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**FACULTEIT SOCIALE WETENSCHAPPEN  
MASTER OF SCIENCE IN DE VERGELIJKENDE EN  
INTERNATIONALE POLITIEK**



# **The Depiction of Iran in United States Media**

**An analytical overview of United States  
media reporting on U.N. Security Council  
resolutions against Iran since 2006**

Promotor : Prof. P. VERLINDEN  
Verslaggever : PROF. M. HOOGHE

**MASTERPROEF**  
aangeboden tot het  
verkrijgen van de graad  
van Master of Science  
in de Vergelijkende en  
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door  
**Yasmine SADRI**

Academiejaar 2014-2015



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# **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

CR Coder Reliability  
IAEA International Atomic Energy Agency  
ILSA Iran and Libya Sanctions Act  
NPT Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty  
SC Security Council  
The NYT the New York Times  
TWP The Washington Post  
UN United Nations  
UNSC United Nations Security Council  
USA United States of America  
WMD Weapons of Mass Destruction

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*“What we speak becomes the house we live in”* –Hafez, Persian poet

I dedicate this thesis to my parents and grandparents. My reasons are best explained through a piece written for my grandmother the day she left us:

**January 8, 2014: “One Day”**

My parents were both born and raised in Tehran, Iran. A place of hope, in their youth, to prosper and let loose your Tina Turner curls, drink wine on patios, hold hands with your lover and dance. As my mother put it, Tehran was like Disneyland and the attractions were found in the homes of friends and family scattered all over the city with their doors always open.

1979. Year of the revolution. When Disneyland turned into prison and not only human beings but a plethora of hopes and dreams were locked away for good. For my parents, having left before the revolution occurred, a large deal of misery was spared. For those still there, whose lives had changed in a heartbeat, nothing would ever be the same. Now, years later, faith in the country is being restored bit by bit as the government makes work of their foreign attractiveness. Today I was told that my grandmother has passed away. And in the midst of all denial, sadness and anger, I blame the political situation for the way she was forced to live the last thirty-five years of her life. And the way it might’ve been if there were still visible curls on the streets, flowy skirts in the summer and the look of hope on peoples’ faces.

Don’t get me wrong, the biased vision of Iran already heavily consists of deserts and religious dogmas. Though this lacks accuracy and is in no way the potential I see in Iran, the freedom that was once found there is far from being restored. And I wish she were alive to see that happen..... One day.

I would also like to thank Professor and Promotor Peter Verlinden for the inspiration and opportunity to research something of such great value to me. I kindly acknowledge Professor Babak Rahimi for the chance to broaden my perspectives at the University of California, San Diego. Last but not least, I am extremely grateful for my Belgian friends who have become family in the last five years. My brother. Those who have seen me through from the beginning. I could never have done this alone. This is for you.

# ABSTRACT

The relations between the United States and Iran have been tumultuous for several decades. The nuclear debate in the last years has worsened, until recently, the trust between the two countries. Perceptions of one another are constantly being altered into a mold that best fits in a theory of international politics. This research intends to clarify if, to what extent and, possibly, why there is a bias concerning Iran in the US media. In light of recent advances in the nuclear debate, this thesis examined the coverage of the Iranian nuclear debate in two United States' newspapers, *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, between 2006 and 2010, when the six first United Nations Security Council resolutions were adopted. A qualitative content analysis observed news coverage of the nuclear debate. A collection of 140 articles was coded with one of three general frames by Scheufele (1999): political, economic and socio-cultural. A second part of our frame-funnel consisted of a more specific frame book with 14 categories and an "other" category, by Boydston, Gross, Resnik, and Smith. A third and last observation was made with regards to the article's tone, using definitions of the words "negative", "neutral" and "positive" to determine what was most applicable to the article. Our results show that beside the outnumbering negative tone throughout the articles, most articles can be framed under a general political frame and further into categories such as "external regulation and reputation", "politics" and "security and defense". The study concludes that beside a very *political* construction in reporting, the newspapers hold the tendency to emphasize *negative* aspects of the Iranian government, leaders and decisions throughout the debate, referring to the faulty regulation and reputation of Iran's government. The consequences of the combination of *agenda-setting*, *priming* and *framing* are immeasurable: as news consumers are predisposed to a certain perception of Iran, the grim process of altering their conjecture is what makes up the international relations of today.

