

The Coverage of the Greenland Issue in the International Arab Press: A Media Framing Theory Perspective

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Abstract

This study examines how the international Arab press framed the Greenland crisis during its most intensive phase in January 2026, drawing on Media Framing Theory (Entman, 1993; Reese, 2007). A quantitative–qualitative content analysis was conducted on 221 articles published by three pan-Arab newspapers (Asharq Al-Awsat, Al-Nahar, and Al-Arab) using MAXQDA to code each article against a typology of nine theoretically derived frames. Findings indicate that coverage was dominated by the Conflict/Crisis frame (34.7%) and the Geostrategic/Great-Power Competition frame (18.3%). Sovereignty (10.9%) and Imperial/Neo-Colonial (11.5%) frames were present but clearly subordinate, while the Climate/Environmental and Analogical/Arab-Centric Comparison frames were empirically absent or marginal. A chi-square test of homogeneity revealed no statistically significant differences in framing across the three outlets, $\chi^2(14, N = 221) = 10.62, p = .716$, Cramér's $V = .15$, indicating a shared interpretive orientation across the international Arab press. The study contributes to framing scholarship by showing that, when reporting an international crisis with no immediate regional stakes, the Arab press converges on a strategic-crisis vocabulary rather than activating its anti-imperial interpretive tradition.

Keywords: Media framing, Arab press, Greenland crisis, international news coverage, content analysis, geopolitical framing

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1. Introduction

On 21 August 2019, U.S. President Donald Trump announced his intention to purchase Greenland from the Kingdom of Denmark, transforming an obscure Arctic territory with fewer than 60,000 inhabitants into a global news event. What was initially treated as political eccentricity has, since Trump's return to the presidency in January 2025, escalated into a sustained transatlantic crisis: explicit threats not to rule out military force, tariff threats against European allies, the deployment of Danish and allied forces to Greenland, and a full-fledged confrontation between Washington, Copenhagen, Nuuk, and Brussels that, by early 2026, was being characterized as a form of "hybrid warfare" and the most serious challenge to NATO cohesion in a generation.

The Greenland issue thus condenses, in a single news topic, several of the structural questions that animate contemporary international relations: the militarisation of the Arctic in a context of accelerating climate change; the competition among great powers over critical minerals, shipping routes, and strategic positioning; the tension between U.S. unilateralism and the multilateral order; the fate of small nations and indigenous populations caught between empires; and the very meaning of sovereignty in the twenty-first century. For these reasons, the issue has generated dense, continuous media coverage worldwide.

Although the Greenland issue is geographically and politically distant from the Arab world, it has been covered intensively by the international Arab press, including "Al-Arab", "Al-Sharq Alawsat", and "Al-Nahar". This coverage is not a neutral transmission of facts. As more than four decades of framing research have demonstrated, news media do not merely report events; they select certain aspects of reality and make them salient, while obscuring or de-emphasising others, thereby promoting particular problem definitions, causal interpretations, moral evaluations, and treatment recommendations (Entman, 1993; Reese, 2007). Every act of coverage is, by necessity, an act of framing.

Yet despite the volume and visibility of Arab press coverage of the Greenland issue, no systematic empirical study has examined how this coverage frames the question. The available scholarship on Arab media framing of international affairs has overwhelmingly concentrated on issues with direct regional stakes (the Arab-Israeli

conflict, the Iraq War, the Arab Spring, the Syrian and Yemeni wars), where the framing patterns of Arab outlets are well documented. The Greenland issue, by contrast, presents a distinctive analytical opportunity: it is an international issue with no immediate Arab stakes, yet its political grammar (sovereignty, foreign occupation, great-power coercion of a smaller nation, selective application of international law) resonates strongly with the interpretive traditions of the Arab public sphere. Examining how the Arab press frames such an issue allows the researcher to isolate the distinctive interpretive grammar of the Arab press at work on a case where regional self-interest is minimal and ideological patterning is consequently easier to observe.

The central aim of this study is to analyse how the international Arab press has framed the Greenland issue in January 2026, drawing on Media Framing Theory. Therefore, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

RQ1. Which media frames are most salient in international Arab press coverage of the Greenland issue?

