

The Strategic Blowback Paradox: Information Securitization And Israeli Media Control In The Iranian AI-Era Conflict

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ABSTRACT

This article analyses the paradoxical outcomes of Israel's media securitization during the 2025-2026 escalating conflict with Iran, which argues that a strategy designed to maintain its national security additionally created the strategic vulnerabilities Israel aimed to minimize. This article examines how Israel's Rising Lion Directive formally elevated media access from a regulatory concern into a domain of existential security, by focusing on securitization theory as defined through constructivist epistemology, specifically Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde speech act framework and Thierry Balzacq reformulation of securitization as a game of legitimation alongside with Armin Krishnan's Fifth Generation Warfare study. The article analyzes three interconnected elements of this dynamic through qualitative library research and descriptive-analytical interpretation of primary and secondary material covering from 2025-2026. From its historical foundations to its extensive implementation in the Rising Lion Directive, it first traces the historical development of Israel's censorship regime. Second, it explores how Israel's international legitimacy was gradually contested by the enforcement of the directive and politicization by the far-right government, weakening the consent and justification pillars

that Balzacq argues are essential to sustained securitization. Third, it illustrates how the resulting information vacuum allowed Iran to propagate AI-generated misinformation in the absence of Israel's independent verification infrastructure on an unprecedented scale. Hence, this article concludes that unilateral information control is not equivalent to narrative dominance in AI-era warfare and that the Israel-Iran conflict represents a notable illustration of strategic blowback in which a state's information security policy produced outcomes that were contrary to its stated goals.

ABSTRAK

Artikel ini menganalisis paradoks yang dihasilkan oleh sekuritisasi media yang dilakukan oleh Israel dalam eskalasi konflik dengan Iran tahun 2025-2026, berargumen bahwa strategi yang dirancang untuk mempertahankan keamanan nasional justru menimbulkan kerentanan yang seharusnya ingin diminimalisir oleh Israel itu sendiri. Artikel ini mengkaji bagaimana mandat Rising Lion secara formal mengangkat isu mengenai akses media dari urusan regulatif biasa masuk ke dalam domain keamanan eksistensial dengan berfokus pada teori sekuritisasi yang dilandasi oleh epistemologi konstruktivis terkhusus pada speech act oleh Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde, juga reformulasi sekuritisasi sebagai permainan legitimasi oleh Thierry Balzacq, serta kerangka perang generasi kelima oleh Armin Krishnan. Artikel juga menganalisis tiga elemen yang saling berkaitan dalam dinamika konflik ini melalui metode penelitian pustaka kualitatif dan interpretasi deskriptif analitis terhadap sumber primer dan sekunder yang mencakup periode tahun 2025 hingga 2026. Pertama, artikel ini menelusuri perkembangan historis rezim sensor Israel dari pondasinya hingga implementasinya dalam mandat Rising Lion. Kedua, artikel ini mengeksplorasi bagaimana legitimasi internasional Israel secara bertahap menghadapi kontestasi akibat penegakan mandat tersebut dan politisasi oleh pemerintah sayap kanan yang melemahkan pilar consent dan justification yang Balzacq identifikasi sebagai aspek esensial bagi keberlangsungan sekuritisasi. Ketiga, artikel ini mengilustrasikan bagaimana kekosongan informasi yang muncul memungkinkan Iran menyebarkan disinformasi berbasis AI secara masif dengan ketiadaan verifikasi independen Israel. Artikel ini menyimpulkan bahwa kontrol informasi sepihak tidak menentukan dominasi narasi dalam peperangan modern berbasis AI dan konflik Israel-Iran merupakan gambaran yang signifikan dari kondisi strategic blowback, yakni kondisi di mana kebijakan keamanan suatu negara menghasilkan konsekuensi yang berlawanan dengan tujuannya.