Key words: Iran, nuclear debate, media, media coverage, media bias



# **1. INTRODUCTION**

## **1.1. Research subject and objectives**

It cannot be denied that the relations between Iran and the rest of the world make up a significant and interesting part of the contemporary study of international relations. Irrefutably, in the last decade, the nuclear debate has taken over the relationship between the United States and Iran. Today, the depiction of a given country in the media is being used as a tool to establish a certain relationship between the citizens of the world. The subject of this study was determined through a combination of the researcher's background and current events. It was seemingly interesting, as a Belgian-Iranian-American citizen, to conduct explorative research regarding the type of representation that exists in each country, of another country.

## **1.2. Relevance of the Study**

### **1.2.1. Social Relevance**

It has never seemed more important to explore and discover the role of the media in international politics. Advisor and Professor Peter Verlinden provided some intriguing lectures regarding the topic of media and international conflicts. It was thought provoking to examine how the media plays a noteworthy part in the determination of public opinions, and, in time, political decisions. Though this dissertation regards the reporting on Iran in US media, it will also focus on the exploratory study of media framing in the United States in general. Framing, as a concept, assumes that the portrayal of a certain issue in the news can influence how the audience will view the issue. Framing can be looked at from two distinct levels. On a macro-level, it echoes the manner in which journalists and other communicators are able to manipulate the representation of information so it fits to the audiences' pre-established schemes. We cannot say that these journalists intend to change or alter the story, but by framing, they can more easily and clearly present information, which may be tortuous. The micro-level of framing, on the other

hand, refers to the way in which news consumers, citizens of a certain country, use and abuse the information they obtain from the media to shape their opinions about certain conflicts or ideas (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007, p.11-12).

Public understanding of the nuclear debate is highly dependent on the way it is reported in the media. News outlets bring international conflicts closer to citizens. These outlets select and highlight facets of events or issues. With regards to the Iranian situation, the topic of media coverage has long been in need of a technical and specialized analysis. While there has been criticism of news coverage regarding the 2003 Iraq invasion, the lack of empathy-sparking images has caused Iran to be depicted as the enemy for a long time. Of course, newspapers report with vigilance after the events that unfolded following the Iraq invasion. It is interesting, however, to determine if there are any changes in tone or theme in written media that could possibly mean a shift in public opinion after consummation of the media (Sobel, 2011). Observers have argued that the coverage of Iran is done with some carefulness, while others maintain that it is a recipe for unintended consequences. With these speculations in the back of our minds, we start to get an idea of this research's objectives: how exactly was the nuclear issue framed in US media? What can explain such reporting?

### **1.2.2. Political Relevance**

Comparisons have been made between the so-called coordinated propaganda campaign about Iran in the years leading up to and following the establishment of the UN resolutions to the campaign that lead up to the war in Iraq (Carpentier, 2007). Reconsideration and many studies reveal that the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 relied on the abominable misconception that the country was able to yield, also, "weapons of mass destruction". Taking over the debate, the media failed miserably in distinguishing the type of weaponry that fell under the category of mass destruction. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) had assessed the situation in Iraq accurately, yet was not credited by the media. Studies confirmed that there was too much reliance on White House sources, alongside very general

descriptions of the weapons of mass destruction, lacking any precision. More obvious was the reliance on the agenda and policies prescribed by senior U.S. officials. We must acknowledge, however, that there was also a disagreement in administration. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta said, in February 2013, that “the intelligence we have is [Iran has] not made the decision to proceed with the development a nuclear weapon. I can’t tell you they are in fact pursuing a weapon, because that’s not what intelligence says they’re doing right now.” Remarks such as these are considered extremely rare but we recognize that in the years leading up to a possible nuclear agreement there were also responses from the political arena that went against mainstream media and were therefore shut out, despite being official, for not advocating the tough sanctions placed on the Islamic Republic (Afrasiabi, 2005).

