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Engineering Unilaterality Governance, Spectacle, and Transitional Legitimacy in Iranian Opposition Media

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Abstract

This article analyzes Iran International as a structurally decisive opposition broadcaster operating under conditions of informational scarcity within Iran. Drawing on a thirty-hour corpus from the 2022 Jin Jiyan Azadi uprising (baseline) protest cycles and qualitative study of early 2026 protests in Iran, in addition to coverage of the Israel-U.S Military operations against Iran, the study identifies recurring representational patterns: leadership centralization, lexical containment of Kurdish political ontology, interactional asymmetry, and adjacency-based salience sequencing. These patterns collectively produce what I term engineered unilaterality—the stabilization of a singular centralized exit narrative while multinational and ethnic constitutional possibilities are administratively managed.

Rather than alleging conspiratorial coordination, this article advances a structural argument: opposition broadcasting can reproduce centralized state ontology through agenda-setting, classification, and symbolic capital accumulation. Integrating political economy analysis, agenda-setting theory, distribution of the sensible, dynamics of spectacle, plurality, Bourdieu's symbolic power, and Rawls's account of public reason, the article argues that transitional legitimacy in multi-national and ethnic polities depends on reciprocity. When constitutional plurality is formatted as conditional or secondary at best, and repeatedly as a state security threat, regime change risks elite substitution within a centralized ontology rather than democratic refoundation. Comparative cases demonstrate how such horizon contraction has historically preceded illiberal restoration.

Keywords: Media power; Transitional legitimacy; Kurdish sovereignty; Agenda-setting; Political imagination.

I. Introduction: Informational Scarcity and Transitional Imagination

Transitional moments expose the architecture of political legitimacy. They reveal not only who governs, but how governance is imagined as justified.

Inside Iran, informational scarcity defines the media ecology. State-controlled broadcasting, repression of independent journalism, and intermittent internet shutdowns limit access to alternative interpretive frameworks. Under such conditions, satellite opposition broadcasting becomes an epistemic infrastructure for millions inside the country and in diasporas.

This is not diaspora commentary. It is horizon formation. They actively set the horizon of the political imaginary. In other words, they form not just the alternative politics but its culture, its socio-psychological economy.

In multi-national and ethnically diverse states such as Iran—where Kurdish, Baluchi, Arab, Azeri, and other minoritized populations have historically experienced securitized governance and administrative containment—the structuring of the transitional imagination determines whether regime change becomes a constitutional renegotiation or an elite substitution.

The question is not whether information is conveyed. The question is how the field of constitutional possibility is arranged.

This article examines structural representational patterns across protest cycles to demonstrate how centralized restoration is stabilized as interpretive gravity while peripheral sovereignty claims are formatted as administratively containable variables.

II. Political Economy and the Broadcast Stack: Governance as Teleological Precondition

Media institutions cannot be analyzed apart from the governance structure. Funding architecture shapes editorial durability; governance concentration shapes classificatory coherence.

2.1 Licence as Legitimacy Interface

Ofcom documentation identifies Global Media Circulation Limited (GMCL) as the license holder.[1] Licensing embeds the broadcaster within UK regulatory oversight and signals formal compliance. Under conditions of informational scarcity, regulatory embedding gives way to blind trust. The licence here becomes a certificate of credibility. While there is no clear board of trustees, no mechanism of oversight, and broad codes of conduct announced but systematically undermined through guest speakers' stacking.

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[1] Ofcom, *Broadcast and On Demand Bulletin*, various issues identifying Global Media Circulation Limited (GMCL) as license holder.

Yet licensing governs conduct standards; it does not disclose horizon-setting architecture.

2.2 Subsidy and Strategic Patience

Companies House filings for Volant Media UK Ltd show a turnover of £183,000 against operating costs exceeding £83 million in 2024, producing losses exceeding £91 million.[2] Liabilities approach £492 million, with negative shareholder funds exceeding £517 million.[3]

These figures establish a sustained subsidy.