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between armed conflict and information control has never been incidental. In contemporary warfare, the management of information has drastically transformed from an auxiliary supporting function into a central strategic domain where states actively construct narratives, control information visibility, and contest legitimacy in front of both domestic and international audiences. The spread of disinformation and competing narratives reflect a broader shift in the nature of conflict where military operations are increasingly intertwined with struggle over perception, interpretation, and digital dissemination. Through the lens of securitization theory, that relies on constructivist understandings of how threats are socially framed, this article explores how Israel formalized media restrictions as a national security tool during the escalating conflict of Israel-Iran in 2025-2026. It also shows how this regulation generated strategic outcomes that extended beyond its original intent that resulted in a paradox of strategic blowback.

Israel's escalation against Iran in June 2025 ignites a conflict that not only escalated in the skies of Tehran and Tel Aviv, but also within global information space. The conflict developed alongside the new information environment, where visibility, speed and narrative dominance become crucial strategic assets. This escalation illustrated the dynamic with profound clarity that went beyond kinetic military exchange. In response, Israeli's authorities implemented a series of formal media restrictions called *The Rising Lion Directives*, which set a guidelines that strictly prohibit journalists from filming impact sites, broadcasting live interceptions of Iranian missiles, and reporting on the locations of air defense systems (Cordall, 2025). The message contained in these restrictions is clearly that in modern warfare, control of information is also a matter of national survival. The scale of these restrictions was historically unprecedented even by Israel's own standards. By the time the Iran War began, the regulations of information control had already been substantially reinforced. Thus, Israel information control illustrated how media access was no longer framed as a matter of press freedom and governance but instead as a matter of national security that requires active state response. From the standpoint of securitization, Israel had established the media environment as an object that required protection, turning journalistic visibility into a security concern subject to restriction, surveillance, and enforcement.

What followed revealed a dynamic that Israel's restriction policy had not anticipated and could not address. As formal restriction progressively foreclosed the space for independent and international journalism, they simultaneously generated an *information vacuum* in which a condition when accurate and verified reports of the conflict became lacking or inaccessible. A senior manager at a foreign media outlet who worked in Israel mentioned their admitting of the consequence: "*We have a partial understanding of the reality on the ground. Our coverage of the war is not truthful*" (Reiff, 2026). As a reaction to this vacuum, a strategic and measured response was taken by Iran. Within twenty-four hours of the opening strikes, accounts affiliated with the *Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps* (IRGC) had begun spreading war propaganda across major social media platforms, reaching audiences of millions (YORK, 2026), with the New York Times identifying there is over 110 AI-generated images and videos in the first two weeks of conflict (Thompson & Cardia, 2026). Iran broadcasts AI-generated video to produce footage that claims their successful retaliation against Israel, imagery of civilian casualties, and disinformation narratives designed to circulate virally across platforms beyond the reach of Israel's military censor. Moreover, by rigidly securitizing its own information space, Israel had inadvertently constrained its capacity to contest the adversarial narratives Iran was actively constructing. Iran's counter-narrative circulated freely across digital platforms and reached global audiences without accurate verification. The restriction designed to protect Israel's operational security had

simultaneously created the very conditions that contributed to its rival's information warfare strategy.