Media scholar Susan Moeller (2004) evaluated the role of the media in the Iraq invasions, and discovered the following: “the US media spotlights US diplomatic efforts at a cost of under-covering the diplomatic initiatives of others, especially international organizations such as the UN and IAEA.” She adds that there is a tendency for US media to authenticate critical assessments made by US officials on the contribution of other countries or international organizations. The officials from other countries or organizations may not be rewarded with an equally noticeable chance to counter accounts of ineffectiveness. The counter-arguments are either lost in the story or completely omitted, causing for imminent bias without the intention of the reader to only hear one side. In a page one story in the *New York Times*, a repetition of an American official Jay Garner’s charge against the UN was the leading sentence. There was no UN counter-voice speaking in its defense. He blamed the United Nations sanctions for the gasoline shortages that have triggered Iraqi anger at the American occupation forces residing in Iraq. Referring to the *New York Times*, he says: “Put in there that the U.N. really needs to lift the sanctions so we don’t have all of this” (Sachs, 2003).

In comparing Iran and Iraq, we note that the situation is, at least categorically, very similar. What distinguishes Iran from Iraq is the fact that Iran has been able to acquire a much greater uranium enrichment activity than Iraq. This activity is being monitored by the

IAEA. Their reports document the accumulation of relevant material, revealing that Iran has not produced uranium at the level necessary to generate a nuclear explosion. Under the terms of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), Iran retained the right to continue the enrichment of uranium alongside a legal obligation to not acquire nuclear weapons by any means. The resolutions laid out by the UN portray that in recent years, Iran has continuously asserted its right to enrich uranium, denying any intention for the acquisition of nuclear weapons. We believe the role of the media has been crucial in this occurrence, as Iran repeatedly tried to prove its innocence while being blasted for the assumption that it was, in fact, trying to produce nuclear weapons. Important in this matter are the judgments regarding the intention and possible justifications, which are entangled in presumptions of a supposed underlying motive Iran may have to engage in nuclear activity. The predominant hostility in relations between Iran and the United States has inhibited these countries to create a steady base for 'normal' diplomatic interaction (Siolino, 2008).





## **2. THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS**

### **2.1. Iran and the nuclear debate**

Iran ranks top 20 of the world's most populous countries. With 75 million Iranians, Asef Bayat (2010) explains its modernity "manifests itself in a host of social processes" in which the "general trend toward smaller, two-child households and apartment living" among other trends "possessing individualism" are characteristics (p. 45). Despite modernization efforts, the country remains deeply authoritarian. Citizens are withheld from decisions concerning public life (p. 47). Noteworthy is Iran's hold on 10% of the world's oil reserves (Wright, 2010). Despite these facts, the economy knows little to no growth. This can be attributed to the international sanctions placed on the country since 1979, after the seizing of the American embassy (Maloney, 2010)

Before dissecting the nuclear history of Iran, we look further into what happened shortly after the hostage crisis in 1979. At this time, the United States imposed broad economic sanctions against the country of Iran. Since then, Washington has imposed several sanctions against Tehran, accusing the government of developing nuclear weapons and funding terrorism abroad. Not only do these sanctions block US-based oil companies from functioning in Iran, they gave the US a reason to extend the sanctions and block foreign competitors from operating as well. The sanctions against Iran became more stringent with the Clinton administration in 1996, when the Iran and Libya Sanctions Act (ILSA) of 1996 was put in place. This act prohibited any U.S. trade with Iran, including their most important revenue-driving force: oil sales. Congress extended sanctions to prevent any foreign power "from undermining the U.S. effort against Iran" and proceeded to severely penalize countries that continued business with Iran (Katzman, 2003). This followed the 2003 report by the Congressional Research Service (CRS) prepared for congress. The report noted that "when U.S. allies refused to adopt similar sanctions, the Clinton Administration and Congress believed

that it might be necessary for the United States to try to deter foreign countries from undermining the U.S. effort against Iran". Iran had revealed, in February of 2003, its uranium enrichment program at Natanz. The country claimed to use technology for peaceful purposes, inviting the UN nuclear monitoring body, the IAEA, to visit their territory. The US maintained their position and alleged that the program was a drive to develop nuclear weapons, and referred the Iranian case to the United Nations Security Council. Prolonging the extent to which ties with Iran were forbidden, the U.S. Department of Treasury prohibited the publication or editing of scientific reports from Iran in 2004. The departments warning included that any American scientist working with Iranians would be prosecuted. In November 2004, Tehran signed an agreement, though temporary, with Germany, France and Britain, in order to cease their uranium enrichment so they would be issued a clean bill of health by the IAEA (Resolutions on Iran, z.d.).