RQ2. To what extent do international Arab press outlets differ in their framing of the Greenland issue?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The renewed political controversy surrounding the United States' attempts to acquire Greenland, particularly under the Trump administration's foreign policy posture in 2019 and again from 2025 onwards, has produced a rich body of international news coverage. As an Arctic territory of strategic, economic, and environmental significance, Greenland has become a contested symbol within global geopolitical discourse, drawing attention from Western, Russian, Chinese, and Arab press alike. Although the issue is geographically distant from the Arab world, its coverage in the international Arab press offers a productive site for examining how non-Western media narrate questions of sovereignty, imperial ambition, and great-power competition. This literature review synthesises existing scholarship relevant to the analysis of such coverage through the lens of Media Framing Theory, identifying the theoretical foundations, the major empirical findings on Arab press framing of international issues, and the gap that the present study seeks to address.

2.2 Theoretical Foundations of Media Framing

Media Framing Theory has its conceptual origins in the sociological work of Goffman (1974), who introduced "frame analysis" to describe the cognitive structures, or schemata of interpretation, that individuals use to organise and make sense of everyday experience. Goffman's premise that meaning depends upon the interpretive frame within which information is situated was subsequently transposed to communication research, where scholars examined how news media select and emphasise particular aspects of reality while obscuring others. Tuckman (1978) extended this argument by conceptualising news itself as a "frame" that shapes the social construction of reality, while Gitlin (1980) demonstrated how mainstream media frames marginalise oppositional movements by foregrounding institutional perspectives.

The most influential formulation in contemporary research is Entman's (1993) often-cited definition: to frame is "to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text" to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and treatment recommendation. Entman's earlier comparative study (1991) of U.S. coverage of the Korean Air Lines and Iran Air incidents demonstrated empirically how identical categories of events can be cast in radically divergent moral terms depending on which actors are foregrounded, what vocabulary is deployed, and which images are selected. His later work on framing and U.S. foreign policy (Entman, 2004) further argued that media frames operate as instruments through which political elites distribute power and structure public deliberation on international affairs.

Complementary contributions have refined the theoretical architecture of framing. Scheufele (1999) distinguished between media frames and audience frames and proposed a process model linking frame-building, frame-setting, and individual-level outcomes. Reese (2001, 2007) advanced a "bridging model" that conceptualises frames as organising principles that are socially shared, persistent over time, and operate symbolically to structure the social world meaningfully. Lyengar (1991) provided an enduring binary (episodic versus thematic frames) that has informed countless analyses of political and conflict reporting. Gamson and Modigliani (1989) added the constructionist notion of "interpretive packages," rhetorical devices through which journalists and sources negotiate meaning. Together, these contributions establish framing as both a textual property of news content and a socio-political process embedded in wider relations of power.

2.3 Framing International Affairs in the Arab Press

A substantial body of communication scholarship has applied framing theory to the Arab media. This literature establishes several recurring patterns relevant to any analysis of Greenland coverage. First, Arab media outlets are not monolithic; their framing strategies are powerfully shaped by ownership structures, state affiliations, and the geopolitical alignments of their host countries. Studies comparing “Al Jazeera” with “Al Arabiya” consistently find that the two networks operationalise distinct interpretive packages even when reporting on the same events, with each outlet's framing reflecting the foreign-policy orientations of its principal financier (Mellor, 2007; Lynch, 2006; Figenschou, 2014). The Arab Reform Initiative's analysis of the two networks' breaking-news output during the 2021 Gaza escalation, for example, traced systematic differences in word choice, source selection, and visual emphasis that aligned with each state's regional posture.

Second, the Arab press's framing of international crises tends to foreground questions of sovereignty, imperialism, and the legitimacy of foreign intervention—legacies of the region's colonial history. Studies of Arab coverage of the 2003 Iraq War, the 2011 Libyan intervention, and the Syrian conflict show that Arab outlets recurrently mobilise “Western interventionism,” “resource exploitation,” and “violation of international law” frames, even when these compete with frames generated by national governments allied with Washington (Abd El Rahman, 2017; Kraidy, 2002; Iskandar, 2007). Such frames provide an interpretive grammar that can be readily reactivated when new instances of perceived imperial behaviour emerge—as in the Greenland case, where U.S. acquisition rhetoric resonates with longstanding Arab readings of Western foreign policy.

Third, the literature documents an asymmetry between Arab and Western media in their capacity to set the global news agenda. Boyd-Barrett (2019) highlights structural inequalities (in resources, distribution, algorithmic visibility, and credibility hierarchies) that constrain the international circulation of Arab frames, even when those frames are widely accepted within the region. This finding is methodologically important: studies of Arab framing of the Greenland issue must account not only for the frames themselves but also for the conditions of their visibility within and beyond the Arab public sphere.