Following existing literature that provides foundational ground based on wartime media behavior helps this article to fill the gap emerging specifically on Israel-Iran conflict. Existing literature examines Israeli censorship as domestic wartime governance, but insufficiently explains how AI-era narrative environments transform censorship into a source of transnational strategic vulnerability. A study from Hillel Nosssek and Yehiel Limor's paper, which explores the formal mechanisms of media governance and the historical compromise between the state and the press in *The Israeli Paradox: The Military Censorship as a Protector of the Freedom of the Press*. Nosssek and Limor argue that Israel's military censorship historically has served as a stabilizing institutional arrangement which paradoxically maintains media freedom by establishing precise and defined boundaries within which journalists can operate, rather than acting as an act of suppression (Nosssek & Limor, 2011, p. 105). While Nosssek and Limor explored its historical foundations, Sagi Elbaz and Daniel Bar-Tal's on their research in *Voluntary Silence: Israeli Media Self-Censorship During the Second Lebanon War* using the angle on *socio-psychological* of Israel media behavior during the war, focusing on the internalized and voluntary aspects of information blockage that typically overlooked. Drawing on content analysis and in-depth interviews with notable Israeli journalists during the Second Lebanon War, Elbaz and Bar-Tal argue that Israeli journalist voluntary withheld the information due to their internalized a set of national, social, and professional motivation, such as the need to uphold national consensus and preserve soldier's morale which made this action perceived as responsible to protect their nation. The author also unfolds the core of this literature that lies in a *self-censorship* concept that is defined as the intentional and voluntary withholding of information in the absence of formal obstacle (Elbaz & Bar-Tal, 2019, p. 3). Narrowing on the contemporary media restriction operates, Armin Krishnan on his paper *Fifth Generation Warfare, Hybrid Warfare, and Gray Zone Conflict : A Comparison* argues that modern conflicts are increasingly oriented around perception management, narrative contestation, and the strategic deployment of norms as instruments of competition, rather than the direct application of military force (Krishnan, 2022, p. 17).

An essential understanding of institutional structure of Israel media control has been provided in existing literature. Nevertheless, a further exploration of understanding on the ways formal censorship, self-censorship, contemporary consequences such as AI-driven disinformation, and disputes of global legitimacy within the same conflict remain underexplored. Additionally, most existing literature focuses on this regulation in their domestic scope rather than its larger geopolitical contest of narratives.

Based on this background, this article strives to comprehensively analyze the paradoxical consequences of Israel securitizing information in AI-Era warfare and proceeds across three interconnected inquiries. (1) This article explores the formal construction and justification of Israel media restriction policy as a national security necessity. It explores a precise mechanism that transforms the issue of media access from ordinary policy into a domain of national security, alongside which this act of securitization functioned in constitutional structure and its actual enforcement. (2) This article aims to give clear details of how the international community challenged the validity of this restriction regulation, and what consequences of that dispute impacting Israel's reputation and credibility in the international scene. (3) The strategic consequences of the resulting information vacuum, with a focus on Iran's leverage with AI-generated content to strengthen their narrative position on this conflict. Generally, these three lines of analysis intersect on the main argument of this article: that media restrictions in the Israel-Iran conflict are not merely a form of censorship and restriction on journalism, it also

perceived as security strategy to control the flow of information in the modern warfare landscape while simultaneously generating an information *blowback effect* that could carry a higher cost. This dynamic is crucially recognized in order to analyze the transformation of AI-Era warfare securitization into multi-audience legitimacy dilemma, wherein domestic security rationale is structurally insufficient to prevent narrative loss in the international and digital arena which AI-era this article highlights as the defining paradox of information control in modern conflict.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research utilizes the theory of securitization as its primary concept, interpreted from a constructivist viewpoint which argues that security threats are not merely an objective reality, but are socially constructed through framing, discourse, and intersubjective recognition (Wendt, 1992, pp. 391-395). This standpoint expose the essence of security threats is not merely based on material condition; threats potentially emerge from political statements regarding a specific situation, and the effectiveness is contingent on the way these claims earn social and institutional acceptance. The book of "*Security: A New Framework for Analysis*" by Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde established the foundational basis framework of securitization by contending that security is formed through speech act, wherein the securitizing actor asserts an issue as an existential threat, thereby justifying the authority to implement extraordinary measures beyond the standards of political procedures (Buzan, Wæver, & De Wilde, 1998, pp. 21-26). Hence, within the framework of this article, Israel's *Rising Lion* guidelines and corresponding political rationalization represent a securitization strategy that elevates the issue of media access from ordinary regulatory concern into a matter of national survival by utilizing authority to enforce restrictions guidelines that would not pass conventional constitutional scrutiny.

