

The Iraqi Tišr?n Revolution (2019-2021) in the Pens of Media: Hegemonic Framing and Alternative Counter-Memory

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Abstract

How did the Iraqi state-aligned media discursively frame the protesters of Thawart Tišr?n (October Revolution, 2019-2021)? On 1 October 2019, Iraq witnessed a large-scale, youth-led socio-political mobilisation that occupied prominent public spaces, most notably Tahrir Square in Baghdad. Al-Tišr?n?y?n (the Octoberists) emerged as a self-referential label denoting a new, trans-sectarian civic identity opposing systemic corruption and advocating for national sovereignty.

This study examines the polarized mediation of the protests within the Iraqi media landscape. It argues that state-aligned media constructed the protests as a national threat, portraying participants as deviant or sectarian actors, while protester-aligned platforms produced counter-narratives that framed them as symbols of civic patriotism and democratic resistance. Particular attention is paid to naming practices as sites of discursive struggle, where the term 'Octoberists' was strategically deployed to imply a coordinated faction rather than an organic movement.

Methodologically, the study adopts Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) alongside Appraisal Theory (Martin and White, 2005) to analyse how evaluative language constructs competing narratives and shapes collective memory. The findings demonstrate that state-aligned media consistently employ delegitimising discursive strategies that reinforce dominant political narratives and constrain alternative representations of civic identity. Analysing Iraqi media discourse reveals how media practices extend beyond reporting events to actively defining the boundaries of political belonging and national identity.

Keywords: Thawart Tišr?n, Iraq, state-aligned media, Critical Discourse Analysis, Appraisal theory, Framing