



Resistance, Social Capital, and International Reactions in Iran's 12 Day War: Reframing the Idea of Resistance in a Hybrid Conflict

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
Article type: Research Article	This study uses a qualitative research design to examine how resistance, social capital, and international reactions were constructed, mobilized, and contested during Iran's 12-Day War. Because hybrid conflicts operate across military, informational, cultural, and diplomatic arenas at once, the article combines discourse analysis, thematic content analysis, process tracing, and triangulation across multiple data sources. This approach makes it possible to interpret the war as a complex socio-political event rather than a purely military confrontation. This research investigates how resistance was discursively constructed and redefined during the 12-Day War, how social capital manifested and functioned as a mechanism of wartime resilience, and how regional and international actors framed and responded to the conflict. Findings suggest that resistance was shaped not only by battlefield developments but also by identity, legitimacy, and narrative struggle. Social capital played a central role in sustaining cohesion and adaptation throughout the conflict. Bridging social capital enabled cross-community coordination, information sharing, and digital counter-misinformation efforts through online verification networks and diaspora-based advocacy. International reactions were similarly shaped by more than military outcomes. Global media framing, humanitarian narratives, and diplomatic signaling influenced how the war was interpreted abroad, aligning with theories of soft power and narrative influence. The article shows how Iran sustained internal cohesion and external messaging amid external pressure and internal fragmentation.
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1. Introduction

The 12-Day War began on the 13th of June 2025, when the Israeli regime launched coordinated strikes on Iranian military, nuclear, and residential sites, killing senior commanders, scientists, soldiers, and civilians. The conflict unfolded just days before scheduled U.S.–Iran nuclear talks, amplifying its political significance. While military assessments have been widely discussed, the war's impact on social capital, resistance discourse, and international reactions remains underexamined. This paper addresses these dimensions.

In the early hours of Friday, June 13, 2025, the 12-day conflict between Israel and Iran began with extensive attacks on Tehran and 14 other provinces. These strikes were carried out with the aim of assassinating senior officials and damaging nuclear and military infrastructure. Between June 14 and 16, the focus of the attacks shifted toward undermining political structures and energy-related infrastructure. From June 17 to 21, the intensity of the attacks declined, and the conflict entered a cyber and psychological phase. In the early hours of Sunday, June 22, 2025, the United States directly joined the hostilities by attacking nuclear facilities at Natanz, Isfahan, and Fordow. The bloodiest hours of this confrontation—including attacks on Evin Prison—occurred on Monday, June 23, and in the early hours of Tuesday, June 24, 2025, prior to the establishment of a ceasefire (Daghighieh, 2025).

The war of June 2025 marks one of the most consequential episodes in Iran's contemporary political and security landscape. Triggered by a series of coordinated Israeli strikes on Iranian military, nuclear, and civilian infrastructure producing both immediate humanitarian consequences and long-term political reverberations, the conflict unfolded at a moment of heightened geopolitical tension, occurring just days before scheduled U.S.–Iran nuclear negotiations. Beyond its kinetic dimensions, the war rapidly evolved into a hybrid confrontation in which military operations, information warfare, and symbolic politics became deeply intertwined.

Hybrid conflicts of this nature are increasingly understood not merely as contests of force but as struggles over meaning, legitimacy, and public perception (Kaldor, 2012). In the case of the above-mentioned war, the informational domain became a central arena in which narratives of aggression, deterrence, victimhood, and resistance were constructed, contested, and circulated. Iran's domestic and transnational publics were exposed to a dense flow of competing claims, ranging from battlefield updates to misinformation campaigns amplified through digital platforms. These dynamics underscore the need to analyse the war not only through military or diplomatic lenses but also through the sociological and communicative frameworks that shape how societies interpret conflict.

A critical yet underexplored dimension of the 12-Day War is the role of social capital—the networks, norms, and shared identities that enable collective action. Moments of crisis often reveal the latent capacities of societies to mobilize solidarity, trust, and cooperation. In Iran, the war catalysed a surge of civic engagement, volunteerism, and digital coordination, reflecting the resilience of social bonds even amid political fragmentation. This social capital was not merely spontaneous; it was embedded in longstanding cultural repertoires of sacrifice,

communal responsibility, and resistance that have historically shaped Iranian responses to external threats (Bourdieu, 1986; Putnam, 2000; Aldrich, 2012).

The conflict also generated significant international reactions, revealing the complex interplay between regional alliances, global power politics, and public diplomacy. The involvement of the United States—whose strikes on Iranian nuclear facilities escalated the conflict—demonstrated the fragility of diplomatic channels and the volatility of regional security architectures. Meanwhile, global media coverage and international public opinion shaped the discursive environment in which Iran sought to assert its narrative. These international dimensions are essential for understanding how the war influenced Iran's strategic posture and how external actors interpreted the evolving dynamics of resistance.

While existing scholarship has extensively documented the kinetic (Jamshidi and Mohammadi, 2025; Mohebi and Abdollahian Fard, 2026; Losier, 2025), diplomatic (Alavi Shahri and Akbernejad, 2026), and geopolitical (Eslami and Akbarzadeh, 2025; Ghasemi Tari, 2025) dimensions of the June 2025 conflict, the role of domestic social dynamics remains significantly underexplored. Current analyses often treat the Iranian response as a monolithic function of state policy, largely overlooking the bottom-up mechanisms of social resilience. Consequently, there is a critical need to move beyond macro-level security assessments to examine how the very structure of society—its networks, norms, and collective identities—functions during periods of acute hybrid confrontation. This study addresses this gap by shifting the analytical focus from state-centric strategy to the micro-level dynamics of social capital, thereby challenging the conventional view that conflict is purely a contest of force between state actors.

By synthesizing sociological frameworks with hybrid warfare theory, this research offers a novel contribution to the field of conflict studies. It demonstrates that the resilience displayed during the 12-Day War was not merely a reaction to external aggression, but a manifestation of deeply embedded cultural repertoires of sacrifice and communal responsibility. Furthermore, this article clarifies how these traditional forms of social capital were re-articulated through modern digital coordination, ultimately shaping the discursive environment of the conflict. By documenting this interplay, the study provides a more nuanced understanding of how societies navigate the volatile intersection of digital information warfare and traditional political resistance, offering a new lens through which to interpret contemporary regional security architectures.

Taken together, these factors position the 12-Day War as a critical case study for examining the intersection of social capital, resistance ideology, and international politics in contemporary hybrid warfare. This article contributes to the emerging literature by offering an integrated analysis of how the war mobilized domestic solidarity, redefined the conceptual boundaries of resistance, and elicited diverse international responses (Putnam, 2000; Castells, 2009; Kaldor, 2012). By situating the conflict within broader theoretical debates on information warfare, political sociology, and regional geopolitics, the study aims to illuminate the multifaceted nature of resistance in the 21st century West Asia.