Working with the conceptual framework developed by Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde, Thierry Balzacq in his research "*Securitization Theory: Past, Present, and Future*" elaborates and expands securitization theory to illuminate the socially negotiated and political contested as a nature of securitization processes, in addition to the fluctuating success and failure of these strategies across various audience and institutional context. While the Buzan framework addressing the speech act as the primary site of securitization, Balzacq analyzes this practice as legitimation game embedded within the concept he refers to as a *Regime of Practice*: a socially reproduced and institutionally stabilized ensemble of ways of thinking, acting, and authorizing that give security claims an enforceable political power (Balzacq, 2019, p. 312). Thus, as indicated by Balzacq reformulation of securitization, he highlighted three interconnected forms of legitimacy that are crucial for the sustainability of action. Legality ensures actions from direct legal challenges by establishing it under a recognized legal framework. Justification by building convincing arguments for affected parties able to perceive this restriction is a national and public interest not merely for those imposing one. Consent binds this entire form, which the acceptance by the relevant parties perceiving the response taken is proportionate. For this article, Balzacq's reformulation of securitization contributes to explicate the paradox of strategic blowback for Israel, which this regulation is under legal foundation and domestically justified. Nevertheless, its global legitimacy is continually eroded as this restriction evidently extends to politicization by Ben Gvir, and the information void inadvertently contributes to Iranian disinformation strategy rather than enhancing Israel's security.

In order to expand on how specific strategic conditions position securitization and lead to unintended consequences, this article additionally uses Krishnan's concept of *Fifth Generation Warfare Framework* which highlights the use of narrative and perception exploitation that shifts the conventional military forces as main instrument in the context of modern warfare. This

strategic instrument can be utilized as a crucial tool over adversaries that are unable to dominate the kinetic warfare due to planned exploitation of information gaps (Krishnan, 2022, p. 14). According to Krishnan's developed framework, any actor that limits access to validated information in the context of Fifth Generation Warfare will expose vulnerabilities that adversaries are able to exploit. In the context of this article, the lack of trustworthy journalism in Israel is in fact creating a condition intended to allow Iran's AI-Generated content to prevail at a high pace and scale.

The primary focus of the analysis is on the political and strategic intentions that underlie the restrictions imposed, by whom, and with what consequences. This article adopts a qualitative explanatory approach through mapping of data from library research which aims to explain the causal and structural implication of Israel securitization practices, contestation of international legitimacy and Iran narratives strategy. By using the theoretical framework of securitization elaborated in this section, this descriptive-analytical research systematically reconstructs and interprets political practices along with the formal justification of Israeli's government and military officials. Primary sources include the "*Rising Lion*" as reported by reliable source, official statements from the Israeli government and military authorities and press freedom reports from the Committee to Protect Journalists and Reporters Without Borders covering the period from June 2025 to April 2026, which will be examined alongside secondary sources from academic papers, think tank assessments, and credible international media. Data interpretation will be implemented through three analytical dimensions relevant to this article three lines of inquiry: the securitization framework and its legal-political justifications of Israel's media restriction policies; the resultant contestation of international legitimacy and its implications for Israel diplomatic credibility; and the strategic blowback effect that arise when Iran leverages the resulting information vacuum through coordinated social media operations and AI-Generated content.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Securitizing Construction of Media Restriction: Historical Foundations to the Rising Lion Directive

Israel formal media censorship was not a product of escalation with Iran in 2026. Historically, this formal censorship was established during the British Mandate of Palestine in 1945 where the United Kingdom initially imposed on press freedom in the territory. Moreover, three years after Israel was recognized as a state, these restrictions were integrated into Israel legislation. The British Mandate Defense Emergency Regulations, which were implemented in 1945, gave significant administrative authority, namely a capacity to ban publishing in order to avoid the distribution of material that potentially endanger public or military security. Following independence in 1948, the state of Israel kept the majority of these laws in place, thereby giving the newly established Israel Defense Forces (IDF) the authority to enforce them. This institutional record has analytical significance from a constructivist standpoint as it demonstrates that media access restrictions in Israel were a socially and historically construct of framework that has been recognized through decades of institutional practice rather than a reactive emergency measure. The legal framework has historically been constructed on the idea that the access of coverage is a conditional right that can be restricted whenever the state authorities determine that publishing of such information potentially threatens operational security. As Balzacq terms it, this is perceived as a *Regime of Practices* which is a stabilized way of thinking, acting, and authorizing that securitization claims its legally forced regulation without requiring a constant speech act. Therefore, what the historical record establishes is not merely a censorship system but also a

reliable security base where institutional legitimacy proves its significant impact in the presence of unprecedented escalation.