Fourth, comparative studies of Arab and Western coverage of the same events (9/11, the Afghan war, the Arab Spring, the Russia–Ukraine war) document the use of contrasting visual and narrative frames. Arab outlets more frequently emphasise human-interest framing of civilian casualties and humanitarian consequences, while Western outlets more often deploy technical, security-oriented, or pro-intervention frames (Fahmy, 2010; Powell, 2011; Ayish, 2002). These comparative findings provide a useful baseline against which the framing of the Greenland issue can be measured

2.4 The Greenland Issue as an Object of International Coverage

Although the Greenland issue is comparatively recent as a sustained news topic, a small but growing body of literature has examined it in international media. Scholars working on Arctic communication have observed that Greenland coverage typically circulates within four dominant interpretive packages: a geostrategic frame (focused on great-power competition with Russia and China and the militarization of the Arctic), an economic-resource frame (emphasizing rare earths, hydrocarbons, and shipping routes opened by climate change), a sovereignty and self-determination frame (centering Greenlandic and Danish perspectives and the indigenous Inuit population), and a personalization frame (centering Donald Trump's individual rhetoric and political style).

However, dedicated empirical studies of how Arab-language outlets specifically frame the Greenland question remain scarce. The few existing analyses note that Arab coverage tends to articulate the Greenland issue through analogical reasoning—by comparing U.S. ambitions in the Arctic to historical episodes of Western intervention in the Arab world, to contemporary territorial disputes such as the occupation of Palestinian territories, or to Russian moves in Ukraine. This analogical framing operationalises what Reese (2007) describes as the cultural resonance of frames: their power derives from their capacity to connect new events to interpretive structures already familiar to audiences.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study adopts a quantitative–qualitative content analysis design, combining the systematic coding of a defined corpus of newspaper articles with the qualitative interpretation of framing identified within them. This mixed approach is consistent with established practice in framing research (Entman, 1993; Reese, 2007; Matthes & Kohring, 2008), which holds that the identification of media frames requires both replicable measurement of indicators (keywords, sources, analogies, visuals) and contextual reading of the texts in which those indicators

appear. Quantitative coding establishes the relative salience of each frame across the corpus, while qualitative analysis recovers the interpretive logic that links indicators into coherent framing packages.

The unit of analysis is the individual published news item (including news reports, news analyses, editorials, and signed opinion columns) dealing wholly or substantially with the Greenland issue. The unit of measurement for coding frames is the article as a whole, with provision to code multiple frames per article when several are present.

3.2 Population and Sample

The population from which the sample is drawn comprises the full body of Arabic-language newspaper coverage of the Greenland issue published in January 2026. This period was selected because it constitutes the most intensive phase of the crisis to date: it includes the renewed escalation following Trump's January statements, the deployment of Danish and allied forces, the Davos negotiations, and the emergence of "hybrid warfare" as a descriptive frame in international commentary. The month, therefore, offers a dense, theoretically saturated period within which the framing strategies of the Arab press can be observed at high intensity.

Three pan-Arab daily newspapers were purposively selected as representative of distinct editorial profiles within the international Arab press: "Al-Arab", "Asharq Al-Awsat", and "Al-Nahar". The selection was guided by three criteria: (1) significant transnational reach within the Arab public sphere; (2) regular and substantive coverage of the Greenland issue during the period under study; and (3) editorial diversity in terms of national origin, ownership, and political orientation, so as to allow inter-outlet comparison.

All articles addressing the Greenland issue published between 1 and 30 January 2026 were retrieved through the digital archives of the three outlets. The final corpus consists of 221 articles, distributed as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of the article sample by the newspaper

Newspaper	Origin / Affiliation	Editorial Profile	Articles (N)	% of Sample
Al-Arab	London-based, pan-Arab daily	Pan-Arab, politically oriented analytical reporting	11	5%
Asharq Al-Awsat	London-based pan-Arab daily	Pan-Arab, internationally oriented, dense foreign-news desk	122	55.2%
Al-Nahar	Lebanese, pan-Arab daily	Pan-Arab, with strong international coverage and an op-ed tradition	88	39.8%
Total	—	—	221	100.0%

The asymmetry in article counts across the three outlets is an empirical finding in its own right and is not corrected through weighting; it reflects the differing editorial priorities each outlet accorded to the Greenland issue during the period and is treated analytically as part of the inter-outlet comparison.

