017	https://irna.ir/xjnxrN
132.	قرارداد بازيكن آلبانيايي سپاهان در هيات فوتبال ثبت شد	Sepahan's Albanian player contract was registered on the football board	30/12/2017	https://irna.ir/xjnF4D
133.	آيين گراميداشت آغاز دهه فجر انقلاب اسلامي در آلباني برگزار شد	The ceremony to commemorate the beginning of the decade of the Islamic Revolution was held in Albania	02/02/2018	https://irna.ir/xjnWP6
134.	حضور چشمگیرشخصیت های آلبانیایی در بزرگداشت سالگرد پیروزی انقلاب اسلامی ایران در تیرانا	Significant presence of Albanian personalities in the commemoration of the anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution of Iran in Tirana	10/02/2018	https://irna.ir/xjp2SK
135.	80 درصد خط انتقال گاز تاپ خاك يونان و آلباني اجرا شد	80% of Greece and Albania's top-soil gas transmission line was implemented	13/02/2018	https://irna.ir/xjp4hk
136.	برگزاري مراسم شب شعر 'محمد نعيم فراشري' در آلباني	" Mohammad Naim Frasheri" Poetry Night in Albania	14/02/2018	https://irna.ir/xjp4WV
137.	نگاهی به روند اوضاع سیاسی در منطقه بالکان	A look at the political situation in Balkan region	04/03/2018	https://irna.ir/xjpdXK
138.	سيل برخی نقاط آلباني را فرا گرفت	Floods sweep some parts of Albania	06/03/2018	https://irna.ir/xjpfFn
139.	دستگيري 12 مقام آلباني به جرم دست داشتن در فساد مالي	12 Albanian officials arrested for involvement in financial corruption	17/03/2018	https://irna.ir/xjpmM6
140.	روسیه 59 دیپلمات غربی را اخراج کرد	Russia expels 59 Western diplomats	30/03/2018	https://irna.ir/xjprKt
141.	مخالفان دولت آلبانی خواستار	Albania government opposition calls for PM's resignation	05/04/2018	https://irna.ir/xjptjS

	استعفای نخست وزیر شدند			
142.	ایران و آلبانی راه های گسترش روابط اقتصادی را بررسی کردند	Iran and Albania explore ways to expand economic ties	24/04/2018	https://irna.ir/xjpCSm
143.	رییس اتاق ایران: آلباني دروازه ورود ایران به حوزه بالکان است	Iranian chamber’s president: Albania is Iran's gateway to the Balkan area	25/04/2018	https://irna.ir/xjpDb3
144.	نشست مشترك تجاري ايران و آلباني در تيرانا برگزار شد	Iran-Albania joint business meeting held in Tirana	25/04/2018	https://irna.ir/xjpDkF
145.	بالکان میدان رویارویی روسیه و غرب	Balkan arena of Russian-Western confrontation	28/04/2018	https://irna.ir/xjpFbY
146.	مخالفين دولت آلباني خواستار استعفاي نخست وزير شدند	Albanian government opponents demand resignation of prime minister	27/05/2018	https://irna.ir/xjpSrG
147.	مراسم شعر خوانی و نقالی فارسی سرای آلبانی برگزار شد	Albania's Poetry Reading and Naqqali Persian Saray Held	08/06/2018	https://irna.ir/xjpXGP
148.	آمریکا و اسرائیل برای اغتشاش در ایران کارگروه تشکیل دادند	The United States and Israel have formed a working group to incite unrest in Iran	04/07/2018	https://irna.ir/xjqb8p
149.	رسانه ها: ظریف خواستار بسته شدن حسابهای جعلی در توییتر شد	Media: Zarif calls for Twitter to close fake accounts	17/09/2018	https://irna.ir/xjqNTR
150.	اعتراض گسترده دانشجويان خشمگين در آلباني	Protests by angry students in Albania	11/12/2018	https://irna.ir/xjrCDy
151.	آلبانی قربانی سناریو سازی آمریکا و رژیم صهیونیستی شد	Foreign Ministry Spokesperson: Albania falls victim to US scenario and Zionist regime	20/12/2018	https://irna.ir/xjrHQz
152.	قاسمی: اقدام دولت آلبانی غیر قابل قبول و محکوم است	Qasemi: Albania government's action is unacceptable and condemned	20/12/2018	https://irna.ir/xjrHSv

153.	ترامپ از اقدام ضد ایراني آلباني تشکر کرد	Trump thanks Albania's anti-Iran action	20/12/2018	https://irna.ir/xjrHX9
154.	آلبانی در ایران سفارت و یا هیچگونه دفتری ندارد	Albania has no embassy or no office in Iran	22/12/2018	https://irna.ir/xjrJyQ
155.	پمپئو اقدام آلباني در اخراج دیپلمات ایراني را ستود	Pompeo praises Albania's move to expel Iranian diplomats	22/12/2018	https://irna.ir/xjrJMC
156.	ذوق زدگی آل سعود از اخراج دیپلمات ایرانی در آلبانی	Al-Saud's enthusiasm over expulsion of Iranian diplomat in Albania	22/12/2018	https://irna.ir/xjrJMV
157.	در گفت و گوی اختصاصی با ایرنا; روایت سفیر ایران از توطئه در آلبانی برای لطمه به روابط تهران و اروپا	In an exclusive interview with IRNA; Iran's ambassador narrates conspiracy in Albania to damage Tehran-Europe relations	02/01/2019	https://irna.ir/xjrQ3S
158.	گزارش رسانه های اسپانیایی از ارتباط منافقین و حزب افراطی این کشور	Spanish media report on the connection between the MKO and this country's extremist party	19/01/2019	https://irna.ir/xjrZk2
159.	عملیات توئیتری منافقین برای نشست ورشو	The Hypocrites' (MEK's) Twitter operation for the Warsaw summit	21/01/2019	https://irna.ir/xjs284
160.	روایت تکان دهنده اشپیگل از شکنجه روحی اعضای منافقین در کمپ آلبانی	Spiegel's shocking account of the mental torture of the members of the MKO in Camp Albania	16/02/2019	https://irna.ir/xjshY5
161.	تظاهرات ضدو دولتي در آلباني	Anti-government demonstrations in Albania	22/03/2019	https://irna.ir/xjsDr4
162.	آلباني ها خواستار استعفاي نخست وزير شدند	Albanians have called for the Prime Minister to resign	04/04/2019	https://irna.ir/xjsKZT
163.	"منافقین" گروهکی منفور و منقرض	"Hypocrites" an unpopular and extinct group	04/04/2019	https://irna.ir/xjsL68

164.	سرقت 2.5 میلیون یورو از هواپیمای اتریشی در آلبانی	Theft of 2.5 million euros from Austrian plane in Albania	10/04/2019	https://irna.ir/xjsPwq
165.	هرم تیرانا زندگي دوباره مي يابد	The Pyramid of Tirana will find life again	05/05/2019	https://irna.ir/xjt5xq
166.	رئیس جمهوری آلبانی انتخابات آتی را لغو کرد	Albania's President cancels upcoming elections	09/06/2019	https://irna.ir/xjtrPS
167.	معترضان در آلبانی بار دیگر خواستار برکناری نخست وزیر شدند	Protesters in Albania again call for PM's ouster	09/07/2019	https://irna.ir/xjtNwf
168.	سفیر ایران در لندن: منافقان بدنبال القای بی اعتمادی مردم به مسوولان هستند	Iran's ambassador to London: Hypocrites seek to instill people's distrust of officials	10/07/2019	https://irna.ir/xjtsC4
169.	جلادهای هشتگ ساز	Hashtag Maker Executioners	11/07/2019	https://irna.ir/xjtPLR
170.	چه کسی بازنده جنگ سایبری است؟	Who is the loser of cyberwarfare?	29/09/2019	https://irna.ir/xjvJdF
171.	هشدار یونکر به فرانسه درباره کارشکنی عضویت آلبانی و مقدونیه شمالی در اتحادیه اروپا	Juncker warns France against sabotaging Albania and Northern Macedonia's membership in EU	21/10/2019	https://irna.ir/xjvXWk
172.	رسانه‌ها، ماهیت پلید منافقین را تبیین کنند	Media outlets explain the filthy nature of the MKO	07/11/2019	https://irna.ir/xjw87v
173.	سردار جلالی: عدم مدیریت درست شبکه‌های اجتماعی باعث قطعی اینترنت شد	General Jalali: Lack of proper management of social networks caused internet outages	30/11/2019	https://irna.ir/xjwp7t
174.	زلزله آلبانی ۵۰ کشته بر جاگذاشت	Albania earthquake kills 50	30/11/2019	https://irna.ir/xjwpsx
175.	زلزله مقر منافقین را در آلبانی تخریب کرد	Earthquake destroys “Hypocrites” (MKO) headquarters in Albania	02/12/2019	https://irna.ir/xjwq9J
176.	اقدام غیر دیپلماتیک آلبانی در قبال دیپلمات‌های ایران	Albania's non-diplomatic action against Iranian diplomats	16/01/2020	https://irna.ir/xjwTNf