The increasing scale and pace of this expansion is reflecting the shifting interpretation of the media's role in the domain of modern warfare. Specifically, throughout 2024 Israel military censors imposed a fully blocked coverage on 1,635 articles and partial blocked on 6,265 articles representing the highest rate of censorship interventions in Israel media history (Adler, 2025). While previous forms of censorship focused on prevention of information disclosure involving specific operation strategies, emerging patterns observed in 2024 illuminated a systemic effort to regulate the information environment as a strategic whole. Analysis of weaponization of social media by Singer and Brooking examines the proliferation of open-source information circulation has compelled the states to adopt a comprehensive information control strategy whose scope extends far beyond traditional security concerns with acknowledgement risk of adversaries leverage to gathering information and turned into threatening intelligence strategy (Singer & Brooking, 2018, pp. 189-192). As the escalation in 2024 illuminated the gradual amplification of expanding scope of the system, thereby requiring ongoing justification to maintain domestic and international support.

A continually expanding array of practices has solidified into an unprecedented comprehensive institutional framework in the escalating conflict of Israel-Iran in June 2025. Brigadier General Kobi Mandelblit, head of Israeli military censorship, released a directive titled *Rising Lion*, an IDF Censorship Guidelines for Media Coverage of Attacks on Israel's Home Front, urging journalists to take strict measures in the context of reporting on missile and drone attacks. He further warned against any reporting that potentially exposed the location of attacks, air defense operations, or the damage that could be beneficial for adversaries and endangered national security (Cordall, 2025). All aspects of conflict coverage restriction applied in the directive included strictly prohibited broadcasting footage using drones or wide-angles cameras to show impacted areas, or broadcast footage of missile launches or Iranian missile interceptions. In addition to limiting the coverage, this guideline requires the editor to submit its material to military censors to approval before publication. Mandelblit urges that disobeying this order could seriously jeopardize national security and face legal repercussions. Analyzing through Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde securitization framework, The Rising Lion directive is Israeli military and governmental efforts performed speech act that elevated media access from a mere regulatory issue to the domain of existential national security issue by enforcing law measures that strictly monitored by the domestic government. Ultimately, the longevity and resilience of this regulation depend largely on the foundation of justification constructed by the government, which is internalized by the public audience. With the constant urge from the government that invoke the media restriction practices during wartime is proportionate to protect their own national security and this justification is internalized by the public to accept the regulation under their state conditions.

Contested Legitimacy: International Pushback and Diplomatic Consequences

Through the Rising Lion directive, the securitization of domestic media access has reached institutional consolidation, but its acknowledgement outside Israel's borders faced a distinct trajectory. Balzacq's reformulation of securitization examines that consent as the third pillar for sustained legitimacy requires active acceptance from the relevant audience, and it is precisely this pillar that has gradually collapsed under international scrutiny. This distinction highlights a core issue of securitization architecture: contextual legitimacy and international acknowledgement was never effectively created, whereas domestic audience acceptance was structurally established through decades of institutionalized practice. Balzacq framework

clarifies that intersubjective legitimacy in the international arena cannot be replaced by exceptionalism asserted domestically; Israel's securitization merely addressed one of the two audiences with differing consent condition. The international actors additionally questioned the proportionality of the restriction enforcement by Israel due to the 2025-2026 conflict with Iran, it also launched a joint institutional challenge that eroded Israel's credibility as a democratic actor in the scene of global information system.