2. Literature Review

To analyse the multi-dimensional nature of the 12-Day War, this study moves beyond traditional kinetic military frameworks, employing instead an interdisciplinary literature review that captures the convergence of tactical, ideological, social, and geopolitical forces. The complexity of contemporary West Asian conflicts requires a multi-layered analytical lens: first, by examining the operational mechanics of Hybrid Warfare and the Information Domain, which defines the medium of modern combat; second, by situating these actions within the framework of Resistance Studies, which elucidates the underlying ideologies and identities that drive strategic practice; and third, by investigating the role of Social Capital and Conflict Resilience in sustaining domestic cohesion during periods of crisis. Finally, these internal dynamics are contextualized within the broader landscape of International Reactions and West Asian Geopolitics, providing a macro-level view of how regional power structures respond to such hybrid disruptions. Together, these four pillars form a cohesive theoretical architecture designed to map the intricate interplay between battlefield technology, national discourse, and regional stability. The conceptualization of hybrid warfare has undergone a profound evolution over the past two decades, shifting from a focus on the tactical fusion of conventional and irregular military manoeuvres toward a comprehensive theory of societal destabilization. Early formulations of the concept primarily sought to categorize the blending of state-led kinetic force with insurgent or paramilitary tactics, viewing the hybridity as a logistical challenge for traditional military doctrine (Hoffman, 2007). However, contemporary scholarship has significantly expanded this framework, positing that modern hybrid conflict is less about the tools of destruction and more about the orchestration of information operations, digital propaganda, and sustained narrative warfare.

In this refined paradigm, information is no longer a peripheral support element but a central kinetic vector. Scholars such as Kaldor (2012) and Rid (2020) argue that the contemporary battlefield has effectively transcended geography, moving into the digital and cognitive realms where victory is defined by the capacity to control the discursive environment. This shift emphasizes the deployment of asymmetric information flows, the strategic use of algorithmic amplification to fracture public discourse, and the conduct of sophisticated psychological operations designed to degrade an opponent's internal cohesion. Ultimately, the modern hybrid model suggests that conflicts are increasingly won through the manipulation of perception and the successful assertion of discursive legitimacy, transforming the public consciousness into a primary arena of contestation. By prioritizing these communicative and psychological dimensions, the modern hybrid conflict challenges states to defend not only their physical borders but their collective identity and social trust against the pervasive, non-kinetic incursions of contemporary warfare.

In the West Asian context, hybrid warfare has been examined in relation to Hezbollah, Hamas, and the Islamic State, yet Iran's experience—particularly during the 12-Day War—remains underexplored. The war demonstrated how states and non-state actors deploy misinformation, counter-narratives, and symbolic communication as strategic tools. This article

contributes to the literature by analysing how Iran's resistance discourse adapted to these hybrid conditions.

In the same vein, the war significantly reshaped the idea of resistance within Iran's political discourse. Resistance—*moqāwemat*—has long served as a foundational concept in the Islamic Republic's ideological architecture, linking national sovereignty to anti-imperialist struggle. However, the 12-Day War introduced new layers to this concept. It highlighted the importance of technological adaptation, digital literacy, and narrative sovereignty, expanding resistance from a primarily military doctrine to a multidimensional strategy encompassing media, diplomacy, and cultural production. The war thus acted as a catalyst for rearticulating resistance as both a national ethos and a regional geopolitical project (Castells, 2009; Dabashi, 2007).

The concept of *moqāwemat* (resistance) serves as a foundational pillar of Iran's post-1979 political identity, transcending mere tactical opposition to function as a comprehensive ideological and strategic paradigm. Scholarly discourse, notably by Dabashi (2007), Ehteshami (2007), and Tamimi (2009), has meticulously traced the transmutation of this concept from a localized, revolutionary ethos of social defiance into a sophisticated regional geopolitical doctrine, most visibly manifested in the 'Axis of Resistance.' This multidimensional doctrine operates across several critical layers: it is rooted in a foundational ideological rejection of Western hegemony and neo-colonialism; it is structurally realized through the provision of strategic support to a network of allied non-state actors; and it is militarily reinforced by a doctrine of asymmetric deterrence, leveraging advanced missile and cyber capabilities to offset conventional weaknesses. Furthermore, *moqāwemat* is not exclusively a matter of hard power; it is deeply embedded in a symbolic political landscape that elevates the values of martyrdom, steadfastness, and endurance to the status of national virtues. By intertwining these kinetic deterrents with a potent socio-religious narrative, the doctrine of resistance creates a resilient framework that allows the state to project influence and maintain ideological continuity amidst persistent external pressures.

Recent analyses from the Middle East Institute emphasize that after the 12-Day War, the Axis of Resistance entered a phase of strategic recalibration, focusing on rearmament, financial adaptation, and narrative consolidation. This aligns with broader scholarship on how resistance movements evolve under pressure, shifting from purely military strategies to hybrid socio-political frameworks (Middle East Institute, 2025).

However, existing literature often treats resistance as a static ideology rather than a dynamic discursive field shaped by crises. The 12-Day War provides a unique case for examining how resistance is reinterpreted in real-time through media, diplomacy, and cultural production (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Foucault, 1988; Sewell, 1992).

Complementing the analysis of state-level strategies, social capital theory—as fundamentally articulated by Bourdieu (1986), Coleman (1988), and Putnam (2000)—provides a critical lens for examining the latent power of social networks, interpersonal trust, and internalized shared norms in facilitating coordinated collective action. While traditionally employed in sociological studies of community development, social capital is increasingly recognized within contemporary conflict studies as a decisive determinant of societal resilience

and a primary driver of non-kinetic stability. During periods of acute crisis, the density and quality of these social ties directly modulate a population's capacity for rapid response, influencing everything from localized civic mobilization to the macro-level efficacy of institutional trust. Furthermore, in the context of modern hybrid warfare, social capital functions as a critical cognitive defence mechanism; it dictates the patterns of information verification behaviours, determining whether communities coalesce around verified truths or succumb to the fragmenting effects of algorithmic disinformation. By examining these relational dynamics, it becomes possible to understand how the structural integrity of social networks can either mitigate or exacerbate the destabilizing effects of hybrid incursions, ultimately serving as the bedrock upon which a society's ability to endure and recover is built.

Research on Iran's social capital has often focused on electoral participation, religious networks, and community-based solidarity. Yet few studies examine how wartime conditions activate or transform social capital (Bayat, 2013; Keshavarzian, 2007). The 12-Day War revealed how Iranian society mobilized volunteer networks for rescue and relief, digital communities for fact-checking and counter-misinformation, symbolic rituals reinforcing national unity.

The international dimensions of the 12-Day War, besides, align with a growing body of scholarship on regional security architectures and U.S.–Iran–Israel strategic competition. Studies from GIGA (2025), and regional think tanks highlight several trends (e.g. International Crisis Group (2025) and Carnegie Middle East Center (2025)):

- the fragility of nuclear diplomacy,
- the shifting balance of deterrence in the West Asia,
- the role of global media in shaping conflict narratives,
- the recalibration of regional alliances.