177.	اجلاس ورشو، شکست آمریکا را رقم خواهد زد	Warsaw summit will mark U.S. defeat	20/01/2020	https://irna.ir/xjs23z
178.	فروش تعدادی از املاک ایران در سه کشور بررسی می‌شود	Iran's real estate sales are put up for sale in three countries	25/01/2020	https://irna.ir/xjwZvH
179.	برگزیت ورود کشورهای بالکان به اتحادیه اروپا را هموار کرد	Brexit paves way for Balkan countries to enter EU	06/02/2020	https://irna.ir/xjx82G
180.	استقلال و آزادی بزرگ‌ترین دستاورد انقلاب اسلامی است	Independence and freedom are the greatest achievements of the Islamic Revolution	10/02/2020	https://irna.ir/xjxbZY
181.	افشاگری خبرنگار نیویورک‌تایمز از اردوگاه منافقین در آلبانی	New York Times reporter reveals Hypocrite’s (MEK-s) camp in Albania	19/02/2020	https://irna.ir/xjxhD2
182.	این هفته در روسیه چه می‌گذرد؟	What's going on in Russia this week?	23/02/2020	https://irna.ir/xjxkB2
183.	بسته ۳۵۰ دلاری آلبانی برای کارگران آسیب دیده از کرونا	Albania's $350 package for workers affected by coronavirus	16/04/2020	https://irna.ir/xjxSSB
184.	انجمن دفاع از قربانیان تروریسم رهایی کارگران را از اسارت منافقین خواستار شد	The Association for the Defense of Victims of Terrorism demands the release of workers from the captivity of the MKO	01/05/2020	https://irna.ir/xjy3XG
185.	جنایتکار جنگی کوزوو حزب الله را متهم کرد	Kosovo war criminal accuses Hezbollah	26/06/2020	https://irna.ir/xjyBgf
186.	امام جمعه موقت ورامین: صف مردم معترض از عناصر مفسد جدا است	Iran: The Temporary Friday Imam of Varamin: The ranks of the protesting people are separate from the elements of corruption	25/07/2020	https://irna.ir/xjyZFK
187.	فیلم کوتاه "ناطق"، در جشنواره تیرانا آلبانی پذیرفته شد	The short film "The Speaker" was accepted at the Tirana Film Festival in Albania	24/08/2020	https://irna.ir/xjzjHZ
188.	سختی کار دستگاه سیاست خارجی در ایران	The Hard Work of the Foreign Policy Apparatus in Iran	07/10/2020	https://irna.ir/xjByPy

189.	رجوی مرده متحرک	Rajavi The Walking Dead	13/10/2020	https://irna.ir/xjBCc4
190.	کنفرانس وحدت؛ نقطه آغاز راهبرد جدید وحدت اسلامی	Unity Conference: The Starting Point of a New Strategy for Islamic Unity	02/11/2020	https://irna.ir/xjBPmc
191.	تظاهرکنندگان در آلبانی خواستار استعفای وزیر کشور شدند	Protesters in Albania demand resignation of interior minister	11/12/2020	https://irna.ir/xjCcF3
192.	آلمانی‌ها و ایرانی‌ها به یک میزان از ترامپ بیزارند	Germans and Iranians loathe Trump at the same rate	21/12/2020	https://irna.ir/xjCjZj
193.	همکاری منافقین با مافیای آلبانی تهدیدی برای شهروندان این کشور است	Hypocrites' (MEK's) cooperation with Albanian mafia poses threat to citizens of that country	18/01/2021	https://irna.ir/xjCzt9
194.	ایران‌شناسی بوسنیایی: مردم بالکان به فرهنگ و زبان ایران عشق می‌ورزند	Bosnian Iranology: Balkan people love Iranian culture and language	19/01/2021	https://irna.ir/xjCCh8
195.	محمدهاشمی: هزینه سفرهای استانی نمایندگان صرف تامین سرپناه و اشتغال شود	Mohammad Hashemi: The cost of provincial trips of representatives should be spent on providing shelter and employment	04/02/2021	https://irna.ir/xjCMB5
196.	تداوم فعالیت های جمهوری آذربایجان در حوزه اکتشاف گاز در خزر	Azerbaijan continues its activities in the field of gas exploration in the Caspian	13/02/2021	https://irna.ir/xjCVRY
197.	دبیر مجمع تشخیص مصلحت: گزارش جامع تخلفات در بورس تدوین می‌شود	Secretary of Expediency Council: Comprehensive report on violations to be drafted in the stock exchange	14/02/2021	https://irna.ir/xjCW85
198.	واکنش دبیر ستاد حقوق بشر به سخن‌پراکنی مقامات سه کشور غربی	Human Rights Secretary Reacts to Speech by Officials of Three Western Countries	28/02/2021	https://irna.ir/xjD5tD

199.	دومین دادگاه ۴۲ عضو سابق گروهک تروریستی منافقین برگزار شد	2nd trial of 42 former members of Hypocrites (MEK) terrorist group held	08/03/2021	https://irna.ir/xjDbvc
200.	فیس بوک صدها حساب کاربری منافقین را حذف کرد	Facebook removes hundreds of Hypocrites' (MEKs) accounts	07/04/2021	https://irna.ir/xjDrQ9
201.	فرد ضارب در آلبانی پنج نمازگزار را زخمی کرد	Assailant injures five worshippers in Albania	19/04/2021	https://irna.ir/xjDzj8
202.	آلمان با تغییر مرزهای کشورهای بالکان مخالفت کرد	Germany opposes changing Balkan borders	23/04/2021	https://irna.ir/xjDBLt
203.	آلبانی استفاده از واکسن اسپوتنیک را تایید کرد	Albania approves use of Sputnik vaccine	01/05/2021	https://irna.ir/xjDGg7
204.	رزمایش مشترک آمریکا و اروپا با ادعای شفافیت	U.S.-Europe joint exercise with transparency claims	14/05/2021	https://irna.ir/xjDNjj
205.	پنج عضو غیردائم شورای امنیت سازمان ملل متحد انتخاب شدند	Five non-permanent members of the UN Security Council elected	12/07/2021	https://irna.ir/xjF5b7
206.	سخنرانی‌های نشست سالانه منافقین هدایت‌شده است	The speeches at the annual meeting of the hypocrites (MEK) are orchestrated	13/07/2021	https://irna.ir/xjFqLg
207.	خانواده‌های داعشی آلبانی تبار بازداشت شده در سوریه به کشورشان بازگشتند	Albanian ISIS families detained in Syria return home	01/08/2021	https://irna.ir/xjFByX
208.	رایزنی های آمریکا با آلبانی برای اسکان موقت پناهجویان افغان	U.S. consultations with Albania to temporarily resettle Afghan refugees	20/08/2021	https://irna.ir/xjFLT8
209.	رقابت فیلم‌های ایرانی در آرژانتین، هند، آلبانی و آمریکا	Iranian films compete in Argentina, India, Albania and the U.S.	04/09/2021	https://irna.ir/xjFTPR