3.3 Data Collection

Articles were retrieved from the digital archives of the three newspapers using a controlled set of Arabic search terms covering the Greenland issue (e.g., *ترامب الشمالي, غرينلاند, الدنمارك, القطب الشمالي*), supplemented by manual screening of the international news and opinion sections of each outlet to capture relevant items that may not have surfaced through keyword search. Each retrieved item was screened for relevance against the criterion that the Greenland issue must constitute the principal or a substantial topic of the article; passing references in articles primarily devoted to other topics were excluded.

3.4 Media Frames

Nine frames are proposed. The first seven are general frames likely to appear in any international press; the last two are region-specific frames whose presence and intensity in the Arab press constitute a primary object of analysis.

Table 2. Typology of media frames for analysing Arab press coverage of the Greenland issue

Frame	Problem Definition	Causal Interpretation & Moral Evaluation	Indicators / Framing Devices
F1. Geostrategic / Great-Power Competition	Greenland is a chess piece in U.S.–Russia–China rivalry over the Arctic.	U.S. ambitions are driven by national security calculus; framing tends to be neutral-to-explanatory, presenting the move as logical in a multipolar world.	Keywords: Arctic, NATO, Pituffik base, missile defense, Russian/Chinese threat. Sources: military analysts, strategic-studies centers. Visuals: maps of Arctic shipping routes, military assets.
F2. Economic / Resource	Greenland matters because of its rare earths, hydrocarbons, and the trade routes it opens due to climate change.	U.S. interest is read as resource-driven; moral tone is often critical, linking acquisition to extractive capitalism.	Keywords: rare earths, minerals, oil, gas, melting ice, Northwest Passage. Sources: economists, energy analysts. Visuals: resource maps, infographics on reserves.
F3. Sovereignty & International Law	U.S. acquisition rhetoric violates Greenlandic and Danish sovereignty and international legal norms.	Causes are located in U.S. unilateralism; moral evaluation is strongly negative, invoking territorial integrity, the UN Charter, and self-determination.	Keywords: sovereignty, red line, international law, territorial integrity, self-determination. Sources: Danish/Greenlandic officials, EU, legal experts. Visuals: protest images, Danish/Greenlandic flags.
F4. Imperial / Neo-Colonial	Trump's Greenland project is a contemporary expression of Western imperial expansion.	Causes are systemic and historical: enduring imperial logics within U.S. foreign policy; moral evaluation is sharply critical.	Keywords: occupation, annexation, hegemony, imperialism, colonialism, Manifest Destiny. Sources: Arab and Global South commentators, opinion pieces, and scholars. Analogies: Palestine, Iraq, Crimea.
F5. Human Interest / Indigenous Rights	The story is fundamentally about Greenlanders—particularly the Inuit—and their right to determine their future.	Causes are framed in terms of historical marginalisation; moral tone is empathetic; treatment recommendations centre on Greenlandic voices.	Keywords: Inuit, indigenous, Nuuk, identity, climate justice. Sources: Greenlandic citizens and civil society

Frame	Problem Definition	Causal Interpretation & Moral Evaluation	Indicators / Framing Devices
			leaders. Visuals: portraits, community life, and daily life in Greenland.
F6. Personalisation / Trump-Centric	The crisis is essentially a story about Donald Trump's personality, style, and political theatre.	Causes are individualised rather than structural; moral tone ranges from dismissive ("Trump being Trump") to alarmed; treatment is electoral or rhetorical.	Keywords: Trump says, Trump wants, MAGA, Donald Trump Jr. Sources: U.S. statements, tweets/posts, press conferences. Visuals: close-up portraits of Trump.
F7. Conflict / Crisis	Greenland is a flashpoint that could rupture NATO, trigger trade wars, or escalate to military confrontation.	Causes are dispersed across the actors; moral tone emphasises risk and instability; treatment recommendations call for de-escalation.	Keywords: crisis, escalation, hybrid warfare, trade war, NATO rift, tariffs. Sources: diplomats, security analysts. Visuals: military movements, summit photos.
F8. Analogical / Arab-Centric Comparison	Greenland is interpreted by analogy with Arab-region experiences of occupation and Western intervention.	Causes are read as a consistent pattern of Western behaviour; moral evaluation invokes "double standards" in international law.	Keywords: like Palestine, double standard, selective international law, Iraq 2003. Sources: Arab columnists, opinion pages.
F9. Climate & Environmental	Greenland's geopolitical salience is a symptom of the climate crisis itself—melting ice opens new contests.	Causes are environmental and structural; moral evaluation links great-power behaviour to climate injustice.	Keywords: melting ice, global warming, Arctic warming, climate crisis. Sources: climate scientists, environmental NGOs. Visuals: ice sheets, glaciers, satellite imagery.