Subsidized media operate differently from market-constrained outlets. They can maintain narrative continuity independent of advertising volatility. Agenda-setting research demonstrates that persistent salience repetition establishes cognitive centrality.[4] Subsidy enables the repetition of administrative tone-setting and narrative fabrication across protest cycles in Iran.

Subsidy does not dictate content. It stabilizes horizon management.

2.3 Governance Concentration and Symbolic Capital

PSC filings indicate concentrated control rights.[5] Governance concentration reduces strategic dispersion. Over time, institutional coherence accumulates symbolic capital—the authority to classify actors as viable, stabilizing, or marginal.[6]

Symbolic capital accumulates through repetition. Repetition stabilizes classification. Classification becomes ontological framing.

2.4 Governance to Horizon

Agenda-setting theory shows that media determine not what audiences think, but what they think about.[7] Under scarcity, this function expands into horizon-setting.

Persistent adjacency between protest coverage and centralized leadership commentary sequences interpretation: rupture → instability → leadership → restoration.

Political economy becomes an ontological precondition.

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[2] Volant Media UK Ltd, *Annual Accounts for the Year Ended 31 December 2024* (London: Companies House, 2025).
[3] Ibid.
[4] Maxwell E. McCombs and Donald L. Shaw, "The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (1972): 176–187.
[5] Companies House, "Persons with Significant Control (PSC) Filings: Volant Media UK Ltd," Companies House Register, 2024–2026.
[6] Pierre Bourdieu, *On Television*, trans. Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson (New York: New Press, 1998), 20–32.
[7] Maxwell E. McCombs and Donald L. Shaw, "The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (1972): 176–187, https://doi.org/10.1086/267990.

Within this stabilized institutional field, representational patterns acquire constitutional weight.

III. Empirical Findings: Structural Patterns Across Temporal Distance

Corpus Scope

Corpus A: 30 hours (2022 Jina uprising).

Variables coded:

Airtime Distribution

Lexical Governance

Interactional Asymmetry

Salience Architecture

1. Airtime Distribution: Leadership Centralization

Table 1A. Airtime Distribution (2022 Baseline)

Category	Minutes	Percentage
Monarchist figures	276	15.3%
Kurdistan protests	118	6.5%
Baluchistan protests	63	3.5%
Federalism/autonomy	27	1.5%
Economic analysis	214	11.8%
IR critique	402	22.3%

Monarchist coverage exceeded the combined coverage of the Kurdistan and Baluchistan protest segments. Federal restructuring discourse was marginal. A similar pattern has been observed in the 2026 protest and Israel-U.S military operations coverage in Iran International.

2. Lexical Governance: Territorial Naming

Repeated phrasing (2022) by anchors and staff:

"17 — "کردستان و مناطق کردنشین instances.

Term	Frequency
Kurdistan alone	3 (when introducing a political party's name[8])
Coupled phrase	17 مناطق کردنشین reference to Kurdistan as a political entity
Demographic phrase	9 مناطق کردنشین reference to people from Kurdistan
Sovereignty language	0 never mentioning Kurdistan as a territorial entity

Lexical containment persists in other samplings in 2026 Feb-March.

Naming disciplines ontological status. In other words, while a guest from a Kurdish political party or a Kurdish academic or expert refers to Kurdistan as a territorial entity or a political structure, the anchors immediately contain the dynamic through assertive, confrontational tactics, disciplining the guest by naming Kurdistan as Kurdish Settled Areas, which in Farsi is مناطق کردنشین. This process is elaborated and formulated to deprive both the speaker and the entire Kurdish population of any form of legitimacy or even agency through articulation. This means it is not up to the audience to determine the information's legibility. Iran International acts continuously as a determining and corrective authority, sanctioning certain types of speech and redlining others, in a manner similar to state media as an extension of the security apparatus.