International relations literature also emphasizes how conflicts generate discursive battles in global forums, influencing sanctions, diplomatic negotiations, and public opinion. The 12-Day War intensified these dynamics, prompting debates over nuclear proliferation, humanitarian impacts, and the legitimacy of pre-emptive strikes (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998; Hurd, 1999; Keck & Sikkink, 1998).

Despite extensive scholarship on hybrid warfare, resistance, and West Asian geopolitics, three gaps remain: 1) limited analysis of social capital during wartime in Iran, particularly in hybrid conflicts, 2) insufficient attention to how resistance is discursively reconstructed during fast-moving crises like the 12-Day War, and 3) underdeveloped integration of international reactions with domestic ideological shifts, especially regarding resistance identity. This study addresses these gaps by offering a multidimensional analysis that integrates social, discursive, and geopolitical perspectives.

3. Theoretical Framework

The 12-Day War presents a complex case that requires an integrated theoretical approach. This section outlines the conceptual foundations that guide the analysis, drawing from four interrelated bodies of theory: hybrid warfare, resistance studies, social capital theory, and international

relations frameworks relevant to West Asian geopolitics. Together, these perspectives provide a multidimensional lens for understanding how resistance is constructed, mobilized, and contested during and after the conflict. Hybrid warfare theory provides the first pillar of the framework. Contemporary scholarship conceptualizes hybrid warfare as a multi-domain conflict system in which actors combine conventional military force, irregular and proxy operations, cyber and information warfare, economic pressure, and symbolic and psychological operations (Galeotti, 2015; Hoffman, 2007; Kaldor, 2012). This approach moves beyond traditional battlefield analysis by emphasizing the interdependence of physical and informational domains. In the context of the 12-Day War, hybrid warfare theory helps explain the simultaneity of kinetic strikes and digital misinformation, the strategic use of narrative framing by state and non-state actors, and the role of media ecosystems in shaping public perception and morale. Hybrid warfare thus provides a conceptual foundation for analysing how Iran's resistance posture operated across military, informational, and symbolic terrains.

In regards to resistance (*moqāwemat*), it is not merely a political slogan in Iran; it is a multilayered ideological and strategic construct. The theoretical literature identifies three dimensions of resistance that are particularly relevant to the 12-Day War: resistance as ideology, resistance as strategic practice, and resistance as discursive formation (Dabashi, 2007). Rooted in post-1979 revolutionary discourse, resistance is framed as opposition to foreign domination, defence of national sovereignty, and moral and spiritual steadfastness. This ideological foundation shapes public expectations and state narratives during crises (Tamimi, 2009; Ehteshami, 2007). Resistance also functions as a military and geopolitical strategy, encompassing deterrence through missile and drone capabilities, support for regional allies, and asymmetric responses to technologically superior adversaries. The 12-Day War highlighted how Iran operationalizes resistance through both direct and indirect means (Ehteshami, 2007). Recent scholarship emphasizes resistance as a discursive field—a space where meaning is produced, contested, and circulated. During the 12-Day War, resistance was articulated through state media narratives, cultural production (poetry, visual art, martyrdom symbolism), digital activism and citizen journalism. This discursive dimension is essential for understanding how resistance identity is reconstructed during conflict (Castells, 2009; Foucault, 1988).

Due to the nature of the qualitative research employed in this study, social capital theory provides the third pillar of the framework. Defined as the networks, norms, and trust that facilitate collective action, social capital is crucial for understanding societal responses to crisis. Three forms of social capital are relevant: bonding social capital, bridging social capital, and linking social capital (Coleman, 1988; Woolcock, 1998). In this vein, Strong ties within communities—familial, religious, neighbourhood-based—enable rapid mobilization of volunteers, emotional resilience, and localized crisis response (Bayat, 2013; Coleman, 1988). During the 12-Day War, bonding capital manifested in grassroots relief efforts and communal solidarity.

In investigating the social capital, there can be two networks to be taken into account: horizontal and vertical. Horizontal networks across social groups support information sharing, cross-community coordination, and digital fact-checking and counter-misinformation. This was

evident in the emergence of online verification networks and diaspora-based advocacy (Putnam, 2000). Viewing diasporas as dynamic processes, rather than static entities, highlights how various mobilizations and practices—such as cultural rituals, language preservation, and community organizing—maintain connections to their country of origin (Féron and Voytiv, 2021). These actions foster a persistent sense of identity and belonging, irrespective of physical distance (Fihel *et. al*, 2025. Sökefeld (2006) further conceptualizes diasporas as social movements driven by collective identities and shared experiences, engaging in transnational advocacy and activism. In the current study, it was aimed to insinuate an example of Iranian diaspora to investigate their perspectives on the war against Iran in June, 2025. In the same vein, vertical ties between citizens and institutions influence trust in state messaging, legitimacy of resistance narratives, and compliance with emergency directives. The war tested and, in some cases, strengthened linking capital as the state sought to unify public sentiment. Social capital theory thus helps explain how Iran sustained internal cohesion despite external pressure and internal political fragmentation (Lin, 2001; Newton, 2001; Woolcock, 1998).

The final pillar draws from international relations theory, particularly frameworks relevant to West Asian geopolitics, that is, regional security complex theory, constructivist approaches to identity and norms, and soft power and public diplomacy. This perspective views the West Asia as a security interdependent region, where conflicts in one state reverberate across others. The 12-Day War activated Israeli deterrence strategies, U.S. intervention dynamics, recalibration among Persian Gulf states, and responses from Iran's Axis of Resistance partners (Buzan & Wæver, 2003; Mearsheimer, 2001; Walt, 1985). Therefore, constructivist IR theory highlights how identity, norms, and narratives shape state behaviour. The war reinforced Iran's self-presentation as a defender of sovereignty, a leader of anti-imperialist resistance, and a victim of aggression seeking international recognition (Katzenstein, 1996; Wendt, 1992). As a result, international reactions to 12-Day War were shaped not only by military events but by global media framing, humanitarian narratives, and diplomatic signalling. This aligns with theories of soft power, which emphasize the role of persuasion, legitimacy, and narrative influence in global politics (Nye, 2004). By combining these four theoretical pillars, the article adopts an interdisciplinary analytical model where Hybrid warfare explains the multi-domain nature of the conflict. Resistance theory clarifies how Iran framed and operationalized its response. Social capital theory illuminates the internal societal dynamics that sustained resilience. International relations theory contextualizes global reactions and geopolitical implications. This integrated framework enables a holistic analysis of the 12-Day War as a military, social, discursive, and geopolitical event.

4. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative, multi-method research design—a choice necessitated by the complex, interpretive nature of the phenomena under investigation—to investigate how resistance, social capital, and international reactions were constructed, mobilized, and contested during Iran's 12-Day War. A qualitative approach is essential for this topic because hybrid conflicts, by their nature, unfold across military, informational, cultural, and diplomatic domains simultaneously. Such complexities necessitate an in-depth exploration of the meanings,

interpretations, and underlying power dynamics that shape these phenomena—insights often obscured by purely quantitative methods. Understanding concepts like resistance and social capital requires delving into the nuanced discursive practices and subjective experiences that define them. Therefore, this research embraces qualitative methods to capture this richness and complexity, moving beyond a purely military confrontation perspective to a holistic socio-political analysis. As a result, the methodological approach integrates Discourse Analysis and Thematic Content Analysis, with findings triangulated across diverse data sources. Discourse Analysis was applied to deconstruct the linguistic strategies and underlying assumptions used to construct narratives of resistance and frame international perceptions. Besides, Thematic Content Analysis systematically identified recurring themes, patterns, and key concepts across the selected data. The unit of analysis typically involved identifying dominant discourses within specific document types. This multi-method design allows for a comprehensive understanding by examining both the linguistic construction of narratives and the sequential unfolding of events. The implementation of these methods focused on ensuring the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the findings—the qualitative equivalents of validity and reliability. Data sources were purposefully selected to ensure relevance, diversity, and analytical depth. Criteria included relevance, representational diversity and discursive richness. The researcher maintained a reflexive journal throughout the study, acknowledging their own positionality and potential biases. This awareness informed the analytical process, ensuring that interpretations remained grounded in the textual evidence rather than personal preconceptions.

In addition, the study is grounded in an interpretivist epistemology, which views social and political phenomena as meaning-laden constructs shaped by discourse, identity, and collective interpretation. This orientation is appropriate for three reasons. First and foremost, resistance is discursive—its meaning shifts through rhetoric, symbolism, and narrative framing. Second, social capital is relational—it emerges through networks, trust, and shared norms that cannot be captured through positivist metrics alone. And, finally, international reactions are performative—they are expressed through diplomatic language, media framing, and symbolic gestures. Interpretivism allows the study to analyse not only what happened during the 12-Day War but how actors made sense of it, how narratives competed, and how meanings were stabilized or contested.

The methodology is structured around three core research questions:

1. How was resistance discursively constructed and redefined during the 12-Day War?
2. How did social capital manifest and function as a mechanism of wartime resilience?
3. How did regional and international actors frame and respond to the conflict?

The study draws on a purposefully constructed corpus consisting of four categories of empirical material collected during and immediately after the conflict period. First, the domestic media corpus includes *Tasnim*, *Avash*, *Mehr*, *Astan-e Baharestan*, *Hamshahri Online*, *Pasokhgoo*, *Moj-e Rasa*. Second, the international media and diplomatic corpus includes reporting and live updates from Reuters and Axios, along with official statements and briefing materials from the region countries' officials. Third, the cultural and symbolic corpus includes wartime poems, Friday sermon transcripts, martyrdom imagery, and digitally circulated posts

gathered from Telegram. Fourth, the policy and expert-analysis corpus includes publications and commentaries from the Strategic Council on Foreign Relations, Carnegie, Crisis Group, ACAPS, Iran Think Tanks.

Regarding the analyses, CDA is used to examine how power, ideology, and identity were articulated through language. The analysis focuses on lexical choices (e.g., “aggression,” “martyrdom,” “deterrence”), narrative structures (crisis → sacrifice → resilience), intertextual references (historical wars, religious symbolism), and discursive strategies (victimhood, heroism, sovereignty) (Fairclough, 2015; van Dijk, 1998; Wodak & Meyer, 2016). Additionally, a thematic analysis synthesizes concepts into three overarching themes: a) resistance and social capital, b) reconstruction of resistance identity, and c) international reactions and geopolitical narratives (Charmaz, 2014; Saldaña, 2021; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This method enables systematic comparison across diverse data types. Yet, by design, this study is deeply contextualized to the “12-Day War.” Because the sample is “purposefully selected” for “discursive richness” rather than being a random or representative sample, the findings cannot be generalized to other conflicts or even other periods of Iranian history. It is a “case study” approach, which limits its broader application.

5. Analysis

The analysis examines how resistance, social capital, and international reactions were constructed and mobilized during the 12-Day War. Drawing on the methodological tools outlined earlier—CDA and thematic content analysis—this section identifies the key patterns that shaped the conflict’s social and geopolitical dynamics. The findings are organized into three major analytical domains: (1) the discursive reconstruction of resistance, (2) the activation and transformation of social capital, and (3) the international framing and geopolitical reverberations of the war. These findings are scaffolded upon the excerpts extracted from the media categorised in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of the media studied

Type of Data	Media
domestic and regional media	<i>Tasnim, Avash, Mehr, Astan-e Baharestan, Hamshahri Online, Pasokhqoo, Moj-e Rasa</i>
international media	Reuters, Axios
cultural and symbolic	Telegram Channels (Reza Nasri, Borideha va Boradeha, Khabar Fori)
policy and expert-analysis	Strategic Council on Foreign Relations, Carnegie, Crisis Group, ACAPS, Iran Think Tanks

5.1. Discursive Reconstruction of Resistance During the 12-Day War

5.1.1. Resistance as a Narrative of Survival and Sovereignty

Across Iranian state and private media, cultural artifacts, and political speeches, resistance was framed as a narrative of survival, emphasizing Iran’s endurance in the face of technologically superior adversaries. Lexical choices such as *esteqlāl* (independence), *sarbolandi* (dignity), and *defā ‘-e melli* (national defense) were repeatedly invoked to construct a moralized narrative of sovereignty under attack. Examples of such themes can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Lexical choices of Iranian state and private media

Media	Original Excerpt	Translated Excerpt (translated by the author)
Tasnim News Agency (2026)	غیائی با بیان اینکه ملت ایران، مدیون حضور آرام و مؤمنانه شماست، گفت: شما که در سکوت مأموریت‌ها، امنیت را به خیابان‌ها و دل‌ها باز می‌گردانید. به برکت خون شهیدان و صبر خانواده‌های صبور نیروی انتظامی، پرچم سبز امنیت و آرامش، همواره در پهنه این سرزمین سرافراز در اهتزاز بماند.	Ghiyasi, noting that the Iranian nation is indebted to your calm and faithful presence, stated: “You, who in the quiet execution of your duties restore security to the streets and to people’s hearts. By the blessing of the martyrs’ blood and the patience of the steadfast families of the Law Enforcement Force, may the green banner of security and tranquillity remain forever aloft across this proud land.”
Avash (2025)	لاریجانی گفت: «طرح دشمنان ایران برای سرنگونی نظام در کمتر از شش روز، با مقاومت ملت و رهبری حکیمانه شکست خورد. از لایه‌های پنهان این جنگ می‌توان دریافت که آنها از حمله نظامی صرف عبور کرده بودند و به دنبال پروژه تمام‌عیار فروپاشی ملی بودند؛ پروژه‌ای که با عنایت الهی و هوشیاری ملت ایران، به بن‌بست خورد.»	Larijani stated: “The plan devised by Iran’s enemies to overthrow the system in less than six days was defeated through the resistance of the nation and the wise leadership guiding it. From the hidden layers of this conflict, it becomes clear that they had moved beyond a purely military assault and were pursuing a full-scale project of national collapse—a project that, by divine grace and the vigilance of the Iranian people, reached a dead end.”
Mehr News Agency (2026)	در حاشیه مراسم باشکوه راهپیمایی ۲۲ بهمن، تعدادی از پهبادهای ساقط‌شده رژیم صهیونیستی در جنگ ۱۲ روزه به‌صورت عمومی در میدان آزادی تهران به نمایش گذاشته شد.	On the sidelines of the grand 22 Bahman (11 February) rally, several of the Zionist regime’s drones that were downed during the 12-day war were publicly displayed in Tehran’s Azadi Square.