3.5 Research Hypotheses

On the basis of the framing typology and the patterns identified in the literature on Arab media coverage of international affairs, the study proposes the following hypotheses, organised into two thematic clusters: (1) frame salience, (2) inter-outlet variation.

H1. The Sovereignty & International Law frame (F3) and the Imperial / Neo-Colonial frame (F4) will be the two most salient frames in international Arab press coverage of the Greenland issue, more prevalent than the Geostrategic (F1) and Personalisation (F6) frames that tend to dominate Western coverage.

H2. The Analogical / Arab-Centric Comparison frame (F8) will appear with significant frequency, indicating that the Arab press systematically reads the Greenland issue through the optic of Arab-region experiences (e.g., Palestine, Iraq).

H3. The Climate & Environmental frame (F9) and the Human Interest / Indigenous Rights frame (F5) will be the

least salient frames in Arab press coverage, reflecting a regional editorial priority for political-strategic over ecological and indigenous-rights interpretations.

H4. There will be statistically significant differences in framing patterns among major pan-Arab outlets (e.g., Al-Arab, Al-Nahar, Asharq Al-Awsat).

3.6 Analytical Tool: MAXQDA

Coding and analysis were carried out in MAXQDA, a qualitative and mixed-methods analysis software widely used in framing and content-analytic research. MAXQDA was selected for four reasons: (1) it supports Arabic-language text natively, including right-to-left display and Arabic search; (2) it accommodates multi-document corpora with attached metadata, allowing inter-outlet and temporal comparisons to be performed within a single project; (3) it provides quantitative outputs (frequencies, code matrices, code co-occurrence) alongside qualitative tools (memos, retrieval of coded segments, visual maps); and (4) it incorporates inter-coder reliability tools that operate directly on the coded corpus.

3.7 Coding Scheme

The coding scheme was developed deductively from the framing typology presented in the study's theoretical framework and refined inductively through pilot coding of a 10% subsample ($n = 22$ articles) drawn proportionally from the three outlets.

Each article was coded for the presence (1) or absence (0) of each of the nine frames specified in the theoretical framework: F1 Geostrategic / Great-Power Competition; F2 Economic / Resource; F3 Sovereignty & International Law; F4 Imperial / Neo-Colonial; F5 Human Interest / Indigenous Rights; F6 Personalization / Trump-Centric; F7 Conflict / Crisis; F8 Analogical / Arab-Centric Comparison; F9 Climate & Environmental. Following Matthes and Kohring (2008), each frame was operationalised through an explicit cluster of indicators (problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, treatment recommendation, keywords, sources, analogies, and visual devices). A frame was coded as dominant when at least three of its indicators co-occurred in the article, and as secondary when one or two indicators were present. Articles could carry one dominant frame and multiple secondary frames; pilot coding confirmed that this rule produced coherent and replicable assignments.

3.8 Data Analysis

Coded data were analysed in MAXQDA through a sequence of procedures designed to address the two research questions of the study.

1. Frequency analysis: the proportion of articles in which each frame appears (as dominant and as secondary) was calculated for the corpus as a whole and for each outlet, providing a measure of frame salience (RQ1).
2. Inter-outlet comparison: cross-tabulations of frame presence by outlet, tested with chi-square statistics, were used to assess whether frames are distributed differently across Al-Arab, Asharq Al-Awsat, and Al-Nahar (RQ2).

3.9 Validity, Reliability, and Limitations

Two measures were taken to strengthen the validity and reliability of the analysis. First, the deductive derivation of frames from a documented theoretical framework, combined with inductive refinement through pilot coding, addresses construct validity by ensuring that frames are grounded in both prior research and the empirical material. Second, recording full coded segments in MAXQDA, alongside coder memos that justify non-obvious assignments, provides an audit trail that allows the analytical procedure to be inspected and replicated.