210.	واکنش تند آلبانی به طرح ضدمهاجرتی انگلیس	Albania reacts harshly to UK's anti-migration plan	20/11/2021	https://irna.ir/xjGFZC
211.	زبان فارسی، مهاجرپذیر یا مهاجرفرست؟	Is the Persian language an “migrant-receiving” or “migrant-sending” language?	06/12/2021	https://irna.ir/xjGNWt
212.	حرکت ورزشکار اصفهانی در اعتراض به پخش سرود اشتباهی، افتخارآمیز بود	Isfahani athlete's move to protest the playing of the wrong anthem was honorable	19/12/2021	https://irna.ir/xjGXfQ
213.	عربستان میزبان وزنه‌برداری قهرمانی جهان شد	Saudi Arabia hosts world weightlifting championships	20/12/2021	https://irna.ir/xjGXns
214.	صربستان، آلبانی و مقدونیه شمالی در مسیر رشد اقتصادی	Serbia, Albania and Northern Macedonia on track for economic growth	21/12/2021	https://irna.ir/xjGYj2
215.	آمریکا پایگاه عملیات ویژه در آلبانی تاسیس می‌کند	U.S. establishes special operations base in Albania	07/01/2022	https://irna.ir/xjH8zB
216.	آمریکا نگران از روابط چین-آلبانی در تیرانا پایگاه نظامی ایجاد می‌کند	U.S. concerned about China-Albania relations establish military base in Tirana	08/01/2022	https://irna.ir/xjH8Hq
217.	سیاست جدید مهاجرتی جانسون برای نجات از رسوایی "پارتی‌گیت"	Johnson's new immigration policy to save him from "Partygate" scandal	17/01/2022	https://irna.ir/xjHfmn
218.	اتحادیه اروپا و بحران‌های پیش رو در سال ۲۰۲۲	EU and the crises ahead in 2022	23/01/2022	https://irna.ir/xjHhXc
219.	موضع متفاوت حوزه بالکان در مورد بحران اوکراین	Balkans' differing stance on the Ukraine crisis	24/02/2022	https://irna.ir/xjHCN5
220.	روایتی از نشست ویژه مجمع عمومی سازمان ملل درباره اوکراینآ	A narrative from the SPECIAL SESSION of the UN General Assembly on Ukraine	28/02/2022	https://irna.ir/xjHFF6
221.	روسیه فهرست کشورهای غیردوست را تصویب کرد/	Russia approves list of unfriendly countries/ U.S. and Britain at the top	07/05/2022	https://irna.ir/xjHKsx

	آمریکا و انگلیس در صدر			
222.	انرژی روسیه، شمشیر دموکلس بر سر اروپا/ آیا قاره سبز می‌تواند از وابستگی مسکو بیرون بیاید	Russia’s energy: the Sword of Damocles hanging over Europe / Can the Green Continent free itself from dependence on Moscow	13/05/2022	https://irna.ir/xjHNhd
223.	یادواره‌های شهدا نقش پررنگی در جلوگیری از تحریف دفاع مقدس دارد	Martyrs' remembrances play a prominent role in preventing distortion of holy defense	21/05/2022	https://irna.ir/xjJtGy
224.	آلبانی رئیس دوره‌ای شورای امنیت شد	Albania becomes the temporary head of Security Council	01/06/2022	https://irna.ir/xjJBjd
225.	تماشاگران فوتبال آلبانی، رژیم صهیونیستی را هو کردند	Albania football spectators boo Zionist regime	13/06/2022	https://irna.ir/xjJHcT
226.	وزیرخارجه روسیه: موشک‌های جاولین و استینگر وارد بازار سیاه شده است	Russia's foreign minister says Javelin and Stinger missiles have entered the black market	18/06/2022	https://irna.ir/xjJKfD
227.	دیدار معاون ترامپ با گروهک تروریستی منافقین در آلبانی	Trump's deputy meets with terrorist group MKO in Albania	24/06/2022	https://irna.ir/xjJNzT
228.	حیات و ممات جامعه در دست دستگاه قضایی است/باید صالح‌ترین انسان‌ها متولی امر قضا شوند	The life and death of society is in the hands of the judiciary/ The most righteous human beings should be the custodians of the judiciary	24/06/2022	https://irna.ir/xjJNLp
229.	واکنش غریب‌آبادی به حضور مایک پنس در نشست گروهک منافقین	Gharibabadi reacts to Mike Pence's presence at MKO group meeting	24/06/2022	https://irna.ir/xjJNPj
230.	وزیر اطلاعات: نام شهدای هفتم تیر همیشه در تاریخ ماندگار می‌ماند	Minister of intelligence: The names of the martyrs of the 7th of June will	25/06/2022	https://irna.ir/xjJPcV

		always remain in history		
231.	جلود: منتظر اتفاقات خوب در وزنه‌برداری جهان باشید	Jalud: Wait for good things to happen in the world weightlifting	27/06/2022	https://irna.ir/xjJPYg
232.	درخواست اوکراین برای تشکیل جلسه اضطراری شورای امنیت علیه روسیه	Ukraine calls for emergency Security Council meeting against Russia	28/06/2022	https://irna.ir/xjJQpX
233.	اعتراض روسیه به حضور "بدون مشورت قبلی" زلنسکی در نشست شورای امنیت	Russia protests Zelensky's "no prior consultation" attendance at Security Council meeting	28/06/2022	https://irna.ir/xjJQTX
234.	ناتو در صدد تاسیس پایگاه در آلبانی است	NATO seeks to establish base in Albania	02/07/2022	https://irna.ir/xjJS33
235.	رسایه سنگین فساد بر آینده اوکراین جنگ‌زده	A narrative of a news I-heavy shadow of corruption over the future of war-torn Ukraine	10/07/2022	https://irna.ir/xjJWhV
236.	اقدام سوئد در محروم کردن حمید نوری از حقوق اساسی	Sweden's move to deprive Hamid Nouri of basic rights	11/07/2022	https://irna.ir/xjJX2Q
237.	واکنش وزارت خارجه به حکم حبس ابد برای حمید نوری	Foreign Ministry reacts to life sentence for Hamid Nouri	14/07/2022	https://irna.ir/xjJYyG
238.	موافقت اتحادیه اروپا با آغاز مذاکرات برای عضویت آلبانی و مقدونیه شمالی	EU agrees to start negotiations for Membership of Albania and Northern Macedonia	19/07/2022	https://irna.ir/xjK28t
239.	روسیه فهرست کشورهای غیردوست را گسترش داد	Russia expands the list of unfriendly countries	22/07/2022	https://irna.ir/xjK3Z3
240.	در آستانه اجلاس سالانه گروهک تروریستی منافقین آلبانی هدف حملات گسترده سایبری قرار گرفت	Albania targeted by massive cyberattacks ahead of annual summit of the terrorist group of Hypocrites (MEK)	22/07/2022	https://irna.ir/xjK429

241.	هک گسترده سامانه‌های خدمات آنلاین آلبانی/ اجلاس منافقین به تعویق افتاد	Massive hack of Albania's online services systems/ Hypocrites (MEK) summit postponed	22/07/2022	https://irna.ir/xjK46x
242.	پناه دادن به گروهک منافقین خلاف حقوق بین الملل است	Sheltering the Hypocrites (MEK) group is against international law	27/07/2022	https://irna.ir/xjK672
243.	عملیات مرصاد تلفات سنگینی به منافقان تحمیل کرد	Operation Mersad inflicted heavy casualties on the hypocrites (MEK)	28/07/2022	https://irna.ir/xjK6wH
244.	آغاز عملیات روانی جدید علیه برادری ایرانی‌ها و افغانستانی‌ها؛ دستگاه رسانه‌ای غرب به دنبال چیست؟	The Beginning of a New Psychological Operation Against the Brotherhood of Iranians and Afghans: What is the Western Media Apparatus Seeking?	10/08/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKdp8
245.	فضای مجازی را طوری بارآورده اند که کسی جرأت نکند از دستاوردهای انقلاب بگوید/ دشمن نفوذی در سپاه ندارد	Cyberspace has been brought up so that no one dares to defame the achievements of the revolution/ The enemy has no influence in the IRG	20/08/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKjDZ
246.	دستگیری ۳ جاسوس روس و اوکراینی در آلبانی	3 Russian and Ukrainian spies arrested in Albania	21/08/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKjSr
247.	تحقیق تیرانا در مورد ورود ۳ بیگانه به تاسیسات نظامی آلبانی	Tirana investigates 3 foreigners entering Albania military facilities	21/08/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKkcc
248.	بیش از ۶ هزار پناهجو از آلمان به کشورشان بازگردانده شدند	More than 6,000 refugees returned home from Germany	22/08/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKkhB
249.	پرواز هواپیماهای راهبردی آمریکا بر فراز بالکان	U.S. strategic aircraft fly over Balkans	23/08/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKm9Y
250.	"بالا افتادن" در بخش دانشجویی جشنواره فیلم آلبانی	"Rise Up" in the Student Section of Albania Film Festival	26/08/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKnsb

251.	امام جمعه شهر گلستان: دولت برای رفع مشکلات مردم گام های بزرگ بردارد	Gulestan's Friday Prayer Imam: Government is taking big steps to solve people's problems	26/08/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKnwg
252.	حضور «به من دست نزن» در جشنواره‌های تیرانا و بولتون	“Touch me Not” to appear at Tirana and Bolton festivals	29/08/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKpVp
253.	سرنوشت نامعلوم قاتل بالاترین مقامات اجرایی کشور	The undisclosed fate of the killer of the country's highest executive officials	30/08/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKqQK
254.	افتتاح ۸۷۱ پروژه در هرمزگان/ امیدآفرینی در ایران و انزوای دشمنان	871 projects inaugurated in Hormozgan/ Hopefulness in Iran and isolation of enemies	31/08/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKpGy
255.	فرانسه رئیس دوره‌ای شورای امنیت سازمان ملل شد	France has assumed the rotating presidency of the United Nations Security Council	02/09/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKrZB
256.	نشست همزمان شورای امنیت با مجمع عمومی سازمان ملل درباره اوکراین	A joint session of the UN Security Council and the General Assembly on Ukraine	02/09/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKrYQ
257.	پرونده» در فستیوال فیلم لندن به نمایش درمی‌آید	‘The Case’ will be presented at the London Film Festival	03/09/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKstK
258.	نخست‌وزیر آلبانی از قطع روابط کشورش با ایران خبر داد	The Prime Minister of Albania announced the severance of his country’s relations with Iran	07/09/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKvnQ
259.	اتهام‌زنی بی‌پایه و اساس آمریکا به ایران در مورد حمله سایبری به آلبانی	Unfounded U.S. accusations against Iran over cyberattack on Albania	07/09/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKvrb
260.	وزارت امور خارجه اقدام ضدایرانی دولت آلبانی را قویا محکوم کرد	Ministry of Foreign Affairs strongly condemns Albania government's anti-Iran action	07/09/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKvvk

261.	نخستین موضع دولت تراس درباره ایران به اتهام‌زنی آلبانی اختصاص یافت	The Truss government's first position on Iran was dedicated to Albania’s accusation	07/09/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKvw3
262.	ادعاهای جدید ضد روسی غرب در نشست شورای امنیت و تکذیب مسکو	New Anti-Russian Western claims at Security Council meeting and Moscow's denials	08/09/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKvxT
263.	کنعانی: آمریکا و انگلیس وجاهتی برای اتهام‌زنی به ایران ندارند	Kanani: U.S. and U.K. have no right to accuse Iran	08/09/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKvx3
264.	حمایت کاخ سفید از آلبانی و اتهام زنی‌های بی‌اساس علیه ایران	White House supports Albania and unfounded accusations against Iran	08/09/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKvxX
265.	واکنش وزارت‌خارجه به نقض حقوق دیپلمات‌های ایرانی در آلبانی	Foreign Ministry reacts to violations of Iranian diplomats' rights in Albania	08/09/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKvLW
266.	فضاسازی ناتو در مورد حمله سایبری ادعایی اخیر علیه آلبانی	NATO's statement on the alleged recent cyberattack against Albania	08/09/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKvMX
267.	گفتگوی مقام کاخ سفید با نخست وزیر آلبانی درباره اتهام زنی بی اساس علیه ایران	White House official talks with Albanian PM about unfounded accusations against Iran	08/09/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKvNV
268.	واکنش سخنگوی سازمان ملل درباره اتهام زنی آلبانی علیه ایران	U.N. spokesman reacts to Albania’s accusations against Iran	08/09/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKvQy
269.	انتقاد نمایندگی ایران در سازمان ملل از سکوت آمریکا و انگلیس در برابر حملات سایبری علیه تهران	Iran's U.N. envoy criticizes U.S. and British silence over cyberattacks against Tehran	09/09/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKvR7
270.	نظام اسلامی ثابت و استوار به حیات جاودانه خود ادامه می‌دهد/ بزرگترین اجتماع امت اسلامی در	The Islamic system continues its eternal life with firmness and stability / The greatest gathering of the Islamic Ummah is	09/09/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKvWR

	پیاده‌روی اربعین تجلی یافته است	manifested in the Arbaeen pilgrimage		
271.	ایران: ناتو به جای انتساب اتهام‌های بی‌اساس، به منافقین پناه ندهد	Iran: Instead of assigning unfounded accusations, NATO should not harbor the Hypocrites (MEK)	09/09/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKw2m
272.	در تداوم اتهام زنی‌های بی پایه و اساس علیه ایران آمریکا وزیر و وزارت اطلاعات ایران را تحریم کرد	In continuation of baseless accusations against Iran U.S. sanctions Iran's Minister of Intelligence and the Intelligence Ministry	09/09/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKw3v
273.	اعتراض شدید ایران به آلبانی بدلیل تعرض علیه سفارت کشورمان در تیرانا	Iran strongly protests Albania for attacking our embassy in Tirana	10/09/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKw5W
274.	در نامه ای به دبیر کل سازمان ملل درخصوص ادعاهای ساختگی آلبانی هشدار ایران نسبت به هرگونه اقدام تحریک‌آمیز و غیرموجه ضدایرانی تحت پوشش ادعاهای بی اساس	In a letter to the UN Secretary-General regarding Albania’s fabricated allegations, Iran warned against any provocative and unjustified anti-Iranian actions carried out under the pretext of baseless claims	10/09/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKw5T
275.	ایران اقدام آمریکا در تحریم چند باره وزارت اطلاعات را به شدت محکوم کرد	Iran strongly condemned the United States for repeatedly sanctioning its Ministry of Intelligence	10/09/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKw63
276.	اتهام زنی دوباره آلبانی به ایران؛ دولت آلبانی مجددا مدعی حمله سایبری از سوی منابع ایرانی شد	Albania accuses Iran again; The Albanian government again claims cyber-attack by Iranian sources	10/09/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKwtn
277.	مرندی: ایران به دنبال توافقی برای دفاع از حقوق خود است	Marandi: Iran seeks deal to defend its rights	10/09/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKwxk

278.	نایب رییس دوم کمیسیون امنیت ملی مجلس: اعمال تحریم‌های جدید علیه ایران مهر تاییدی بر عدم درک آمریکا از منطق مذاکرات است	Second Deputy Chairman of the National Security Commission of the Parliament: New sanctions against Iran confirm U.S. lack of understanding of the logic of negotiations	11/09/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKwjv
279.	حمایت آمریکا از اتهام زنی دوباره آلبانی علیه ایران	U.S. supports Albania's re-accusation against Iran	12/09/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKwYw
280.	بیانیه تروئیکای اروپا یک موضع نادرست و نسنجیده بود/ آمریکا موظف به صدور روادید برای رئیس‌جمهور است	The European Troika's statement was an incorrect and ill-considered position / America is obliged to issue a visa for the President	12/09/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKx4B
281.	نامه خانواده شهدای ترور کشور: پذیرش منافقین نه مهمان‌نوازی بلکه فریبکاری دولت آلبانی است	Letter from the families of the martyrs of the terror in the country: The Hypocrites' (MKO's) acceptance is not hospitality but the Albanian government's deception	12/09/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKxhW
282.	گفتگوی بلینکن با نخست وزیر آلبانی و حمایت از اتهامات ضدایرانی	Blinken talks with Albania's PM and supports anti-Iranian accusations	13/09/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKxLJ
283.	مرکز ملی فضای مجازی در واکنش به اتهاماتی بی اساس حملات سایبری به آلبانی: طرح اتهام حمله سایبری ایران به آلبانی بی‌اساس است	National Cyberspace Center in response to baseless accusations of cyber-attacks on Albania: Iran's cyberattack on Albania is unfounded	13/09/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKxLL
284.	ادعای آمریکا در مورد مداخله روسیه در انتخابات کشورهای دیگر	U.S. claim regarding Russia's interference in other countries' elections	14/09/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKxQn

285.	در تداوم سیاست های دوگانه تحریم و دیپلماسی واشنگتن آمریکا ۱۰ فرد و دو نهاد ایرانی را به اتهام حملات سایبری تحریم کرد	In continuation of Washington's dual policies of sanctions and diplomacy U.S. sanctions 10 Iranian individuals and two entities for alleged cyberattacks	14/09/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKydF
286.	آمریکا سه ایرانی را متهم به انجام فعالیت‌های مخرب رایانه‌ای کرد	U.S. accuses three Iranians of carrying out malicious computer activities	14/09/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKyfw
287.	سازمان بین‌المللی کار، ازدواج اجباری را در گروهک منافقین بررسی کند	The International Labor Organization (ILO) investigates forced marriage in the Hypocrites (MEK) group	18/09/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKzct
288.	درخواست خانواده شهدای ترور از آیت الله رییسی: رییس جمهور صدای قربانیان ترور را به گوش جامعه جهانی برساند	Terror martyrs' families appeal to Ayatollah Raisi: The President to bring the voices of terror victims to the ears of the international community	20/09/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKBgp
289.	حاشیه‌هایی از سفر رییس جمهور به نیویورک/ دوربین در مقابل دوربین!	The President's Trip to New York/ Camera in front of the camera!	20/09/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKBkt
290.	نهادهای انتظامی، امنیتی و قضایی بدون مماشات با آشوبگران برخورد کنند	Law enforcement, security and judicial agencies deal with rioters without appeasement	24/09/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKCPK
291.	استاندار تهران: حساب افراد فریب خورده و غافل را از آشوبگران جدا می کنیم	Tehran Governor: We will separate the accounts of the deceived and unsuspecting people from the rioters	29/09/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKFf5
292.	بیانیه مهم وزارت اطلاعات پیرامون حوادث اخیر کشور	Important Statement by the Ministry of Intelligence on recent incidents in the country	30/09/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKFzT
293.	قطعنامه ضد روسیه در شورای امنیت وتو شد	Anti-Russia resolution vetoed at Security Council	01/10/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKFCL

294.	پشت پرده آشوب‌های اخیر به روایت آمار	Behind the scenes of the recent turmoil according to statistics	01/10/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKFMT
295.	ترفند رسانه‌های خارج‌نشین به سلبریتی‌های وطنی/ ما بیرون گود ایستاده‌ایم اما شما به جای ما مبارزه کن	Foreign-based media's trick on domestic celebrities/ We are standing outside the pit, but you fight for us	02/10/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKG42
296.	انفجار یکی از موشک‌های کره جنوبی در جریان رزمایش مشترک با آمریکا	South Korean missile explodes during joint exercise with U.S.	05/10/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKHbt
297.	آلبانی بند ۵ منشور ناتو را علیه ایران فعال نمی‌کند	Albania does not invoke PARAGRAPH 5 of NATO Charter against Iran	06/10/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKHm8
298.	بیانیه جمعی از اصحاب و فعالان فرهنگ، هنر و رسانه استان اردبیل درباره اغتشاشات اخیر	Statement by a group of cultural, art and media activists in Ardabil province on the recent disturbances Ardebil	07/10/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKHKc
299.	پلیس اسپانیا باند قاچاق انسان به انگلیس را متلاشی کرد	Spanish police break up UK human trafficking ring	08/10/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKJ7x
300.	جمعیت مسلمانان ایتالیا رو به افزایش است	Italy's Muslim population on the rise	09/10/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKJcW
301.	از سفارت‌خانه‌های ایران چه می‌خواهند؟	What do they want from Iranian embassies?	12/10/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKJSK
302.	آغاز نشست مجمع عمومی سازمان ملل برای تصویب قطعنامه علیه روسیه	UN General Assembly begins session to pass resolution against Russia	12/10/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKKMh
303.	جبهه پایداری و جمعی از فعالان فرهنگی هنری کرمانشاه	The Resistance Front and a group of cultural and artistic activists in Kermanshah	13/10/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKKWg

	اغتشاشات اخیر را محکوم کردند	condemned the recent riots		
304.	نهمین دوره المپیاد هندسه ایران در اصفهان برگزار شد	The 9th Iranian Geometry Olympiad was held in Isfahan	14/10/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKLbZ
305.	هوشیاری مردم مانع اجرای نقشه منافقین در آمل شد	People's vigilance prevented the implementation of the hypocrites' plan in Amol	14/10/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKLfy
306.	حمایت شماری از کشورهای آسه آن از قطعنامه ضدِ روسی سازمان ملل	Support of several ASEAN countries for the UN’s anti-Russian resolution	16/10/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKMc6
307.	گنجی: بین حوزه امنیتی و رسانه شکاف جدی داریم/ قوچانی: روزنامه‌نگار و روشنفکر را که حذف می‌کنید، آدم‌های بادکنکی می‌آیند	Ganjī: There is a serious gap between the security establishment and the media / Ghouchani: When you eliminate journalists and intellectuals, you end up with hollow, inflated people	16/10/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKLXc
308.	ایران هرگونه خشونت علیه نمایندگی‌های دیپلماتیک و کنسولی خود در اروپا را محکوم کرد	Iran condemns any acts of violence against its diplomatic and consular missions in Europe	19/10/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKMY5
309.	امام جمعه ایلام: ریشه تناور انقلاب اسلامی با اغتشاشات کور دشمنان آسیبی نمی بیند	Ilam Friday Imam: The Strong Roots of the Islamic Revolution Will Not Be Harmed by the Blind Disturbances of the Enemies	21/10/2022	https://irna.ir/xjKPd8

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به دنبال استرداد عوامل انفجار دفتر حزب جمهوری هستیم (We seek the extradition of the perpetrators of Republican Party office bombing). (17/05/2016). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjfFhk

موگرینی خواستار اصلاحات قضایی در آلبانی شد (Mogherini calls for judicial reform in Albania). (07/06/2016). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjfS3N

رهبران سياسي آلباني درباره پيش نويس اصلاحات قضايي به توافق نرسيدند (Albania's political leaders fail to agree on drafting judicial reforms). (08/06/2016). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjfSL7

وزير خارجه يونان: عده اي درصدد ايجاد اختلال ميان ما و آلباني هستند (Greek foreign minister: Some are trying to disrupt us and Albania). (13/06/2016). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjfW9w

تازه ترین جزییات اخراج منافقین از بغداد/ آلمان و آلبانی مقصد اخراجی ها (The latest details of the expulsion of the Hypocrites (MEK) from Baghdad/ Germany and Albania the destination of the deportees). (10/09/2016). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjgTVP

رئیس جمهوری آلبانی :برای مبادلات اقتصادی و فرهنگی با ایران ارزش زیادی قائل هستم (The President of Albania: I value economic and cultural exchanges with Iran). (19/10/2016). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjhjKd

رئیس پارلمان آلبانی: ایران جایگاه تاریخی و تمدنی بزرگ دارد (Albania's parliament speaker: Iran has a great historical and civilizational status). (14/11/2016). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjhBK7

نخست وزير آلباني: اختلافات با يونان بايد با گفت و گو حل شوند (Albania’s Prime Minister: Disputes with Greece must be resolved with dialogue). (24/11/2016). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjhJz6

مدیرعامل انجمن نجات ایران: فعالیت کنونی گروهك منافقین جذب جاسوس است (Managing director of Iran’s Nejat Society: The Hypocrites’ Group (MEK’s) current activity is recruiting spies). (13/12/2016). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjhVzb

مراسم جشن ولادت رسول مکرم اسلام (ص) و امام جعفر صادق (ع) در تیرانا (The Ceremony of The Birth of the Prophet (pbuh) and Imam Xha'far al-Sadiq in Tirana). (18/12/2016). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjhY5g

وزیرامورخارجه آلبانی:مصمم به رفع تمام موانع تجاری با ایران هستیم (Albania's Foreign Minister: We are determined to remove all trade barriers with Iran). (15/01/2017). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjjhtw

وزير خارجه آلباني: شرايط براي تعميق روابط با جمهوري اسلامي ايران فراهم شده است (Minister of Foreign Affairs of Albania: Conditions have been provided for the strengthening of relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran). (15/01/2017). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjjhD6

روحانی: دوره پسابرجام فرصت مناسبی برای تعمیق همکاری های ایران و آلبانی است (Rouhani: Post-2012 period is a good opportunity to deepen Iran-Albania cooperation). (16/01/2017). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjjhT4

روحانی: دوره پسابرجام فرصت مناسبی برای تعمیق همکاری های ایران و آلبانی است (Rouhani: The post-JCPOA period is an appropriate opportunity to deepen cooperation between Iran and Albania). (16/01/2017). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjjhT4