Still, in June of 2006, the Security Council adopted its first resolution, demanding that Iran suspend all of its enrichment programs by August 31. When Tehran had not complied in December 2006, the council started imposing sanctions on Iran's trade (Gootman, 2006). The UNSC passed Resolution 1747 in March 2007, intensifying previous sanctions while targeting specific officials and adding some to Iranian financial institutions (UN Sanctions Against Iran, z.d.). Nonetheless, Iran maintained its right to continue uranium enrichment for peaceful purposes, and cited its right to do so within the limits of international law. Relevant here is the compliance Iran has shown with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), and the fact that the countries backing the sanctions have provided no evidence to prove the opposite. When in December 2007, U.S. intelligence services concluded that since 2003, Iran had ended its nuclear weapons research, Washington's policy remained firm (UN Sanctions Against Iran, z.d.). Years later, it seemed as though this firm stance would not change.

### 2.1.1. United Nations Security Council Resolutions

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has adopted several resolutions regarding the Iranian nuclear program. Between 2006 and 2010, UNSC drafted six resolutions, each one requiring Iran to halt the enrichment of its uranium. This uranium can either be used for civilian purposes or with the intent to build nuclear weapons (DeYoung and Shear, 2009). The resolutions (SC) are the following:

- 1) **Resolution 1696** adopted on July 31, 2006, was the first resolution in which the Security Council called on Tehran to suspend any enrichment of uranium and verify that compliance with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Board of Governor's requirements. This was intended to build trust between Iran and the UN member states.
- 2) **Resolution 1737** adopted on December 23, 2006, placed economic sanctions on Iran and prohibited UN member states from supplying Iran with materials or technology that might contribute to nuclear weapons development. In addition, this resolution also called on member states to freeze any assets of particular individuals or companies showing any ties to Iran's nuclear programs.
- 3) **Resolution 1747** adopted on March 24, 2007, tightened the existing sanctions imposed on Iran in connection with their nuclear program. This resolution also resolved to impose a ban on arms sales and expand the freezing of assets that was already in place.
- 4) **Resolution 1803** adopted on March 3, 2008, imposed a requirement at all costs for Iran to cease any and all uranium enrichment.
- 5) **Resolution 1835** adopted on September 27, 2008, was a response to the 15 September report of the IAEA that confirmed that Iran had not suspended uranium enrichment related activities. It was basically a reaffirmation of the four previous Security Council resolutions.

- 6) **Resolution 1929** adopted on June 9, 2010, imposed the sixth round of sanctions against Iran. It reiterated everything that was said in the previous five resolutions and further banned Iran from investing in nuclear and missile technology abroad, including investment in uranium mining.

With the above sanctions to consider, it is becoming increasingly interesting to see how the US, as a major player in the decision making process regarding Iran, informs its citizens of the UNSC decisions (Yazdani & Hussain, 2006). As these resolutions were brought out by the United Nations Security Council as official documents, we considered them a starting point for this research. Stemming from these resolutions, we proceeded to decipher what was published shortly after they were adopted.

## **2.2. Coverage of international conflicts**

When it comes to reporting on international conflicts, there tends to be a distinction in the media between “the self and the enemy” (Carpentier, 2005). According to the discourse theory, the enemy is perceived to be someone of an antagonistic identity. This results in a process of antagonistic identity construction in which both one’s own identity as well as the other identity are molded, or formed (Cottle, 2006). These identities are, and remain equally dependent. What one side thinks of the other, results in a payback of portrayal by the other side. The media, however, is most strongly manipulated by one of the conflicting parties, usually on the side of the government. Journalists tend to follow what the government has already framed.