The first and the most tangible contestation of this regulation is unfolded by press freedom institutions. This year the Reporters Without Borders (RSF) World Press Freedom index had placed Israel in the 116th out of 180 countries while by June 2025 was in 112th with the organization has strongly credited their decline to this systemic limitation on media diversity and coverage freedom (Bocandé, 2025). A related assessment was published by The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), which documented at least eight cases during the conflict in Iran alone in which fourteen journalists were harassed, had their equipment captured, or were compelled to leave by police. CPJ Regional Director Sara Qudah described this pattern as an attempt by Israeli authorities to exploit "security concerns to tighten censorship, while far-right politicians have demonized the media, thereby legitimizing attacks on journalists." (Mandour, 2025). As a whole, the analysis using Balzacq's framework showing this data and coverage indicate the collapse of legitimacy dynamics which the incapability of domestic legal foundation of securitization facing the contestation from international community as secondary audience whose consent is structurally required for diplomatic credibility.

The second concern is that impacting the decrease of this regulation legitimacy more pronounced as the politicization of censorship framework. National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir exploited the Rising Lion directive into a platform for his campaign of rhetoric despite recognizing this regulation was established in technical-security terms and urged Israeli citizens to report to authorities anyone watching Al-Jazeera. Moreover Ben-Gvir and Communications Minister Shlomo Karhi issued a joint effort to criminalize unauthorized broadcasts from impact sites which Israel's Attorney General challenged by arguing for its legal basis (BREUER, 2025). The politicization of this restriction accelerated further when far-right National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir publicly vowed to act with "*severity and zero tolerance*" against international media that violated censorship guidelines (Liebermann, 2026). Restrictions supported by a politician with a record of using provocative rhetoric are far less credible internationally than those supported by security experts on the basis of proportionality. Yair Lapid, as an opposition, expressed a similar statement, cautioning that these ministers' offensive statement will constantly erode the worldwide support Israel had just started to gain during the Iran conflict (Moran, 2025). According to the Balzacq regime of practice framework, these cases weakened the rationale under the viewpoint of the international community, whose recognition is essential to Israel's diplomatic legitimacy.

What Balzacq reformulation refers to as a legitimacy deficiency is the outcome of both dynamics combined in which the securitizing actor maintains domestic legal authority while intersubjective consent is required for wider political power progressively decreased. Israel's drop in the RSF Press Freedom Index from 88th in 2020 112th in 2025 is not merely a symbolic indication; it shows a trajectory of declining credibility due to Iran conflicts significantly escalating. For a state that its strategic position depends on maintaining its credibility among Western democratic audiences as a necessity of ongoing diplomatic support and assistance, this degradation of its credibility is a big disadvantage. Crucially, the international contestation of Israel's media restrictions policy was not limited to normative condemnation; it also generated

an information vacuum that gives the leverage for Iran through a coordinated AI-driven narrative operations which will discuss in the following section.

The Information Vacuum and Iran AI-Driven Strategy

The securitization serve as a calculated strategy to protect national security, yet on the other hand simultaneously generated that contradicts the practices originally intended, is defined as a *blowback effect*. In the context of information control, blowback does not manifest with a single tangible loss, but rather an accumulation across domains as the gap between expected and actual result. Israel's media restrictions policy was built on security premise and had a decade of support at institutional level. Yet during the escalated conflict this practice in fact causing three overlapping contradictions which delegitimization of Israel international standing, as emphasized in the preceding section, this regulation also limits Israel capability to maintain their position in the global arena, and it giving the adversaries the leverage to control the narrative during wartime with AI-generated content as the result of Israel information vacuum. There are indicators are implied to identify the blowback effect in this circumstances: outcome inversion, where censorship suppressed critical journalism that could have served as counter-narrative resource and narrative asymmetry, where Iran's AI-generated content influenced global audience at a scale that Israel restriction policy struggled to effectively compete.