در گفت و گو با ایرنا وزیر خارجه آلبانی: بخش بانکی کشور ما در پی ارتباط با ایران است (In an interview with IRNA, Albania's foreign minister: Our country's banking sector is seeking ties with Iran). (16/01/2017). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjjhZv

معاون رئیس‌جمهوري در ديدار با وزير خارجه آلباني: دوران پسا برجام، آماده ميزباني از سرمايه‌گذاران آلباني هستيم (Vice President meets with Albanian Foreign Minister: In the post-JCPOA era, we're ready to host Albanian investors). (16/01/2017). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjjj8y

سفر 5 رئیس دولت از منطقه بالکان به ایران، دستاورد سیاسی برجام است (5 heads of state travel from Balkan region to Iran, political achievement of JCPOA). (18/01/2017). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjjkhY

يك فعال اسلامی آلبانی: حکومت ایران همیشه حامی مسلمانان بوده است (Albanian Islamic activist: Iran's government has always been a supporter of Muslims). (25/01/2017). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjjqbF

رئیس انجمن دوستی ایران و آلبانی: نقش برجام در توسعه روابط تهران و تیرانا ارزشمند است (The President of the Friendship Association of Iran and Albania: The role of the JCPOA in the development of Tehran-Tirana relations is valuable). (29/01/2017). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjjsjh

سفير ايران در آلباني: آمريكا نمي تواند به تعهدات خود در قبال برجام عمل نكند (Iran's Ambassador to Albania: America cannot fail to fulfill its obligations to the JCPOA). (07/02/2017). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjjwJc

افق‌هاي خوبي در زمينه توسعه همكاري‌ها ميان ايران و آلباني وجود دارد (There are good prospects for developing cooperation between Iran and Albania). (09/02/2017). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjjzN8

برگزاری جشن سالروز پیروزی انقلاب اسلامی در آلبانی (Celebration of Islamic Revolution victory anniversary in Albania). (12/02/2017). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjjCFk

اجرای موسیقی اصیل ایرانی در آلبانی (Original Iranian Music in Albania). (12/02/2017). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjjD95

بزرگداشت شاعر برجسته کشور آلباني در تهران (Albania's distinguished poet in Tehran). (14/02/2017). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjjF5t

تبادل مستقیم اخبار ایران و آلبانی با همکاری ایرنا و آتا (Direct exchange of news between Iran and Albania with IRNA and ATA cooperation). (21/02/2017). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjjJR9

ايران و آلباني همكاري‌هاي خبري خود را گسترش مي‌دهند (Iran and Albania expand their news cooperation). (21/02/2017). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjjK36

مراسم گرامیداشت ولادت حضرت فاطمه (س) در آلبانی برگزار شد (A ceremony to commemorate the birth of Hazrat Fatima was held in Albania). (20/03/2017). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjjYZ9

بكتاشي هاي آلباني همزمان با دومين روز بهارولادت حضرت علي (ع) را جشن گرفتند (Albanian Bektashis celebrated the birth of Imam Ali (AS) at the same time with the second day of spring). (23/03/2017). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjk24p

بكتاشيان آلباني در آستانه ميلاد حضرت علي (ع) مراسم مولودي خواني اجرا كردند (Albanian Bektashis performed a Mevlud singing ceremony on the eve of The Birth of Hazrat Ali). (04/04/2017). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjk6gw

بازديد شهرداران كشورهای اسلامی از آرامگاه فردوسی (Mayors of Islamic Countries Visit Ferdowsi's Tomb). (25/04/2017). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjkj29

سراسقف كليساي ارتدكس آلباني از تبادلات مذهبي و فرهنگي بين مسيحيان آلباني و ايراني استقبال كرد (The Archbishop of Albanian Orthodox Church welcomes religious and cultural exchanges between Albanian and Iranian Christians). (23/08/2017). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjmsFN

نماز عيد قربان در آلباني برگزار شد (Eid al-Adha prayers were held in Albania). (01/09/2017). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjmxRV

مراسم جشن عيد سعيد غدير خم در آلبانی برگزار شد (Eid Al-Ghadir Khumm celebration held in Albania). (10/09/2017). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjmCck

نمايشگاه نقاشي هنرمندان ايراني درشهر فير آلباني افتتاح شد (Iranian artists' painting exhibition opens in The City of Fier, Albania). (15/10/2017). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjmVmR

عكاسان جوان شيرازي در نمايشگاه خطوط ناتمام آلباني شركت كردند (Young Shirazi's photografers attend Albania's unfinished lines exhibition). (15/10/2017). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjmVB6

عبور از روزنامه‌نگاري سنتي و ورود به عصر ديجيتال؛ موانع و چالش‌ها (Passing traditional journalism and entering the digital age, obstacles and challenges). (29/10/2017). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjn48T

روزنامه نگار آلبانيايی : ايران ابرقدرت فرهنگی است (Albanian journalist: Iran is a cultural superpower). (31/10/2017). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjn4ZL

برپايي نمايشگاه نقاشي هنرمندان ايراني در آلباني (Iranian Artists Painting Exhibition held in Albania). (02/11/2017). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjn6b2

استقبال آلبانيايي ها از انتشار مجله فرهنگي و علمي ايران در تيرانا (Albanians welcome the publication of Iranian Scientific and Cultural Journal in Tirana). (10/11/2017). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjn9Hm

استقبال از همايش ايران شناسي در آلباني (Welcoming The Conference of Iranology in Albania). (01/12/2017). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjnnt7

برگزاري مراسم شب شعر 'محمد نعيم فراشري' در آلباني ("Mohammad Naim Frasheri" Poetry Night in Albania). (14/02/2018). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjp4WV

دستگيري 12 مقام آلباني به جرم دست داشتن در فساد مالي (12 Albanian officials arrested for involvement in financial corruption). (17/03/2018). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjpmM6

مخالفان دولت آلبانی خواستار استعفای نخست وزير شدند (Albania government opposition calls for PM's resignation). (05/04/2018). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjptjS

ایران و آلبانی راه های گسترش روابط اقتصادی را بررسی کردند (Iran and Albania explore ways to expand economic ties). (24/04/2018). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjpCSm

رییس اتاق ایران: آلباني دروازه ورود ایران به حوزه بالکان است (Iranian chamber's president: Albania is Iran's gateway to the Balkan area). (25/04/2018). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjpDb3

نشست مشترك تجاري ایران و آلباني در تیرانا برگزار شد (Iran-Albania joint business meeting held in Tirana). (25/04/2018). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjpDkF

مخالفین دولت آلباني خواستار استعفاي نخست وزیر شدند (Albanian government opponents demand resignation of prime minister). (27/05/2018). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjpSrG

مراسم شعر خوانی و نقالی فارسی سرای آلبانی برگزار شد (Albania's Poetry Reading and Naqqali Persian Saray Held). (08/06/2018). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjpXGP

رسانه ها: ظریف خواستار بسته شدن حسابهای جعلی در توییتر شد (Media: Zarif calls for Twitter to close fake accounts). (17/09/2018). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjqNTR

اعتراض گسترده دانشجویان خشمگین در آلباني (Protests by angry students in Albania). (11/12/2018). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjrCDy

آلبانی قربانی سناریو سازی آمریکا و رژیم صهیونیستی شد (Foreign Ministry Spokesperson: Albania falls victim to US scenario and Zionist regime). (20/12/2018). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjrHQz

قاسمی: اقدام دولت آلبانی غیر قابل قبول و محکوم است (Qasemi: Albania government's action is unacceptable and condemned). (20/12/2018). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjrHSv

ترامپ از اقدام ضد ایراني آلباني تشکر کرد (Trump thanks Albania's anti-Iran action). (20/12/2018). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjrHX9

پمپئو اقدام آلباني در اخراج دیپلمات ایراني را ستود (Pompeo praises Albania's move to expel Iranian diplomats). (22/12/2018). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjrJMC

ذوق زدگی آل سعود از اخراج دیپلمات ایرانی در آلبانی (Al-Saud's enthusiasm over expulsion of Iranian diplomat in Albania). (22/12/2018). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjrJMV

در گفت و گوی اختصاصی با ایرنا; روایت سفیر ایران از توطئه در آلبانی برای لطمه به روابط تهران و اروپا (In an exclusive interview with IRNA; Iran's ambassador narrates conspiracy in Albania to damage Tehran-Europe relations). (02/01/2019). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjrQ3S