Three limitations should nonetheless be noted. First, the temporal scope of a single calendar month, although deliberately chosen for analytical density, limits the generalisability of the findings beyond the period studied; longer-term framing trajectories would require a multi-month or multi-year corpus. Second, the sample is confined to three newspapers and does not include broadcast or social-media coverage; findings should therefore be read as describing the international Arabic-language press rather than the Arab media system as a whole. Third, the marked asymmetry in article counts across outlets (11 / 122 / 88) may attenuate the statistical power of inter-outlet comparisons involving Al-Arab; this is acknowledged in the interpretation of results, where comparisons with Al-Arab are presented descriptively rather than inferentially where appropriate.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

All analysed material consists of publicly available newspaper content. No human participants were involved, and no personal data beyond the published articles were processed.

4. Results

4.1 Overview of the Coded Corpus

The corpus retrieved for January 2026 comprises 221 articles distributed across three outlets: Asharq Al-Awsat (n = 122; 55.2%), Al-Nahar (n = 88; 39.8%), and Al-Arab (n = 11; 5.0%). Following the coding scheme specified in the methodology, each article was coded for the presence of the nine theoretically derived frames, and the resulting code–outlet crosstab was generated in MAXQDA. The values reported below represent the share of coded-frame instances per outlet, so the columns for each newspaper sum to 100%. Reported in this form, the data make visible the relative weight each outlet gave to each frame within its own coverage, which is precisely the quantity required by RQ 1 and the relative-salience hypotheses (H1–H3).

Two preliminary observations frame the analysis that follows. First, the sample is markedly asymmetric across outlets, and inferential comparisons with Al-Arab (n = 11) must therefore be treated descriptively rather than statistically, as anticipated in the methodology. Second, eight of the nine theoretically specified frames appear in the corpus; the Climate and Environmental frame (F9) registered zero codings across the three outlets and is therefore omitted from the figure and discussed separately as a substantive finding.

4.2 Frame Salience in the Arab Press Coverage

Figure 1 displays the salience of the nine frames in the international Arab press coverage of the Greenland issue during January 2026, with each frame shown for the three outlets and for the total corpus. Frames are ordered from most to least salient at the level of the corpus as a whole.

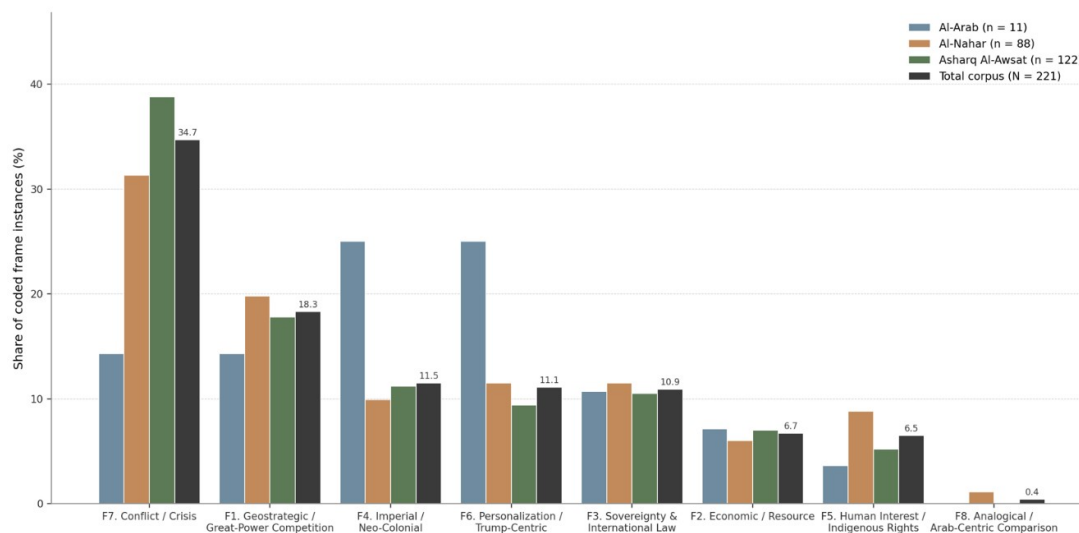


Figure 1. Salience of media frames in the international Arab press coverage of the Greenland issue, by outlet (MAXQDA, January 2026)

A single pattern dominates the figure: the Conflict and Crisis frame (F7) is by a substantial margin the most salient interpretive structure in the corpus, accounting for 34.7% of all coded frame instances. The Geostategic / Great-Power Competition frame (F1) follows at 18.3%, and the remaining frames cluster more tightly between roughly 6% and 12%. Taken together, F7 and F1 account for slightly over half of all coded frame instances in the corpus (53%), indicating that Arab press coverage during the most intensive phase of the crisis was organised predominantly around an escalation–competition logic rather than around either an indigenous-rights or an environmental–climate logic.