The information vacuum, as this article conceptualized it, is a persistent condition rather than a sudden news gap. It appears when credible independent sources are excluded from conflict area, gradually undermining the cross-verification system audience use to assess conflicting claims. Iran's operational opportunity becomes fundamentally clear in this particular situation. When independent journalism is systematically absent from a conflict of circumstance, the narrative gap does not remain neutral; instead, it is occupied by those that are able to conduct it. Iran, whose information operation infrastructure was already focused on perception management and had integrated generative artificial intelligence as fundamental tools of content creation by 2025, was the most capable actor to take advantage of the resulting gaps in the Israel-Iran escalation. The outcome resonates with a dynamic predicted by Krishnan's *Fifth Generation Warfare theory* which emphasizes that information control operations can simultaneously generate new vulnerabilities within the larger narrative environment. In the context of this escalation, Israel's media restrictions were intended to prevent adversary data gathering and limit the publication of domestic operational information, but they also decreased availability of independent, verified reporting which generally serves as a standard to assess conflicting claims. Since there were fewer reliable sources to verify or deny disinformation as it started to spread, some narratives were able to gain momentum based on exposure and its spread scale rather than evidentiary strength. Alongside this circumstance, the information environment was increasingly influenced by external content, such as strategically distributed misinformation and fabricated materials were exposed to a wider audience in the absence of effective verification. Simultaneously, institutional limitations imposed by restricted information access hindered Israel's ability to maintain an effective evidential stance in the international sphere. This advancement illustrates how regulation designed to safeguard information flow, under particular circumstances, undermines a state's ability to uphold narrative credibility in modern warfare.

The 2025-2026 Israel-Iran conflict served as a landmark operationalization of Krishnan's Fifth Generation Warfare framework, demonstrating that information suppression in a high-paced digital environment is a fundamental vulnerability. Researchers at the European Digital Media Observatory characterized that this period signified a paradigm shift, as AI-generated narratives displaced traditional disinformation as the fundamental instrument of narrative control (EDMO, 2025). What distinguishes the conflict from the prior ones in Ukraine, Armenia,

and Gaza is the scale of disinformation produced. Disinformation by generative AI content has emerged at a pace and scale that surpasses a fact-checking infrastructure. Within the twenty-four hours of opening strikes, accounts affiliated with *Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps* (IRGC) had broadcasted AI-Generated material across major platforms, reaching a million of audiences before any institutional verification system (YORK, 2026). Analytically, in the high-uncertainty context, the first available content creates a cognitive structure that guides how audiences interpret upcoming data. According to research, the use of AI content generation in crisis events carries a crucial implication for democratic stability and credibility of public information which helps to increase the information's persuasiveness and enhance the resonance of misleading information among the public (McDonald & Stockwell, 2026). Iran recognizes this asymmetrical pattern and is preparing their strategic operations for it.

Studies on AI-driven disinformation across conflict frequently indicate that synthetic content is most prevalent has risen in areas with the least amount of independent reporting. This fills the information gap that audiences typically seek to verify journalism to address (García-Huete, et al., 2025). Iran launched a multi-layered information campaign supported by two interconnected processes that worked together to target systemic flaws that Israel's existing censorship mechanisms were structurally unprepared to mitigate. The systemic development of reality by utilizing synthetic media served as the cornerstone of this operation. This manifested as fabricated footage of Israeli aircraft losses over Iranian terrain, an AI-generated video footage of missiles attacks, and fully fabricated damage projection. Crucially, the operational architecture of this information control was not based on long-term credibility. The strategic value of these fabrications lies in their capacity to achieve immediate narrative supremacy, saturating the digital sphere during the most critical starting period and establishing narrative dominance before any retroactive verification efforts could catch up and correct the record (Alimardani & Gregory, 2025). Beyond mere disinformation, the second strategy produced a far deeper, long-term distortion of public understanding. When an information ecosystem is generally recognized for being contaminated with AI-generated content, the baseline foundation of trust erodes. Authentic information loses the capacity to operate on its own terms and must be proven to be valid. The dynamic of authentic information degradation and its correlation in AI-era rivalry sums up what Citron and Chesney define as "Liar's Dividend" which in a deep-fake saturated environment, basic awareness that synthetic media exists provides a strategic hedge for adversaries, allowing them to convincingly deny authentic information by exploiting misconceptions and labeling authentic information as a fabricated (Citron & Chesney, 2019). For Israel, whose censorship regime formally restricted the publication of impact sites and air defense operations, both mechanisms contributed to each other. While fabrications circulated freely, Israel's capacity to produce legitimate counter-opinions was limited by the same policy designed to protect its operational security. Beyond its operational aspects, the conflict transformed as a psychological legitimacy war, marked by rapid loss of credibility as its objective rather than military destruction. The instability of informational basis itself, contributing to a situation where audience gradually struggle in differentiating between authentic and fake report. This dynamic was further compounded by the decentralized architecture of AI-era conflict, where content spread through algorithmically platforms that operate outside regulatory oversight of any state. The erosion of the state's monopoly over narrative authority examines the deeper consequences this article try to identified, the state ability to serve as narrator of its own conflict becomes more operationally passive when adversarial fabricated content starts to gain audience recognition before any state-authorized account reaches the public.