عملیات توئیتری منافقین برای نشست ورشو (The Hypocrites' (MEK's) Twitter operation for the Warsaw summit). (21/01/2019). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjs284

روایت تکان دهنده اشپیگل از شکنجه روحی اعضای منافقین در کمپ آلبانی (Spiegel's shocking account of the mental torture of the members of the Hypocrites' (MEKs) in Camp Albania). (16/02/2019). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjshY5

تظاهرات ضدو دولتي در آلباني (Anti-government demonstrations in Albania). (22/03/2019). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjsDr4

آلباني ها خواستار استعفاي نخست وزیر شدند (Albanians called for the Prime Minister to resign). (04/04/2019). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjsKZT

رئیس جمهوری آلبانی انتخابات آتی را لغو کرد (Albania's President cancels upcoming elections). (09/06/2019). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjtrPS

معترضان در آلبانی بار دیگر خواستار برکناری نخست وزیر شدند (Protesters in Albania again call for PM's ouster). (09/07/2019). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjtNwf

سفیر ایران در لندن: منافقان بدنبال القای بی اعتمادی مردم به مسوولان هستند (Iran's ambassador to London: Hypocrites seek to instill people's distrust of officials). (10/07/2019). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjtsC4

جلادهای هشتگ ساز (Hashtag Maker Executioners). (11/07/2019). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjtPLR

چه کسی بازنده جنگ سایبری است؟ (Who is the loser of cyberwarfare?). (29/09/2019). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjvJdF

زلزله مقر منافقین را در آلبانی تخریب کرد (Earthquake destroys “Hypocrites” (MEK) headquarters in Albania). (02/12/2019). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjwq9J

اقدام غیر دیپلماتیک آلبانی در قبال دیپلمات‌های ایران (Albania's non-diplomatic action against Iranian diplomats). (16/01/2020). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjwTNf

استقلال و آزادی بزرگـترین دستاورد انقلاب اسلامی است (Independence and freedom are the greatest achievements of the Islamic Revolution). (10/02/2020). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjxbZY

افشاگری خبرنگار نیویورک‌تایمز از اردوگاه منافقین در آلبانی (New York Times reporter reveals Hypocrite’s (MEKs) camp in Albania). (19/02/2020). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjxhD2

فیلم کوتاه "ناطق"، در جشنواره تیرانا آلبانی پذیرفته شد (The short film "The Speaker" was accepted at the Tirana Film Festival in Albania). (24/08/2020). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjzjHZ

سختی کار دستگاه سیاست خارجی در ایران (The Hard Work of the Foreign Policy Apparatus in Iran). (07/10/2020). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjByPy

رجوی مرده متحرک (Rajavi The Walking Dead). (13/10/2020). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjBCc4

کنفرانس وحدت؛ نقطه آغاز راهبرد جدید وحدت اسلامی (Unity Conference: The Starting Point of a New Strategy for Islamic Unity). (02/11/2020). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjBPmc

همکاری منافقین با مافیای آلبانی تهدیدی برای شهروندان این کشور است (Hypocrites’ (MEK's) cooperation with Albanian mafia poses threat to citizens of that country). (18/01/2021). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjCzt9

فیس بوک صدها حساب کاربری منافقین را حذف کرد (Facebook removes hundreds of Hypocrites’ (MEKs) accounts). (07/04/2021). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjDrQ9

فرد ضارب در آلبانی پنج نمازگزار را زخمی کرد (Assailant injures five worshippers in Albania). (19/04/2021). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjDzj8

رزمایش مشترک آمریکا و اروپا با ادعای شفافیت (U.S.-Europe joint exercise with transparency claims). 14/05/2021. *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjDNjj

پنج عضو غیردائم شورای امنیت سازمان ملل متحد انتخاب شدند (Five non-permanent members of the UN Security Council elected). 12/07/2021. *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjF5b7

خانواده‌های داعشی آلبانی تبار بازداشت شده در سوریه به کشورشان بازگشتند (Albanian ISIS families detained in Syria return home). 01/08/2021. *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjFByX

رایزنی های آمریکا با آلبانی برای اسکان موقت پناهجویان افغان (U.S. consultations with Albania to temporarily resettle Afghan refugees). 20/08/2021. *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjFLT8

زبان فارسی، مهاجرپذیر یا مهاجرفرست؟ (Is the Persian language an "migrant-receiving" or "migrant-sending" language?). (06/12/2021). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjGNWt

آمریکا نگران از روابط چین-آلبانی در تیرانا پایگاه نظامی ایجاد می‌کند (U.S. concerned about China-Albania relations establish military base in Tirana). (08/01/2022). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjH8Hq

یادواره‌های شهدا نقش پررنگی در جلوگیری از تحریف دفاع مقدس دارد (Martyrs' remembrances play a prominent role in preventing distortion of holy defense). (21/05/2022). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjJtGy

دیدار معاون ترامپ با گروهک تروریستی منافقین در آلبانی (Trump's deputy meets with terrorist group MEK in Albania). (24/06/2022). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjJNzT

حیات و ممات جامعه در دست دستگاه قضایی است/باید صالح‌ترین انسان‌ها متولی امر قضا شوند (The life and death of society is in the hands of the judiciary/ The most righteous human beings should be the custodians of the judiciary). (24/06/2022). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjJNLp

واکنش غریب‌آبادی به حضور مایک پنس در نشست گروهک منافقین (Gharibabadi reacts to Mike Pence's presence at Hypocrites' (MEKs) group meeting). (24/06/2022). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjJNPj

وزیر اطلاعات: نام شهدای هفتم تیر همیشه در تاریخ ماندگار می‌ماند (Minister of intelligence: The names of the martyrs of the 7th of June will always remain in history). (25/06/2022). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjJPcV

ناتو در صدد تاسیس پایگاه در آلبانی است (NATO seeks to establish base in Albania). (02/07/2022). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjJS33

اقدام سوئد در محروم کردن حمید نوری از حقوق اساسی (Sweden's move to deprive Hamid Nouri of basic rights). (11/07/2022). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjJX2Q

موافقت اتحادیه اروپا با آغاز مذاکرات برای عضویت آلبانی و مقدونیه شمالی (EU agrees to start negotiations for Membership of Albania and Northern Macedonia). 19/07/2022. *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjK28t

روسیه فهرست کشورهای غیردوست را گسترش داد (Russia expands the list of unfriendly countries). (22/07/2022). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjK3Z3

در آستانه اجلاس سالانه گروهک تروریستی منافقین آلبانی هدف حملات گسترده سایبری قرار گرفت (Albania targeted by massive cyberattacks ahead of annual summit of the terrorist group of Hypocrites (MEK). (22/07/2022). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjK429

هک گسترده سامانه‌های خدمات آنلاین آلبانی/ اجلاس منافقین به تعویق افتاد (Massive hack of Albania's online services systems/ Hypocrites (MEK) summit postponed). (22/07/2022). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjK46x

پناه دادن به گروهک منافقین خلاف حقوق بین الملل است (Sheltering the Hypocrites is against international law). (27/07/2022). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjK672

عملیات مرصاد تلفات سنگینی به منافقان تحمیل کرد (Operation Mersad inflicted heavy casualties on the hypocrites (MEK). (28/07/2022). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjK6wH

فضای مجازی را طوری بارآورده اند که کسی جرأت نکند از دستاوردهای انقلاب بگوید/ دشمن نفوذی در سپاه ندارد (Cyberspace has been brought up so that no one dares to defame the achievements of the revolution/ The enemy has no influence in the IRGC). (20/08/2022). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjKjDZ

"بالا افتادن" در بخش دانشجویی جشنواره فیلم آلبانی" ("Rise Up" in the Student Section of Albania Film Festival). (26/08/2022). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjKnsb

امام جمعه شهر گلستان: دولت برای رفع مشکلات مردم گام های بزرگ بردارد (Gulestan's Friday Prayer Imam: Government is taking big steps to solve people's problems). (26/08/2022). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjKnwg

حضور «به من دست نزن» در جشنواره‌های تیرانا و بولتون ("Touch me Not" to appear at Tirana and Bolton festivals). (29/08/2022). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjKpVp

"پرونده" در فستیوال فیلم لندن به نمایش درمی‌آید ('The Case' will be presented at the London Film Festival). (03/09/2022). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjKstK

نخست‌وزیر آلبانی از قطع روابط کشورش با ایران خبر داد (The Prime Minister of Albania announced the severance of his country's relations with Iran). (07/09/2022). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjKvnQ

اتهامزنی بی‌پایه و اساس آمریکا به ایران در مورد حمله سایبری به آلبانی (Unfounded U.S. accusations against Iran over cyberattack on Albania). (07/09/2022). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjKvrb

وزارت امور خارجه اقدام ضدایرانی دولت آلبانی را قویا محکوم کرد (Ministry of Foreign Affairs strongly condemns Albania government's anti-Iran action). (07/09/2022). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjKvvk

نخستین موضع دولت تراس درباره ایران به اتهامزنی آلبانی اختصاص یافت (The Truss government's first position on Iran was dedicated to Albania's accusation). (07/09/2022). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjKvw3

ادعاهای جدید ضد روسی غرب در نشست شورای امنیت و تکذیب مسکو (New Anti-Russian Western claims at Security Council meeting and Moscow's denials). (08/09/2022). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjKvxT

کنعانی: آمریکا و انگلیس وجاهتی برای اتهامزنی به ایران ندارند (Kanani: U.S. and U.K. have no right to accuse Iran). (08/09/2022). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjKvx3

حمایت کاخ سفید از آلبانی و اتهام زنی‌های بی‌اساس علیه ایران (White House supports Albania and unfounded accusations against Iran). (08/09/2022). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjKvxX

واکنش وزارت‌خارجه به نقض حقوق دیپلمات‌های ایرانی در آلبانی (Foreign Ministry reacts to violations of Iranian diplomats' rights in Albania). (08/09/2022). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjKvLW

فضاسازی ناتو در مورد حمله سایبری ادعایی اخیر علیه آلبانی (NATO's statement on the alleged recent cyberattack against Albania). (08/09/2022). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjKvMX

گفتگوی مقام کاخ سفید با نخست وزیر آلبانی درباره اتهام زنی بی اساس علیه ایران (White House official talks with Albanian PM about unfounded accusations against Iran). *IRNA*. (08/09/2022). https://irna.ir/xjKvNV

واکنش سخنگوی سازمان ملل درباره اتهام زنی آلبانی علیه ایران (U.N. spokesman reacts to Albania's accusations against Iran). (08/09/2022). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjKvQy

انتقاد نمایندگی ایران در سازمان ملل از سکوت آمریکا و انگلیس در برابر حملات سایبری علیه تهران (Iran's U.N. envoy criticizes U.S. and British silence over cyberattacks against Tehran). (09/09/2022). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjKvR7

ایران: ناتو به جای انتساب اتهام‌های بی‌اساس، به منافقین پناه ندهد (Iran: Instead of assigning unfounded accusations, NATO should not harbor the (MEK) Hypocrites). (09/09/2022). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjKw2m

در تداوم اتهام زنی‌های بی پایه و اساس علیه ایران آمریکا وزیر و وزارت اطلاعات ایران را تحریم کرد (In continuation of baseless accusations against Iran U.S. sanctions Iran's minister of Intelligence and the Intelligence Ministry). (09/09/2022). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjKw3v

اعتراض شدید ایران به آلبانی بدلیل تعرض علیه سفارت کشورمان در تیرانا (Iran strongly protests Albania for attacking our embassy in Tirana). (10/09/2022). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjKw5W

در نامه ای به دبیر کل سازمان ملل درخصوص ادعاهای ساختگی آلبانی هشدار ایران نسبت به هرگونه اقدام تحریک‌آمیز و غیرموجه ضدایرانی تحت پوشش ادعاهای بی اساس (In a letter to the UN Secretary-General regarding Albania's fabricated allegations, Iran warned against any provocative and unjustified anti-Iranian actions carried out under the pretext of baseless claims). (10/09/2022). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjKw5T

ایران اقدام آمریکا در تحریم چند باره وزارت اطلاعات را به شدت محکوم کرد (Iran strongly condemned the United States for repeatedly sanctioning its Ministry of Intelligence). (10/09/2022). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjKw63

اتهام زنی دوباره آلبانی به ایران؛ دولت آلبانی مجددا مدعی حمله سایبری از سوی منابع ایرانی شد (Albania accuses Iran again; The Albanian government again claims cyber-attack by Iranian sources). (10/09/2022). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjKwtn

مرندی: ایران به دنبال توافقی برای دفاع از حقوق خود است (Marandi: Iran seeks deal to defend its rights). (10/09/2022). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjKwxk

نایب رییس دوم کمیسیون امنیت ملی مجلس: اعمال تحریم‌های جدید علیه ایران مهر تاییدی بر عدم درک آمریکا از منطق مذاکرات است (Second Deputy Chairman of the National Security Commission of the Parliament: New sanctions against Iran confirm U.S. lack of understanding of the logic of negotiations). (11/09/2022). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjKwjv

حمایت آمریکا از اتهام زنی دوباره آلبانی علیه ایران (U.S. supports Albania's re-accusation against Iran). (12/09/2022). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjKwYw

بیانیه تروئیکای اروپا یک موضع نادرست و نسنجیده بود/ آمریکا موظف به صدور روادید برای رئیس‌جمهور است (The European Troika's statement was an incorrect and ill-considered position / America is obliged to issue a visa for the President). (12/09/2022). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjKx4B

نامه خانواده شهدای ترور کشور: پذیرش منافقین نه مهمان‌نوازی بلکه فریبکاری دولت آلبانی است (Letter from the families of the martyrs of the terror in the country: The Hypocrites' (MEK's) acceptance is not hospitality but the Albanian government's deception). (12/09/2022). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjKxhW

گفتگوی بلینکن با نخست وزیر آلبانی و حمایت از اتهامات ضدایرانی (Blinken talks with Albania's PM and supports anti-Iranian accusations). (13/09/2022). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjKxLJ

مرکز ملی فضای مجازی در واکنش به اتهاماتی بی اساس حملات سایبری به آلبانی: طرح اتهام حمله سایبری ایران به آلبانی بی‌اساس است (National Cyberspace Center in response to baseless accusations of cyber-attacks on Albania: Iran's cyberattack on Albania is unfounded). (13/09/2022). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjKxLL

ادعای آمریکا در مورد مداخله روسیه در انتخابات کشورهای دیگر (U.S. claim regarding Russia's interference in other countries' elections). (14/09/2022). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjKxQn

در تداوم سیاست های دوگانه تحریم و دیپلماسی واشنگتن آمریکا ۱۰ فرد و دو نهاد ایرانی را به اتهام حملات سایبری تحریم کرد (In continuation of Washington's dual policies of sanctions and diplomacy U.S. sanctions 10 Iranian individuals and two entities for alleged cyberattacks). (14/09/2022). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjKydF

آمریکا سه ایرانی را متهم به انجام فعالیت‌های مخرب رایانه‌ای کرد (U.S. accuses three Iranians of carrying out malicious computer activities). (14/09/2022). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjKyfw

سازمان بین‌المللی کار، ازدواج اجباری را در گروهک منافقین بررسی کند (The International Labor Organization (ILO) investigates forced marriage in the Hypocrites (MEK) group). (18/09/2022). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjKzct

درخواست خانواده شهدای ترور از آیت الله رییسی: رییس جمهور صدای قربانیان ترور را به گوش جامعه جهانی برساند (Terror martyrs' families appeal to Ayatollah Raisi: The President to bring the voices of terror victims to the ears of the international community). (20/09/2022). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjKBgp

استاندار تهران: حساب افراد فریب خورده و غافل را از آشوبگران جدا می کنیم (Tehran Governor: We will separate the accounts of the deceived and unsuspecting people from the rioters). (29/09/2022). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjKFf5

پشت پرده آشوب‌های اخیر به روایت آمار (Behind the scenes of the recent turmoil according to statistics). (01/10/2022). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjKFMT

آلبانی بند ۵ منشور ناتو را علیه ایران فعال نمی‌کند (Albania does not invoke PARAGRAPH 5 of NATO Charter against Iran). (06/10/2022). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjKHm8

از سفارت‌خانه‌های ایران چه می‌خواهند؟ (What do they want from Iranian embassies?). (12/10/2022). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjKJSK

ایران هرگونه خشونت علیه نمایندگی‌های دیپلماتیک و کنسولی خود در اروپا را محکوم کرد (Iran condemns any acts of violence against its diplomatic and consular missions in Europe). (19/10/2022). *IRNA*. https://irna.ir/xjKMY5