3. Interactional Asymmetry

Table 3A. Interview Coding (2022)

Variable	N-E[9] Guests	Monarchist Guests
Interruptions	6.8/12	2.1/12

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[8] Kurdistan alone has been used only when introducing guests from political parties, whose names have Kurdistan in them, such as Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran, Komala Party of Iranian Kurdistan, Komala of Tailors of Kurdistan, and others.

[9] N-E stands for National and Ethnic groups political parties, speakers, academics, and experts from Kurdistan, Azerbaijan, Ahwaz, Baluchistan, and others.

Variable	N-E[9] Guests	Monarchist Guests
Integrity affirmation demanded	9/12	1/12
Security framing	8/12	0/12
Future orientation	3/12	11/12

Conditional futurity structures legitimacy asymmetrically.

In randomized Interview Coding, almost 7 out of 12 N-E guests (the vast majority Kurdish) were interrupted by Iran International program anchors, preventing them from continuing their remarks. 9 out of 12 were asked to reaffirm their views upholding Iranian territorial integrity and to clarify their commitment to the unity of the Iranian state in an interrogatory manner. These questions that are repetitively asked by Kurdish guests are based on the Islamic Republic of Iran's normative language in reference to the Kurdish parties. While the Iran International program's anchors have not demanded that Monarchist guests clarify themselves regarding the Islamic Republic Security Apparatus's accusations against their political camp. Security framing of the political views of the N-E guests has been astonishingly similar to that of the government in Tehran, especially the Kurdish guests. This process signals forms of conditioning futurity or the political horizon asymmetrically to sustain state-sanctioned narrative and delegitimize structural critique of the state itself. Therefore, the media here does not inform the audience; it functions as an apparatus that dictates the rules and the framework of political imaginary and sets the tone for any political transition from one condition to another. This is why almost all Kurdish political figures face intrusive demands that seek fidelity to what the Persian-Nationalistic visionary has set as a normative framework.

4. Salience Architecture: Spectacle Completion

Monarchist content featured in 9/12 headline rotations during protest spikes (2022). Protest adjacency persists in 2026.

The main tactical aim in consistent headlining to project Monarchist-centered imagery is to draw a set political horizon: Rupture resolves into restoration. This is a form of psychological engineering of the inevitable outcome. While it challenges the current political-administrative apparatus of the state, it simultaneously harks back to a remnant of a previous regime, in Iran, the Pahlavi dynasty, to patch the historical faultlines and close the rupture. This tactic has

repeatedly backfired, driving major polarization of the narrative, occupying the political sphere, and dismantling competing imagery, dismissing them as peripheral, unorganized, or even a security threat to the "greater good." In other words, a supposed opposition media becomes a site for establishing the Islamic Republic of Iran as the safest, most stable, and least costly to civil society.

IV. Transitional Legitimacy, Public Reason, and Kurdish Constitutional Horizon

Transitional moments do not simply expose regime fragility; they expose the justificatory architecture of political authority. They reveal how a future political order will claim legitimacy, and on what grounds that legitimacy will rest. In such moments, media institutions are not passive transmitters of information. They curate the field within which legitimacy becomes thinkable.

The central normative question in transitional contexts is not who will replace whom. It is this:

On what grounds can the post-regime order claim authority over all those subject to it?

If legitimacy rests on territorial continuity—unity preserved, leadership replaced—then regime change becomes elite substitution. If legitimacy rests on public justification to all constituent peoples as free and equal political subjects, then regime change becomes constitutional renegotiation.

This distinction is not a rhetorical positioning but a much more revealing reality. It is Rawlsian at its core.

1. Public Reason and Constitutional Essentials

Rawls's account of public reason insists that the exercise of coercive political power must be justifiable to citizens regarded as free and equal participants in a shared constitutional structure.[10] Political authority is legitimate only when it can be supported by reasons that others, under fair conditions, could reasonably accept as co-authors of the institutional order.