This discursive framing served two functions: 1) legitimizing the state’s strategic posture by portraying the conflict as an existential struggle, 2) reinforcing collective identity by linking contemporary events to historical memories of resistance (e.g., the Iran–Iraq War, anti-colonial struggles). The analysis shows that resistance was not presented as a static doctrine but as a living, adaptive identity responsive to the pressures of hybrid warfare.

5.1.2. Hybrid Warfare and the Expansion of Resistance into New Domains

The war’s informational dimension forced a rapid expansion of resistance into digital and symbolic domains. State media and affiliated outlets framed information campaigns as part of a broader “psychological war,” positioning Iran as both a military and informational target. Three discursive strategies emerged whose examples are demonstrated in Table 2:

- Delegitimizing foreign narratives by labelling them as “fabrications,” “psychological operations,” or “algorithmic warfare.”
- Elevating domestic narratives through real-time reporting, mythic framing, and appeals to national unity.
- Symbolic amplification via cultural production—poetry and martyrdom iconography that reframed loss as sacrifice.

This expansion demonstrates how resistance was reconstructed as a multi-domain strategy, aligning with hybrid warfare theory.

Table 3. Excerpts from Iranian media showing discursive strategies during hybrid warfare

Media	Original Excerpt	Translated Excerpt (translated by the author)
Tasnim News Agency (2025)	به گزارش خبرگزاری تسنیم از مشهد، سردار سرتیپ پاسدار سید هاشم غیائی روز یکشنبه در پیامی به مناسبت آغاز هفته نیروی انتظامی اظهار کرد: در جنگ ۱۲ روزه اخیر، آن گاه که آسمان خاورمیانه از آتش و دسیسه می‌درخشید، فرزندان فراجا با چشمانی بیدار، جبهه‌ای بی‌صدا اما سرنوشت‌ساز را پاسداری کردند.	According to a report by Tasnim News Agency in Mashhad, Brigadier General Seyed Hashem Ghiyasi stated in a message issued on Sunday to mark the beginning of Police Week: <i>"In the recent 12-Day War, at a time when the skies of the Middle East were illuminated by fire and intrigue, the children of the Law Enforcement Command (FARAJA), with vigilant eyes, safeguarded a silent yet decisive front."</i>
Avash (2025)	لاریجانی از تهدیدهای مستقیم دشمن علیه مسئولان کشور سخن گفت و با اشاره به تماس تلفنی تهدیدآمیز دشمن با وی در روز جمعه برای ترک تهران، اظهار کرد: «به من گفتند ظرف ۱۲ ساعت باید از تهران خارج شوم، وگرنه سرنوشتی مانند شهیدان باقری و رشید در انتظارم است. این تماس‌ها بخشی از پروژه ترور روانی و تهدید گسترده بود که البته با جوابی که شایسته نتانیاهو بود به این تماس پاسخ دادم.	Ali Larijani spoke of the enemy's direct threats against senior officials of the country, and referring to a threatening phone call he received on Friday urging him to leave Tehran, stated: <i>"They told me that I must leave Tehran within 12 hours, otherwise I would face the same fate as Martyrs Baqeri and Rashid. These calls were part of a broader campaign of psychological terror and extensive intimidation. Naturally, I responded to the call with an answer befitting Netanyahu."</i>
Mehr News Agency (2026)	[سرتیپ پاسدار ابوالفضل شکارچی] تاکید کرد: تا زمانی که مردم قهرمان در صحنه هستند، دشمنان نخواهند توانست به اهداف شوم خود دست یابند.	Brigadier General Abolfazl Shekarchi emphasized that as long as the heroic people remain present on the scene, the enemies will never be able to achieve their malicious objectives.
Strategic Council on Foreign Relations (2025)	چالش بعدی برای ترامپ انتقاداتی است که در خصوص عملکرد او درباره تضعیف دکترین امنیت ملی و سیاست خارجی آمریکا وجود دارد. در حال حاضر این چالش در محافل مختلف سیاسی، امنیتی و ... آمریکا شدت گرفته که با توجه به شعار «اول آمریکا»ی ترامپ و اینکه او می‌خواهد «عظمت آمریکا» را احیا کند، آیا اسرائیل باید در خدمت منافع و عظمت آمریکا باشد یا آمریکا با همه عظمتش در خدمت رژیم اسرائیل.	The next challenge facing Trump concerns the criticisms directed at his performance regarding the weakening of the United States' national security doctrine and foreign policy. This challenge has now intensified across various political and security circles in the United States. In light of Trump's "America First" slogan and his claim that he seeks to "restore America's greatness," the question has arisen: Should Israel serve the interests and greatness of the United States, or should the United States, with all its power, serve the Israeli regime?

The hybrid war was not limited to only news or policy papers. There were poets reciting on the 12-day War and focusing on the religious roots of martyrdom among the Iranians. Mohammad Mahdi Khanmohammadi, a clergyman, has recited the following poem in Persian:

Table 4. A poem by Mohammad Mahdi Khanmohammadi posted on Astan-e Baharestan Website (Translated by authors)

Original Persian Poem	Translation into English (translated by the author)
در خلسه‌ای از شهود عرفان غدیر پیش از همه رفتند به قربان غدیر دیدیم به خون خویش بیعت کردند یاران حسینند، شهیدان غدیر	In a trance of Ghadir's mystical vision, they were the first to hasten toward the offering of Ghadir. We witnessed how they pledged allegiance with their own blood— they are the companions of Hossein, the martyrs of Ghadir.

Source: <https://astanebaharestan.ir/?p=25316>

5.1.3. Resistance as Emotional and Moral Capital

The analysis of cultural artifacts reveals that resistance was also framed as an emotional and moral resource. Imagery of martyrs, references to Karbala symbolism, and poetic invocations of endurance created a moral economy in which suffering was reinterpreted as meaningful and redemptive. This emotional framing helped transform fear into resolve, convert loss into

symbolic capital, and sustain public morale during uncertainty. Resistance thus operated not only as a political doctrine but as a moral narrative that shaped collective affect.