The course of the conflict determines how the media is going to act upon it. This is typically in favor of those who are in power. We can apply this phenomenon to the first two phases of the conflict model by Hunt (1997). The first phase is one in which signals are spread. In the case of our research, these would entail the stereotypes existing about the Iranians. The second phase is one in which the media tries to justify the conflict. Some argue that Iran’s nuclear weapons program is reason enough to interfere by sanctioning. Propaganda plays a big part of this entire process. An example of this was seen following the attacks on 9/11, when former president

George W. Bush (2002) used Manichean frames as he told Americans “you’re either with us or against us” (Rojecki, 2008). He further exemplified how Iran was an evil force in the world with his “axis of evil” speech. The concept of Manichaeism is also found in the term often used to describe Iran, namely “rogue state (Jenkins, 2013). Walt (2011) refers to this belief of superiority as “American exceptionalism”. It is a belief that presumes the American “values, political system and history are unique and worthy of universal admiration. They also imply that the United States is both destined and entitled to play a distinct and positive role on the world stage” (Walt, 2011, p.1). Continuing this strain of thought, he wrote that the belief often blinds Americans to how similar they are to the “others” they refer to (Walt, 2011, p.1). The “either you are with us or you are with the terrorists” feel that has existed in the last few decades is classified by Hunt (1997) as “black propaganda”. Adding to this, and perhaps the most important contraption to focus on: the terms used in the media are responsible for the simplification and justification of the portrayal of Iran as some type of “Evil Regime”.

### **2.2.1. Intercultural Schemata**

A study conducted by Shagasemi and Heisey in 2009 showed a comparison between intercultural schemata of both the US and Iran’s population. Two groups of the social sciences faculties at the University of Tehran and Kent University participated in this study. The results showed that Iranians generally had a more positive scheme to describe the Americans than vice versa. When examining possible explanations, the researchers concluded that the restriction of free press in Iran, and on the other hand, the plethora of news sources Iran’s citizens are sometimes illegally (via satellites) acquiring could possibly override a one-sided Iranian perception of the American population. “Negativity”, “positivity” and “neutrality” were measured by the language used in the answers. Examples of negative intercultural schemata on the Americans’ side (regarding Iranians) include “poor”, “repressed”, “bad government”, “evil” and “headscarves”. Negative words used to describe Americans were, among others, “intimidating, immoral, ignorant” and “selfish”. Both

sample groups identified the media as the main source of their schemes.

*“In the West, during the last few decades of the twentieth century, Islamic culture has been dissected, deciphered and categorized in numerous degrees of interpretation. Most of the analyses have been based on ethnocentric thought, generating a massive amount of negatively toned literature about Islamic culture. The key problem is a lack of cultural relativity, which allows one to judge another culture by its standards rather than by using Western standards. However, because of deep-rooted, distorted perceptions of Islamic culture, receptivity to cultural relativity is low in the West”*  
(Kamalipour, 1995, p. 202).

This brings us to selective gatekeeping by Galtung and Ruge. The elements intensity, simplicity, unexpectedness and most important to this study: cultural proximity all comprise their characterization of news topics. According to the authors, the news reported must overlap with the audience’s mental images on the subject and the potentials of the news medium (Galtung & Ruge, 1965). Additionally, these elements make news reporting on the peace process much more difficult. When we speak of “proximity”, there is a consonance with a certain country or region with which the acting country is related. This country will appear in the media faster than countries we have less in common with, and thus cultural proximity. This is only relevant to determine how stereotypical or important certain events will be shown in the media. Criticism on the proximity argument is that you can manipulate these (Harcup & O’Neill, 2001).