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[10] John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 50-140.

Crucially, Rawls distinguishes between mere stability and "stability for the right reasons."[11] A regime may be stable because alternatives are marginalized. After all, certain proposals never acquire public salience, or because dissenting constitutional imaginaries are formatted as irresponsible. Such stability lacks justificatory depth. Stability for the right reasons requires that constitutional essentials be defensible in terms accessible to all those subject to them.

In multi-national polities, constitutional essentials are not limited to electoral mechanics or the separation of powers. They include sovereignty distribution, territorial governance, recognition of national communities, and the allocation of self-rule.

In Kurdish political reality, these are far beyond theoretical concerns or semantic issues. They are the historical axis around which state violence, securitization, and administrative containment have turned. The Kurdish question is not merely cultural recognition; it is constitutional status.

If transitional discourse centralizes leadership restoration while sovereignty renegotiation remains statistically marginal—as the empirical section demonstrates—then the range of publicly visible constitutional essentials narrows before deliberation begins. The narrowing is not a procedural exclusion. It is aesthetic governance.

2. Mapping Empirical Patterns onto Reciprocity

The empirical findings acquire normative weight when mapped onto Rawlsian reciprocity.

Airtime Distribution:

When monarchist coverage exceeds the combined coverage of protest events in Kurdistan and Baluchistan during a multi-national uprising, the hierarchy of constitutional seriousness becomes visible. Leadership centralization functions as interpretive gravity. Federal or territorial restructuring appears at 1.5% of total programming in the 2022 baseline. This is not absence; it is marginalization. Under Rawlsian standards, if sovereignty distribution is a constitutional essential, its marginal salience undermines reciprocity.

Lexical Governance:

The repeated coupling of Kurdish Settled Areas/Regions "مناطق کردنشین " performs ontological containment. Kurdistan appears administratively acknowledged but politically absorbed. Sovereignty language is absent. Naming is not semantic decoration; it determines political subject

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[11] Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, esp. lecture IV ("The Idea of Public Reason Revisited") and discussion of "stability for the right reasons."

status. When Kurdistan rarely appears as a standalone political subject, public reason is subtly reordered. The burdens of justification fall asymmetrically: unity appears axiomatic; sovereignty must justify itself against suspicion. This means any form of governance claim on Kurdistan as a political entity is already being persecuted through the lens of the media. Such an approach, on its own, displaces the role of a "neutral opposition" news outlet as a state mechanism for legitimizing coercive means against dissent. In a way, it refabricates the "right reasons" on behalf of the constituents who have already questioned the current political dynamic. Through this tactic, the Kurdish political project must answer to a monarchist quasi-order on live TV, without that order being established constitutionally in the first place.

Interactional Asymmetry:

Kurdish representatives required to affirm territorial integrity before articulating political demands are placed under conditional legitimacy. Monarchist guests appear futurally, not defensively. Reciprocity demands that all participants appear as presumptive co-authors of the constitutional structure. When one group must first demonstrate loyalty before being heard, equality is prestructured in an uneven way.

Salience Architecture:

Adjacency between protest coverage and centralized leadership commentary sequences crisis into restoration. Rawls does not prohibit leadership advocacy. He requires that the constitutional structure itself be justifiable to all. When spectacle resolution repeatedly routes rupture toward restoration without parallel routings toward sovereignty renegotiation, the field of acceptable reasons narrows.

Reciprocity requires symmetrical visibility of constitutional essentials.

Plural visibility is the condition of legitimate coercion, the obvious enforcement tool of any government.

3. Kurdish Constitutional Horizon and Internal Colonial Grammar

Kurdish political history in Iran has been marked by securitization and administrative containment: recognition of demographic presence without recognition of political co-authorship. Transitional legitimacy must address this structural history.