Israel's media restrictions paradoxically undermined its capacity in the global information control arena. Israel's decisions to strictly secure its media environment was based on valid military measures. Limiting information circulation was justified to prevent adversaries from acquiring crucial operational information. However, this practice had a fundamental snag which overlooked the dual function of independent journalism. While open journalism potentially risks exposing key military strategies, it also serves as a major defensive function by creating a factual and objective baseline of information. This baseline is the sole mechanism capable of contesting false adversary narratives. Hence, by continually suppressing the first role of journalism, Israel simultaneously undermined the second. In light of this conflict, the policy that is enforced by rational purposes and gains domestic and institutional legitimacy, on the contrary generates consequences directly inverse to its national security and paradoxically produced strategic blowback effect.

CONCLUSION

Israel's determination to securitize media access during the escalation with Iran has drawn institutionally on a censorship regime built across decades through repeated wartime that also the application has repeated and formally articulated in the Rising Lion directive. The policy, which was presented as a logical approach to prevent adversaries in extracting operations intelligence through open-source coverage, was effectively restricting sensitive information and consistent with its national security rationalism. Nevertheless, as this article highlighted, its broader consequences went far from its intended purpose. The directive is struggled to maintain its legitimacy internationally despite having firm institutional and legal foundations domestically. Sustained criticism from press freedom organizations, along with the evident politicization of the censorship from the apparatus, undermined the justification of claims that required external recognition and consent. In line with the Balzacq framework, this ongoing contestation of the consent aspect of securitization, leading to disparity between domestic legitimacy and international trust.

The theoretical implication lies in the expansion of Balzacq's securitization framework beyond what has been covered by previous research. Balzacq conceptualized consent as an institutional and domestic requirement. This case empirically shows that consent functions as a multi-audience variables in AI-era conflict and the inability to create contextual legitimacy across international and digital audience serve as a structural vulnerability. This conflict between information control and narrative credibility becomes increasingly significant as the dynamic of *AI-era warfare* has continually evolved, particularly for states that manage the information domain primarily through securitization rather than integrating it with mechanisms that uphold international legitimacy, trust, and verification.

Therefore, when conventional security logic is applied to an information environment modified by artificial intelligence, algorithmic content distribution, and the erosion of the state's monopoly over narrative authority, blowback is required to be reconsidered as a structurally predictable outcome rather than contingent policy error. This article provides the first systematically observed case of strategic contradiction in information securitization when a policy logical foundation leads to consequences that are directly at odds with its stated security objective. This article examines an analytical explanation of how information securitization in modern warfare leads to strategic contradiction through the policy's foundational logic. This issue is unlikely to be limited to the Israel-Iran case as generative AI continues to reshape the circumstances in which narrative authority is formed and disputed. Future research in examining alternative, adaptive, and calculated framework of information governance might allow states to

maintain operational security without sacrificing legitimacy in the domains where modern conflicts are increasingly determined would be beneficial.

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