### **2.2.2. Different Media Paradigms**

Simon Cottle (2006) distinguishes three important paradigms in the media. A first paradigm is the “manufacturing consent paradigm”. In this paradigm, Cottle points to several factors that exert a big influence on reporting. A first factor is *ownership of media machines*. The largest messengers in the US were mostly tied to their

founders. A second important factor is *commercial investments*. This is where the media receives most of its funding. Investors rely on a certain range of information that is given, approved and supported by the government, businesses and experts. The media therefore relies on a symbiotic and reciprocal relationship. The “*flak*” factor works as a method to discipline the media. It gives dominant social institutions the power and possibilities to force the media to spread propaganda. A fourth factor, which also works as a control mechanism, is the so-called “*anti-communism*” factor. When today’s authors refer to this concept, after the cold war and in modern context they would refer to it as “anti-terrorism”, or “anti-Islam”. In other words, it can be summarized as a “dichotomy of otherness”. It holds the idea that strong enemies will attack us and that we should instill our trust and support in those who rule the country. The fifth and last factor is the *limitation of alternative interpretations*. The media can, in a way, determine public opinions by controlling how ideas are presented. By their framing, if you will. In a contemporary global environment, the mass media, especially visual media, is extremely powerful. The collective power exceeds that of families, religion, education and traditional institutions.

*“The daily barrage of images and information emerging from the media may not only underscore but also counter and overturn the enlightenment gained inside the classroom”*(Campbell, 1997, p.178).

A second paradigm classified by Simon Cottle (2006) is the media contest paradigm. This paradigm indicates that with international conflict, the political process influences the media more than the other way around. We see this happen in recent events when the media tends to report more from a certain viewpoint, depending on which side of the conflict they are on. There is an importance in time and circumstance when determining the media’s influence on political conflicts. Again we mention Hunt’s (1997) conflict model and its first phases. Furthermore, when it comes to determining which political side will have the most influence on the media, we must think of the fight as a two-sided struggle. There is competition between the two parties to influence the media both structurally and



culturally. Structurally, the US has an advantage, because of the lack of restriction and censorship. Culturally, as a western super power, the US also enjoys the ability to exert some kind of influence over countries located in Western Europe as they sometimes agree on certain points.

The national media follow the lineage of the national government when at “war” Despite the lack of actual war in this case, we can link this to the situation between the US and Iran. The war model of reporting has infiltrated newscasts. The direct result of this, as mentioned before, is a one-dimensional enemy image. There is one enemy, because of a certain characteristic (ex. the possession of nuclear power). We can link this back to the media consent paradigm: from the moment you find yourself in a war situation, the media will fall back on the togetherness, solidarity of the people in their own country – placing themselves behind the same ideology. The media market is what matters most, so the media will tend to follow the political ideologies of their own group or country. Lewis Brookes and Wahl-Jorgensen (2004) showed us the dangers of such reporting in “reporting the war on British television”. They found that most media (86 percent) with respect to the war in Iraq blatantly accepted the idea that there were mass weapons of destruction. There was no effort to discover the truth. When applying this to Iran, we can assume that the media will not attempt to disprove the idea that Iran is a potential threat with their nuclear program.

The last paradigm described by Cottle is the ‘media culture paradigm’. This paradigm defines the specific focus that is placed on one cultural sphere in which the media is entrenched. According to the third paradigm, ones cultural background strongly shapes and alters values and world vision. News is produced through this frame. Thus, in order to understand the media in a specific region, we must acknowledge the cultural elements which constitute it (Cottle, 2006). When distinguishing this paradigm and the previous, Cottle writes “differentiating from the media contest paradigm, the media culture paradigm is based fundamentally on the explication of ‘culture’ as the medium of social representation and engagement (p. 25).

Cottle (2006) refers to Douglas Kellner’s book *Media Culture:*

*Cultural Studies, Identity, and Politics Between the Modern and the Postmodern* (1995), highlighting Kellner's statement: "a media culture has emerged in which images, sounds and spectacles help produce the fabric of everyday life... radio, television, film and the other media products of the culture industries provide the models of what it means to be male or female, successful or a failure, powerful or powerless. Media culture also provides the materials out of which many people construct their sense of class, of ethnicity and race, of nationality, of sexuality, of 'us' and 'them'. Media culture helps shape the prevalent view of the world and deepest values: it defines what is good or bad, positive or negative, moral or evil" (p. 1). When using this lense to observe the coverage of the Iranian nuclear debate, consumers may find themselves in a media culture which embodies the 'us' and 'them' variance between the United States and Iran.