A Rawlsian framework expanded through decolonial analysis clarifies the stakes. Public reason presumes a shared constitutional starting point among citizens recognized as equal. But when a national community has historically been positioned as administratively managed rather than

constitutionally co-authoring, reciprocity requires more than rhetorical inclusion. It requires structural renegotiation.

If transitional discourse formats sovereignty claims as secondary to unity restoration—"stability now, negotiation later"—the sequence of legitimacy reverses. Authority consolidates before justification. Reciprocity becomes deferred. Deferred reciprocity is structurally unstable. It reproduces centralized ontology under new personnel. In other words, deep historical and political grievances are maintained, and the administration that takes charge to contain, discipline, and oppress the othered; changes from A to B.

4. Distribution of the Sensible and Managed Appearance

Rancière's insight that politics concerns who appears as speaking equal intersects directly with Rawlsian reciprocity.[12] If Kurdish representatives appear primarily in interrogative formats while centralized figures appear as future governors, political equality is aesthetically distributed unevenly. In simple words, the media's goal here is to fabricate a good guys-bad guys dichotomy and capitalize on the current and future violence against the "bad guys," through such spectacle.

The issue is not overt censorship. It is calibrated intelligibility.

Who appears as the constitutional author?
Who appears as a security question?
Who appears as stabilizing inevitability?

Appearance precedes legitimacy. It is a field through which a symbolic construct has already created the silhouette of the person, which, through the transition process, a fully materialized figure maps onto. In Iran, this has become the son of the deposed dictator in 1979. What takes place in this process is the engineering of the politics of spectacle.

5. Spectacle and Horizon Management

Debord's analysis of the spectacle clarifies the logic of adjacency.[13] Spectacle does not fabricate events; it sequences them. Protest becomes energy. Energy becomes instability. Instability becomes necessity for leadership. Leadership becomes restoration.

Plural constitutional futures become an aesthetic background.

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[12] Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*, trans. Julie Rose (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

[13] Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Zone Books, 1994).

The spectacle here is not visual excess. It is horizon management.

When adjacency patterns persist across protest cycles—as the empirical comparison between 2022 and 2026 events suggests—spectacle becomes structural grammar.

6. Unity as Moral Axiom and the Erosion of Plurality

Arendt reminds us that plurality is the condition of political freedom.[14] When unity becomes a moral axiom—when territorial continuity is staged as a pre-political necessity—dissenting constitutional imaginaries appear irresponsible rather than coequal.

Opposition broadcasting may reject the incumbent regime while preserving the ontological premise that the state is indivisible and renegotiation is completely ineligible, and what matters is the immediate consolidation of power by a figurehead. In doing so, it reproduces a centralized ontology even while opposing current rulers.

Authoritarian reproduction need not emerge from repression. It can emerge from the moralization of unity through the flattening of narratives, the suppression of differences, and the co-optation of agencies.

7. Symbolic Capital and Credibility Calibration

Bourdieu's concept of symbolic power clarifies how classification becomes reality.[15] When certain actors repeatedly appear as viable, coherent, and stabilizing, viability accumulates. Repetition stabilizes ontology. From this perspective, one can establish the foundational and political rationale for the continuous wall-to-wall coverage of monarchist imagery, guests, Reza Pahlavi's statements, and social media posts. Most Persian-speaking oppositional media consistently project a narrative in which Pahlavi appears as the uncontested future of Iran, regardless of the socio-geopolitical realities of Iran's shifting political landscape. This approach has been embedded in narrative engineering regardless of the political situation. Whether it was the 2017 Aban uprising, mostly in parts of Iran with non-Persian populations, the 2022 Jin Jiyan Azadi centered in Kurdistan, or the 2026 protests followed by the U.S-Israel military operation against Iran. This is not simply a muscle-memory reflex in narrative formation; it is far beyond generating hot topics to please the audience, since these media do not rely on audience-retention revenue. This is an obvious statecraft attempt that completely dismisses people's political

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[14] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958).
[15] Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, ed. John B. Thompson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991).

agency, histories, and aspirations, simply replacing a despotic administration with another through the consolidation of symbolic ontology and imagery.