Table 5. Emotional capital on media

Media	Original Excerpt	Translated Excerpt (translated by the author)
Hamshahri Online (2025)	مفاهیمی چون «مبارزه با ظلم»، «دفاع از حق»، «ولایت‌پذیری»، «حماسه‌زیستی» و هزاران خصوصیت اخلاقی و رفتاری دیگر، از دیرباز در فرهنگ دینی مردم ایران نهادینه شده است.	Concepts such as “fighting against injustice,” “defence of truth,” “commitment to guardianship (velāyat-paziri),” “living heroically,” and countless other ethical and behavioural virtues have long been deeply embedded in the religious culture of the Iranian people
Pasokhgoo (2025)	در جریان غزه خندق (۵ هـ / ۶۲۷ م) با توطئه یهودیان، قبیله قریش با متحدانش از دیگر قبایل کفار عرب و یهود، برای ریشه‌کن کردن اسلام بر ضد پیامبر صلی‌الله‌علیه‌وآله و مسلمانان هم‌داستان شدند. در جنگ ۱۲ روزه تحمیلی رژیم صهیونیستی علیه ایران نیز این رژیم به همراه امریکا و دیگر هم‌پیمانان سعی در ضربه زدن به انقلاب اسلامی و درنهایت سرنوشتی نظام اسلامی داشتند.	During the Battle of the Trench (5 AH / 627 CE), through the machinations of certain Jewish groups, the Quraysh tribe—together with their allied Arab and Jewish tribes—united against the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) and the Muslims in an effort to eradicate Islam. In the recent 12-Day War imposed by the Israeli regime against Iran, this regime, alongside the United States and its other allies, likewise sought to inflict damage upon the Islamic Revolution and ultimately bring about the overthrow of the Islamic system.
Moje Rasa (2025)	وی با بیان اینکه بنابراین، با شناخت ریشه‌های تاریخی این دشمنی، این شبهه برای همگان برطرف خواهد شد که دشمنی رژیم صهیونیستی و جنگ‌های نیابتی با ایران، صرفاً به دلیل تهدید و شعار مرگ بر آمریکا و اسرائیل نیست، تأکید کرد: این دشمنی جنگی میان حق و باطل است که از ابتدای خلقت جریان داشته است. این جنگ، یک جنگ موجودیتی است و جبهه باطل موجودیت خود را در نابودی جبهه حق می‌بیند.	[Morteza Ahmadi] stated that by understanding the historical roots of this hostility, it becomes clear to all that the enmity of the Israeli regime and its proxy wars against Iran is not merely a reaction to slogans such as “Death to America” or “Death to Israel.” Rather, he emphasized, this hostility represents a struggle between truth and falsehood that has persisted since the beginning of creation. This conflict is an existential one, in which the camp of falsehood perceives its very survival as dependent on the destruction of the camp of truth.

In a similar vein, on 16 June 2025, Reza Nasri disseminated a video featuring Esmail Baghaei, the spokesperson for the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This instance further illustrates the efficacy of emotive rhetoric in fostering national solidarity. The accompanying Persian caption, provided here in translation, states:

We will not allow the victims of Israel’s crimes to be reduced to mere numbers in international media. Each one had a face, a name, a story, a set of aspirations.

Publish their names, photographs, and life narratives. Speak of their families, their friends, their interests, and their goals. Do not allow the Western and Israeli propaganda apparatus—along with a handful of Persian speaking collaborators—to claim that “Israel conducts precise strikes and does not target ordinary civilians.”



Figure 1. Screenshot taken from Reza Nasri's Telegram channel - posted on June 16, 2025

5.2. Social Capital as a Mechanism of Wartime Resilience

5.2.1. Bonding Social Capital: Community-Level Solidarity

The analysis of domestic media and citizen-generated content shows a surge in bonding social capital during the war. Local communities mobilized rapidly to provide shelter and food to displaced families, organize blood donation drives, and support rescue and recovery operations.

These actions were often spontaneous and decentralized, reflecting strong intra-community ties. The war thus activated latent social networks that had been shaped by previous crises (e.g., earthquakes, sanctions, the COVID-19 pandemic) (Aldrich, 2012; Dynes, 2006).

Table 6. An excerpt on local communities' mobilisation to help their fellow citizens (Iran Think Tank, 2025)

Source	Original Excerpt	Translation into English (translated by the author)
Iran Think Tanks (2025)	در این بحران، طیف گسترده‌ای از تشکلات مردم نهاد شامل جمعیت هلال احمر، خیریه‌ها، انجمن‌های صنفی، کانون‌های مساجد، هیئت‌های مذهبی، گروه‌های جهادی، خانه‌های جهاد (سرای محلات تهران)، بسیج مردمی و سازمان‌های غیردولتی (NGOs) با کارکردهای حمایتی، امدادی و ترویجی به میدان آمدند. این نهادها با تکیه بر شبکه‌های اجتماعی و سازمانی خود، نقش موثری در مدیریت بحران ایفا کردند. برخی از اقدامات کلیدی این تشکلات را به شرح زیر است: تولید و انتشار محتوای آموزشی جهت کنترل اضطراب جمعی، از طریق شبکه‌های اجتماعی رسمی و غیررسمی؛ واگذاری موقت بخش زیادی از کودکان و سالمندان بی سرپرست مستقر در شیرخوارگاه‌ها، مراکز شبه خانواده و آسایشگاه‌های سالمندان به خانواده‌های داوطلب؛ تشکیل گروه‌های محافظت محله‌ای با محوریت مساجد یا هیئت‌های مذهبی و نهادهای مردمی محلی به ویژه بسیج مردمی و گروه‌های جهادی برای حفظ نظم و امنیت اجتماعی؛ سازماندهی خدمات داوطلبانه نظیر نانوايي‌های شبانه‌روزی، ارائه کمک‌های پزشکی رایگان و توزیع مواد غذایی به منظور تقویت انسجام اجتماعی در بحران.	During this crisis, a wide range of civil society organizations—including the Red Crescent Society, charitable foundations, professional associations, mosque-based community centers, religious congregations, jihadi volunteer groups, neighborhood service houses (Tehran's sarāy-e mahallāt), the Basij, and various non-governmental organizations (NGOs)—entered the field with supportive, relief-oriented, and promotional functions. Relying on their social and organizational networks, these institutions played an effective role in crisis management. Some of their key actions included: Producing and disseminating educational content aimed at managing collective anxiety through both formal and informal social media channels; Temporarily placing a significant number of unaccompanied children and elderly individuals—residing in orphanages, quasi-family centers, and eldercare facilities—with volunteer families; Forming neighborhood protection groups centered around mosques, religious associations, and local grassroots institutions—particularly the Basij and jihadi groups—to help maintain social order and security; Organizing voluntary services such as round the-clock bakeries, free medical assistance, and the distribution of food supplies to strengthen social cohesion during the crisis.

5.2.2. Bridging Social Capital: Digital Coordination and Fact-Checking Networks

Digital platforms became critical sites for bridging social capital, linking diverse groups across geographic and ideological boundaries. The analysis identified two major forms of digital coordination:

1. Diaspora-based advocacy networks amplifying Iranian perspectives internationally.
2. Cross-community solidarity campaigns that transcended political divides.

These networks functioned as horizontal connectors, enabling rapid information flow and collective problem-solving.