The corpus is organized around what can be described as a top–middle–bottom hierarchy of frames. At the top, the Conflict / Crisis frame (F7, 34.7%) is by itself responsible for more than one third of all framing work in the sample, and the Geostategic / Great-Power Competition frame (F1, 18.3%) consolidates the dominance of an escalation-and-rivalry reading. In the middle, four frames sit in a relatively tight band between 10.9% and 11.5%: Imperial / Neo-Colonial (F4, 11.5%), Personalisation / Trump-Centric (F6, 11.1%), and Sovereignty &

International Law (F3, 10.9%). The Economic / Resource frame (F2, 6.7%) and the Human Interest / Indigenous Rights frame (F5, 6.5%) form a lower tier. At the bottom, the Analogical / Arab-Centric Comparison frame (F8, 0.4%) is empirically marginal, while the Climate & Environmental frame (F9, 0%) is empirically absent.

This distribution provides only partial support for H1, which predicted that the Sovereignty (F3) and Imperial / Neo-Colonial (F4) frames would jointly dominate Arab press coverage of the Greenland issue. Both frames are present at non-trivial levels, but they are clearly subordinate to the Conflict/Crisis (F7) frame, which the literature more readily associates with Western coverage of geopolitical flashpoints. The Geostrategic frame (F1) is likewise more prominent than the framing-theoretical expectation about Arab media would suggest. H1 is therefore not supported in its strong form; the data instead point to a hybrid pattern in which the strategic-crisis vocabulary of international journalism coexists with, and partly outweighs, the anti-imperial vocabulary characteristic of the Arab interpretive tradition. The relatively even presence of F3 and F4 across outlets nevertheless suggests that the anti-imperial reading is a stable secondary structure rather than absent.

H3 predicted that the Climate & Environmental (F9) and Human Interest / Indigenous Rights (F5) frames would be the least salient frames in Arab press coverage. The data strongly support the F9 component of this hypothesis: F9 registered zero codings across all three outlets, an empirical absence rather than a low presence. This is a substantive finding in its own right. Although the Greenland issue is inseparable from climate dynamics — Arctic warming is precisely what has made the territory geopolitically valuable — the Arab press during the most intensive month of the crisis did not interpret the issue through a climate-and-environment lens. The crisis is read as a political-strategic event detached from its environmental conditions of possibility.

The F5 component of H3 is partially supported. The Human Interest / Indigenous Rights frame is one of the lowest-salience frames in the corpus at 6.5%, but it is not the lowest: F8 (0.4%) and F9 (0%) sit below it. Within F5, however, there is a notable inter-outlet variation. Al-Nahar codes F5 at 8.8% — markedly above the corpus average — whereas Asharq Al-Awsat (5.2%) and Al-Arab (3.6%) under-index on this frame. The pattern suggests that Al-Nahar gave somewhat greater editorial space to Inuit and Greenlandic-citizen voices than the other two outlets did, consistent with its op-ed tradition and broader international news orientation.

H2 predicted that the Analogical / Arab-Centric Comparison frame (F8) would appear with significant frequency, particularly in opinion content, as Arab media systematically read the Greenland issue through the optic of Palestine and Iraq. The data do not support this hypothesis. F8 registered only one coded instance across the entire corpus (1.1% within Al-Nahar; 0% within both Asharq Al-Awsat and Al-Arab; 0.4% overall). On its face, this is a striking finding: the political grammar of the Greenland issue — a small territory subjected to acquisition rhetoric by a great power — resonates with Arab interpretive traditions, yet explicit analogical framing was almost entirely absent from news and op-ed coverage in January 2026.

Two interpretations are possible. First, the analogical reading may have been carried implicitly within the Imperial / Neo-Colonial frame (F4) rather than through explicit comparison. F4 is non-trivially present across all three outlets, and its keywords (occupation, annexation, hegemony, imperialism) plausibly transmit the analogical evaluation without naming Palestine or Iraq. On this reading, F4 absorbs the work that F8 would otherwise have performed. Second, the genre composition of the sample — predominantly news and news-analysis content rather than signed op-eds — may understate F8, which the framing typology located primarily in opinion writing. The Discussion section returns to this question; the empirical observation here is simply that, in the present corpus, explicit analogical framing is rare.