Additionally, through a different theoretical lens, we can note Fricker's concept of epistemic injustice, which deepens the abovementioned framework: when minority representatives repeatedly appear under suspicion—affirming territorial loyalty before articulating constitutional claims—their credibility is structurally calibrated downward.[16]

Legitimacy is not only about who governs. It is about who is heard as governing. This is the main reason that Persian-speaking media invite Kurdish and occasionally other minoritized people's representatives and guests. This is a known media-studies tactic that symbolically and through live broadcasts outlines the absolutism within which a Kurdish guest may conduct themselves. In other words, it maps the silhouette of the state's deterministic power onto the symbolic image of a Kurdish leader whose epistemic existence is contained and managed through the media and not necessarily contested through fair and free debate. This tactic has a large ripple effect on the society that matches the guest's identity. Basically, the utilization of this tactic is the persecution of the collective political imagery of that entire society through symbolic means. The aim here is to imbue collective assimilation with a desired identity that aligns with the political project attached to statecraft efforts by those who set the tone in Persian-speaking oppositional media like Iran International.

8. Horizon Contraction as Structural Risk

The structural danger is not immediate repression. It is foreclosed reciprocity.

If sovereignty renegotiation rarely appears as a serious constitutional candidate, regime change risks becoming a transition within a centralized ontology rather than beyond it.

Rawls's question returns:

Can the future political order be justified to all constituent peoples as free and equal co-authors?

If the media architecture narrows the field of acceptable constitutional imagination before deliberation begins, legitimacy risks being derived from restoration rather than reciprocity. That is the structural danger for the Kurdish constitutional horizon.

Not explicit denial.

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[16] Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

Not overt incitement.

But the quiet reproduction of centralized ontology under the banner of opposition.

V. Comparative Cases: When Opposition Media Prefigures Illiberal Restoration

The structural concern articulated above is not unique. Across post-authoritarian transitions, media centralization during rupture has prefigured illiberal restoration rather than democratic refoundation. The pattern is architectural, not conspiratorial.

1. Russia: Crisis Sequencing and Executive Restoration

Post-Soviet Russia initially experienced media pluralization. Yet the concentration of major networks under oligarchic structures, intertwined with political authority, gradually centralized interpretive control.[17] Crisis reporting—economic collapse, Chechnya conflict—was repeatedly paired with narratives of executive stabilization. Federal renegotiation debates were eclipsed by territorial unity discourse. By the time executive consolidation occurred under Vladimir Putin, constitutional imagination had already narrowed.

Restoration appeared as democratic correction.

2. Hungary: Unity Framing and Constitutional Contraction

Hungary's post-1989 pluralism coexisted with narratives emphasizing national continuity and cultural cohesion.[18] Opposition ecosystems framed sovereignty and unity as prerequisites for stability. When Viktor Orbán reentered power, constitutional transformation unfolded within a discursive environment already oriented toward centralized coherence. The media had long sequenced fragmentation as instability.

Illiberal consolidation followed horizon contraction.

3. Turkey: Security Framing and Peripheral Conditionality

In the early 2000s, in Turkey, Kurdish constitutional claims were routinely framed within security paradigms.[19] Even during reformist periods, the discourse of municipal autonomy appeared

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[17] Ivan Zassoursky, *Media and Power in Post-Soviet Russia* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2004).

[18] Kim Lane Scheppele, "The Rule of Law and the Frankenstate: Why Governance Checklists Do Not Work," *Governance* 26, no. 4 (2013): 559–562.

[19] Aslı Tunç, "Media Ownership and Political Polarization in Turkey," *Turkish Studies* 16, no. 4 (2015): 550–567.

conditional on adherence to the central government's absolutism regarding city-level policies. Executive centralization later emerged not as a rupture but as a stabilization. The earlier sequencing—unity first, renegotiation later—had structured justificatory terrain.