There are lots of Iranians living their lives abroad for decades now. For example, in Figure 2, extracted from a Telegram channel named Akhbar Fori, is a woman of an Iranian decent who is a diplomat in France. As pointed out above, the diaspora community usually follow a transnational advocacy approach to their homeland. In the case of Figure 2, Aida Hajizadeh, a member of the French National Assembly, supports Iran in the war although she is not living in Iran anymore. The caption to this figure on the mentioned channel is illustrated in Table 7 where she supports Iran and condemns the Israeli regime.



Figure 2. Aida Hajizadeh, in a video posted on Khabar Fori Telegram cahnnel on June 20, 2025

Table 7. Caption to a post reporting Aida Hajizadeh's interview condemning the Israeli regime (available at https://t.me/NE_WG/63121)

Posted on Akhbar Fori Channel	Translation into English (translated by the author)
نماینده ایرانی تبار پارلمان فرانسه: نتانیاهو با بمباران مردم، از آزادی حرف می‌زند؟ این نهایت ریاکاری است	French MP of Iranian Descent: "Netanyahu speaks of freedom while bombing civilians? This is the height of hypocrisy."
آیدا هادی‌زاده، نماینده مجلس ملی فرانسه و رئیس گروه دوستی پارلمانی ایران و فرانسه، با لحنی صریح و بی‌پرده به ادعاهای بنیامین نتانیاهو درباره «آزادی مردم ایران» واکنش نشان داد.	Aida Hadizadeh, a member of the French National Assembly and the President of the France–Iran Parliamentary Friendship Group, responded in a direct and forthright tone to Benjamin Netanyahu's claims regarding "the freedom of the Iranian people."

Figure 3. is another example from Khabar Fori, where there is a video on the U.S. citizens supporting Iran during the 12-Day War?



Figure 3. A video posted on Khabar Fori, showing global support for Iran

Table 8. Caption to the post in Figure 3 (available at https://t.me/NE_WG/62910)

Posted on Akhbar Fori Channel	Translation into English (translated by the author)
حضور گسترده معترضین به جنگ با ایران در خیابانهای نیویورک	Mass Presence of Protesters Opposing War with Iran in the Streets of New York
شب گذشته تعداد زیادی از شهروندان آمریکایی در خیابانهای نیویورک و در میدان مشهور تایمز، راهپیمایی اعتراضی به جنگ با ایران برگزار کردند و خواستار پایان فوری حمایت آمریکا از اسرائیل شدند.	Last night, a large number of American citizens held a protest march in the streets of New York and in the iconic Times Square, voicing their opposition to a war with Iran and calling for the immediate end of U.S. support for Israel.

5.3. International Reactions and Geopolitical Reverberations

5.3.1. Global Media Framing and the Politics of Representation

There have been comments insinuating the regional escalation or humanitarian issues in the 12-Day War (Blanchet et al., 2026). In the same vein, international media coverage framed the conflict through three dominant lenses:

- nuclear risk and regional escalation,
- humanitarian consequences,
- strategic competition between Iran, Israel, and the United States.

Table 9. Excerpts from global media framing

Media	Excerpt
Reuters (2025)	– At least 20 senior Iranian commanders killed in Israeli attack on Iran, two sources say – Rubio warns Iran not to target US interests – “Tonight, Israel took unilateral action against Iran. We are not involved in strikes against Iran and our top priority is protecting American forces in the region,” Rubio said in a statement.
Axios (2025)	– President Trump said Friday he halted plans to potentially ease sanctions on Iran after Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei downplayed the success of U.S. and Israeli airstrikes on Iran's nuclear program. – President Trump's MAGA movement appeared to largely coalesce late Saturday in supporting his decision to strike Iranian nuclear sites, despite its bitter infighting recently over the prospect of the U.S. intervening in the Israel-Iran war.
ACAPS (2026)	– Similarly, an estimated 60,000–80,000 ethnic Armenians in Tehran and northwest Iran are potentially exposed to displacement to Armenia, including to the Syunik region. If 300 people started arriving at reception centres in Armenia every day for three consecutive days, the government response would likely be insufficient and humanitarian intervention could be required (IFRC 06/03/2026). Drinking water, ready-to-eat food, hygiene items, emergency medical services, psychological support, NFIs, shelter, and emergency cash assistance are likely needed at reception points near border crossings expecting arrivals (Astara border crossing in Azerbaijan and Nurdüz–Agarak in Armenia)

These frames shaped global public opinion and influenced diplomatic responses. The analysis shows that Iran's attempts to assert narrative sovereignty were constrained by the dominance of Western media ecosystems.

5.3.2. Diplomatic Signalling and Regional Realignments

Diplomatic statements from the U.S., EU, Persian Gulf states, and regional actors reveal a complex pattern of strategic ambiguity, deterrence signalling, and cautious de-escalation. The war intensified debates over Iran's nuclear program, the future of regional security architectures, and the role of non-state actors aligned with Iran.

Table 10. Excerpts from media insinuating diplomatic signalling during the 12-Day War

Media	Excerpt
Carnegie (2025)	Trump's initial statements paint Israel's strikes as useful leverage for nuclear talks, but to see them that way is a mistake. Instead, he urgently needs to press Israel to stop ramping up its campaign and offer Iran incentives to stand down, while making clear to Tehran the ruinous costs of not doing so.
Crisis Group (2025)	A subsequent escalation could draw in the U.S., its regional partners and Iran's non-state allies in a growing conflagration. While Trump appears to have given diplomacy a welcome two weeks, there remains a serious prospect that at some point soon he will jump into Israel's war with Iran. Should he do so, he risks joining the bipartisan ranks of U.S. presidents who underestimated the risks of conflict in the Middle East at a huge cost to regional stability, U.S. power and their own legacies.

Process tracing shows that each escalation in the conflict triggered a corresponding wave of diplomatic activity, demonstrating the war's geopolitical ripple effects. On social media, specifically on Telegram, *Akhbar Fori* Channel shared two posts on diplomatic signals of Arab foreign ministers and Saudi foreign minister whose translations from Persian are as follows:

Table 11. Statement of FMs of the region country signalling diplomatic requests (available at https://t.me/NE_WG/63222 and https://t.me/NE_WG/63222)

Statement of Arab FMs	Saudi FM
Tabnak—The foreign ministers of the member states of the Arab League, in a statement issued from Istanbul, condemned Israel's aggression against Iran. The statement, released early Saturday morning, declares: <i>"We call for a return to negotiations in order to reach an agreement on the Iranian nuclear issue."</i> Warning that Israel is pushing the region toward further confrontation and instability, the ministers added: <i>"We call for effective and impactful international action to halt Israel's aggressive policies and practices."</i> <i>"We emphasize the necessity of refraining from targeting nuclear facilities operating under the safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency."</i> <i>"We reaffirm the need to respect the principles of the United Nations Charter, which prohibit the use or threat of force in international relations."</i> The statement concludes: <i>"We stress the importance of establishing a Middle East free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction."</i>	Faisal bin Farhan, the Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia, stated: <i>"We condemn Israel's acts of aggression against Iran—aggressions that undermine its sovereignty and security and constitute a clear violation and disregard of international law."</i> He added that Saudi Arabia <i>"values Yemen's courageous stance in targeting American ships and vessels in the Red Sea should the United States enter a military aggression against Iran alongside the Zionist regime."</i>

5.3.3. The Axis of Resistance and Transnational Solidarity

The analysis of regional media and policy reports indicates that the war strengthened transnational resistance networks, particularly in Lebanon, Iraq, and Yemen. These actors framed the conflict as evidence of Iran's central role in regional resistance, a test of collective deterrence, and a moment of ideological reaffirmation. This transnational solidarity reflects the regionalization of resistance identity, extending beyond Iran's borders.