4.3 Differences in Framing Across International Arab Press Outlets

To address RQ2, which asked to what extent international Arab press outlets differ in their framing of the Greenland issue, and to test H4, which predicted statistically significant differences in framing patterns among major pan-Arab outlets, a chi-square test of homogeneity was conducted on the cross-tabulation of the eight media frames by outlet (Al-Arab, Al-Nahar, and Asharq Al-Awsat). The test was non-significant, $\chi^2(14, N = 221) = 10.62, p = .716$, with a small effect size (Cramér's $V = .15$), indicating that the three outlets did not differ significantly in their framing of the issue. H4 was therefore not supported.

Rather than diverging, the newspapers employed the framing categories in broadly comparable proportions. The Conflict/Crisis frame (F7) dominated coverage across all three outlets (34.7%), followed by the Geostrategic/Great-Power Competition frame (F1) at 18.3%, while the remaining frames appeared at similar, lower rates. This convergence suggests a shared interpretive orientation within the international Arab press, in which the Greenland issue was predominantly framed as a moment of geopolitical confrontation embedded in great-power rivalries — a pattern consistent with prior observations that Arab media often align in their framing of major international events despite differing editorial identities.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study offer a nuanced contribution to the literature on Arab media framing of international affairs. The dominance of the Conflict/Crisis frame (F7, 34.7%) and the Geostrategic/Great-Power Competition frame (F1, 18.3%) over the Sovereignty (F3, 10.9%) and Imperial/Neo-Colonial (F4, 11.5%) frames runs counter to the most readily available prediction in the literature: that the Arab press would interpret the Greenland issue through the anti-imperial and sovereignty-oriented lens that has historically characterised its coverage of regional crises (Abd El Rahman, 2017; Iskandar, 2007; Kraidy, 2002).

This pattern suggests that, when reporting an international issue without direct regional stakes, the Arab press appears to adopt the strategic-crisis vocabulary more typically associated with Western international journalism (Ayish, 2002; Fahmy, 2010). The anti-imperial interpretive grammar identified in earlier scholarship is therefore not automatically activated in every instance of perceived Western overreach; rather, it appears to be conditional on the proximity and salience of the issue for Arab publics. In its absence, the professional routines of international reporting — wire-service dependence, Western-dominated source hierarchies, and the news values of conflict and escalation — seem to structure coverage more powerfully than regional interpretive traditions. This is consistent with Boyd-Barrett's (2019) account of the structural inequalities that shape global news flows.

The non-support of H1 should nevertheless be qualified. F3 and F4 were not absent but present as stable secondary structures across all three outlets, suggesting that the Arab press did not abandon its interpretive heritage but subordinated it to the journalistic imperatives of crisis reporting during an exceptionally volatile month. This is consistent with Reese's (2007) bridging model, in which frames operate as persistent organising principles activated in context-dependent ways.

The near-total absence of the Analogical/Arab-Centric Comparison frame (F8, 0.4%) is perhaps the most theoretically striking result, contradicting H2 and the expectations generated by literature on cultural resonance (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989; Reese, 2007). Two explanations are plausible: the analogical work may have been absorbed within F4, whose lexicon of occupation and hegemony transmits the same evaluative orientation without naming regional referents; or the predominance of news over signed opinion content may have suppressed a frame primarily located in op-ed writing. Similarly, the absolute absence of the Climate/Environmental frame (F9, 0%) is a substantive finding in its own right: although Arctic warming is the structural condition that makes Greenland geopolitically valuable, the Arab press systematically detached the crisis from its environmental conditions of possibility, privileging political-strategic over ecological interpretations.

The findings related to RQ2 and H4 reinforce this interpretive coherence. The non-significant chi-square result, $\chi^2(14, N = 221) = 10.62, p = .716$, indicates that the three outlets employed the observed frames in broadly comparable proportions despite their distinct national bases and editorial profiles. This convergence challenges established findings that Arab outlets diverge systematically when reporting on regionally salient issues (Figenschou, 2014; Lynch, 2006; Mellor, 2007), suggesting instead that on distant international issues the differentiation produced by ownership and editorial orientation attenuates considerably.

Taken together, the findings suggest that the international Arab press in January 2026 approached the Greenland issue through a hybrid interpretive structure: a dominant strategic-crisis vocabulary inherited from international news routines, layered over a stable but subordinate anti-imperial reading, and largely detached from indigenous-rights and environmental framings. The Arab press did not produce a distinctively "Arab" framing of the Greenland crisis; it produced an internationally legible one with anti-imperial undertones — a pattern that both extends and refines existing scholarship on the framing strategies of the international Arab press.

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