4. Egypt: Spectacle and Military Resolution

During Egypt's 2011 revolution, plural media flourished. Yet escalating instability was narratively paired with calls for national cohesion.[20] Spectacle of protest resolved into restoration of order. Military reassertion appeared as a resolution of chaos rather than a constitutional regression.

5. Myanmar: Unity as Pre-Political Necessity

Myanmar's partial democratic opening coexisted with national unity framing that marginalized ethnic federalism.[21] Peripheral sovereignty appeared conditional. When democratic reversal occurred, justificatory vocabulary of unity and stability was already entrenched.

Structural Convergence

Across these cases, recurring mechanisms appear:

- Crisis centralization

- Territorial unity as axiom

- Conditional plurality

- Spectacle resolution into executive authority

Illiberal restoration rarely arrives as an overt coup alone. It is incubated within a narrowed constitutional imagination. For multi-national polities, the danger intensifies. Where sovereignty is historically contested, deferral of renegotiation in favor of unity-first stabilization tends to reproduce centralization. Once authority consolidates, renegotiation occurs under asymmetrical conditions. In Rawlsian terms, reciprocity is postponed. Once postponed, it rarely reemerges under equal footing.

This dictates that the Kurdish political front cannot delay liberative efforts to the future, but as liberation occurs, step by step, sentence by sentence, coalition by coalition, and phase by phase.

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[20] Marc Lynch, *The Arab Uprising: The Unfinished Revolutions of the New Middle East* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2012).
[21] Matthew J. Walton, *Buddhism, Politics and Political Thought in Myanmar* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

It will be detrimental to any emancipatory project in the Kurdish context to succumb to postponement tactics.

The Kurdish dimension of this structural risk is acute. If sovereignty claims are consistently formatted as secondary during transitional imagination, the eventual constitutional order will likely treat them as peripheral rather than foundational.

The comparative record offers diagnostic—not deterministic—warning. Oppositional ecosystems are not immune to reproducing a centralized ontology. When they do, restoration appears as a democratic necessity rather than a constitutional regression.

The structural danger is not an immediate authoritarian takeover. It is a horizon contraction. When plural sovereignty appears unreasonable before deliberation begins, reciprocity is structurally compromised.

Not through repression.
Not through explicit incitement.

But through the quiet reproduction of centralized ontology under the banner of opposition.

VI. Conclusion

This study identifies structural continuity across protest cycles: leadership centralization, lexical containment, interactional asymmetry, and spectacle adjacency.

The argument is structural, not conspiratorial. Opposition media can reproduce centralized ontology even while opposing incumbents. In the case of Persian-speaking oppositional media, this process is a part of a larger statecraft project to consolidate power by a predetermined camp and sideline every other political agency.

In conditions of informational scarcity, horizon-setting power intensifies. If constitutional plurality is formatted as conditional while centralized restoration is formatted as coherent inevitability, transitional legitimacy risks deriving from continuity rather than reciprocity.

Vocabulary may change.

Ontology may persist.

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Pedram Baldari is an interdisciplinary artist, architect, and scholar whose work explores questions of land, belonging, and knowledge production through indigenous and stateless perspectives. Born and raised in the city of Sine (Sanandaj) in Eastern Kurdistan, Baldari engages with themes of colonialism, displacement, migration, and conflict, examining how artistic practice can reimagine social and political realities. His work spans installation, sound, video, performance, sculpture, public art, and community-based practice. Baldari's work has been presented in major national and international venues, including the Victoria & Albert Museum in London, Documenta's Import–Export program, Art Basel Switzerland, and the Walker Art Center. He has received numerous fellowships and awards, including from the Delfina Foundation, the Jerome Foundation, and the MacDowell Foundation. Baldari is currently an Assistant Professor of Art and Design at the Stamps School of Art and Design at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.