Table 12. An excerpt showing the solidarity of the Axis of Resistance with Iran

Media	Excerpt
Carnegie (2025)	So far, however, Hezbollah has opted for restraint. As expected, the party has issued statements of solidarity with Iran and condemned the Israeli attacks.



Figure 4. A post by Akhbar Fori channel on Telegram. Translation of caption by the authors: Al Jazeera Correspondent's Report on the Large Scale Demonstrations of Yemeni Citizens in Support of Iran

5.4. Synthesis: Resistance as a Multi-Layered System

The findings across all three domains converge on a central insight: resistance during the 12-Day War functioned as a multi-layered system, integrating discursive power (narratives, symbolism, identity), social power (networks, solidarity, collective action), and geopolitical power (alliances, deterrence, diplomatic signalling).

This system allowed Iran to maintain internal cohesion, project regional influence, and contest international narratives despite significant military and informational pressures.

6. Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that the 12-Day War functioned as a multi-layered conflict system in which military operations, information warfare, social mobilization, and geopolitical signalling were deeply intertwined. It is argued that the war catalysed a significant reconfiguration of resistance identity, activated new forms of social capital, and reshaped regional and global perceptions of Iran's strategic posture. The analysis demonstrates that resistance during the 12-Day War was not a static ideological construct but a dynamic and adaptive system that evolved in response to the pressures of hybrid warfare. Traditionally, resistance in Iranian political discourse has been associated with military deterrence, ideological steadfastness, and anti-imperialist struggle. However, the war revealed that resistance now encompasses informational sovereignty (countering misinformation, narrative control), symbolic politics (martyrdom, cultural production), digital activism (fact-checking, diaspora advocacy), emotional mobilization (collective mourning, moral framing). This expansion aligns with hybrid warfare theory, which emphasizes the integration of physical and informational domains. The war thus accelerated the transformation of resistance into a comprehensive socio-political identity. The war's cultural artifacts—poetry, posters, commemorations—revealed that resistance was framed not only as a strategic necessity but as a moral imperative. This moral framing transformed suffering into symbolic capital, enabling the state and society to reinterpret loss as meaningful and redemptive. This finding supports constructivist IR theories that highlight the role of identity, norms, and emotional narratives in shaping state behaviour and public mobilization. The informational dimension of the war exposed resistance to unprecedented discursive pressures. Competing narratives—domestic, regional, and international—contested the meaning of aggression, legitimacy, and victory. Iran's efforts to assert narrative sovereignty were challenged by algorithmic amplification of misinformation, global media framing, and diplomatic signalling from adversaries. Therefore, resistance thus became a discursive battleground, where meaning was negotiated in real time.

The findings highlight the central role of social capital in sustaining societal resilience during the war. Local solidarity networks—familial, neighbourhood, religious—activated quickly to support relief efforts. This confirms social capital theory's claim that bonding ties are crucial in moments of crisis, enabling communities to respond effectively even when state capacity is strained. Also, digital coordination networks played a critical role in countering misinformation, disseminating verified information, and connecting domestic and diaspora communities. This demonstrates that bridging capital can function as a digital immune system, enhancing societal resilience in hybrid warfare.

The war's international dimension reveals how regional and global actors interpreted and responded to Iran's resistance posture. International media coverage often emphasized nuclear risk, regional escalation, and humanitarian consequences. This framing limited Iran's ability to project its preferred narrative globally, illustrating the asymmetry of informational power in hybrid conflicts. The reactions of the U.S., EU, Persian Gulf states, and regional actors were characterized by cautious de-escalation, deterrence signalling, and selective condemnation or neutrality. These responses reveal the fragility of regional security architectures and the complexity of balancing deterrence with diplomatic restraint. Besides, regional allies framed the war as a test of collective deterrence and ideological unity. This reinforced the regionalization of resistance identity, extending beyond Iran's borders and shaping future geopolitical alignments.

Synthesizing the findings, the war can be understood as a critical juncture in the evolution of resistance. It expanded resistance into digital, cultural, and informational domains and activated new forms of social capital that enhanced societal resilience. Also, it reconfigured regional and international perceptions of Iran's strategic posture. Besides, it deepened the integration of resistance into national identity and geopolitical strategy. The war thus marks a shift from resistance as a primarily military doctrine to resistance as a multi-dimensional system of meaning, mobilization, and geopolitical positioning.

7. Conclusion

The 12-Day War stands as a defining moment in Iran's contemporary political and social trajectory, revealing the extent to which modern conflicts transcend the battlefield and unfold across informational, cultural, and geopolitical domains. This study has shown that resistance during the war was not merely a military posture but a multi-layered system of meaning, mobilization, and strategic adaptation. Through discourse, symbolism, and narrative framing, resistance was reconstructed as a dynamic identity capable of absorbing shock, generating cohesion, and projecting purpose in the face of external aggression. The war also illuminated the critical role of social capital in sustaining societal resilience. Bonding networks enabled rapid community mobilization; bridging networks facilitated digital coordination and fact-checking; and linking networks shaped the fluctuating relationship between state and society. Together, these forms of social capital functioned as a strategic resource, enabling Iran to withstand both kinetic attacks and informational pressures. The findings underscore that in hybrid warfare, resilience is not solely a function of military capability but of social infrastructure, trust, and collective meaning-making.

Internationally, the conflict triggered a complex array of reactions that reshaped regional and global perceptions of Iran's strategic posture. Global media framing constrained Iran's narrative sovereignty, while diplomatic responses reflected the fragility of regional security architectures and the persistent volatility of U.S.–Iran–Israel relations. At the same time, the war strengthened transnational solidarity within the Axis of Resistance, reinforcing Iran's role as a central node in a broader ideological and geopolitical network. Taken together, these dynamics suggest that the 12-Day War marked a critical juncture in the evolution of resistance as both a domestic ethos and a regional strategy. It expanded resistance into digital and symbolic arenas,

activated new forms of social capital, and reconfigured the geopolitical landscape in ways that will shape future conflicts and negotiations. Understanding this transformation is essential for scholars and policymakers seeking to grasp the shifting contours of power, identity, and legitimacy in the West Asia. Finally, the war demonstrates that resistance in the 21st century is not a singular act but a complex ecosystem—one that integrates discourse, community, and geopolitics into a coherent, adaptive framework. As hybrid conflicts become increasingly prevalent, the interplay between social capital, narrative sovereignty, and international alignment will remain central to the study of regional security and political resilience.

Conflict of Interest

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