### **2.3. The rhetoric on Iran**

Political rhetoric regarding the Islamic Republic has been very high in the last decade, especially with regards to its nuclear proliferation. The rhetoric has been placed at two ends of the spectrum. An example of extreme disinclination toward Iran can be found in the statement by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in March 2006 that Iran acted as the Middle East's "central banker" for terrorism and that it poses the "[greatest] challenge from a single country" for the U.S. (Tarock, 2006, p. 646). President Obama's first term was characterized by a strong will to build stronger ties with Iran. Concerning foreign policy, this was one of the major objectives. On January 20, 2009, when President Obama gave his inaugural address, he announced:

*"To the Muslim world, we seek a **new way forward**, based on mutual interest and mutual respect. To those leaders around the globe who seek to sow conflict, or blame their society's ills on the West, know that your people will judge you on what you can build, not what you destroy. To those who cling to power through corruption and deceit and the silencing of dissent, know that you are on the wrong side of*

*history, but that we will extend a hand if you are willing to unclench your fist.”*

Much to the disappointment of the Iranian peoples, a new relationship as promised was not reached. John Limbert (2010) analyzed the rhetoric in both countries and concluded that the debate consisted of accusing each other of “tricking” or “cheating” the other. Nearly two years following the president’s inaugural address, U.S. Senator Lindsey Graham gave a speech at a security conference which took place in Canada. She called on the country “not to just neutralize [Iran’s] nuclear program, but to sink their navy, destroy their air force and deliver a decisive blow to the Revolutionary Guard, in other words neuter that regime” (Duss, 2010, p. 1).

On September 25, 2012, Obama spoke at the United Nations General Assembly on the topic of Iran nuclear proliferation. “Make no mistake,” the president noted, “a nuclear-armed Iran is not a challenge that can be contained.” The president claimed that such developments would certainly “threaten the elimination of Israel, the security of Gulf nations, and the stability of the global economy. It risks triggering a nuclear-arms race in the region, and the unraveling of the non-proliferation treaty. ... That is why the United States will do what we must to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon” (Johnston, 2012). On March 15, 2013, Obama mentioned in an interview with Israeli TV that Iran was only a year away from developing nuclear weapons and continued to toughen his rhetoric stating that he would use “all options” to halt this (Dwyer, 2013). Vice President Joe Biden had “warned Iran in a spirited speech to the American Israeli Public Affairs Committee, the powerful pro-Israel lobby, that those ‘options’ include U.S. military action.” “Let me make clear what that commitment is” said Vice-president Joe Biden, “it is to *prevent* Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon. Period. End of discussion. Prevent — not contain — prevent.” Obama had also noted that the Islamic Republic had shown no intent “to get right with the international community” (Dwyer, 2013).

One can imagine that such rhetoric, with “such stark perceptions,” can stall any progress. “There can be no peace and no room for compromise”. Tarock mentions that “in political terms,

there is a clash here between a superpower intolerant of a perceived dissident and ‘rogue’ state, an assertive and old but glorious civilization that has had the ‘temerity’ to challenge that superpower in a region where Washington demands submission” (Tarock, 2006, p. 647).

### **2.3.1. The double standard**

The policies imposed on Iran have also faced much criticism. Some speak of a “double standard”, especially EU countries; criticizing ILSA, as the U.S. once fought against the Arab League boycotting of Israel, simultaneously encouraging the entire world to boycott Iran, with all necessary consequences. Countries in the EU even went as far as “[threatening] formal counter-action in the World Trade Organization” (Katzman, 2003). The media underreported on the 2010 summer act signed by Obama, also known as the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, the Accountability and Divestment Act of 2010 (CISADA). The domestic and international sales bans of petroleum to Iran included in this act had very serious consequences for the country’s economy. Furthermore, CISADA prohibits, as mentioned before, any industries from engaging in business with Iran’s oil companies. Adding to this in February 2013, the Iran Threat Reduction and Syria Human Rights Act of 2012 took full effect. These sanctions restricted the actions of the Iranian petroleum industry and its Central Bank (Katzman, 2003).

### **2.3.2. 2015: A year of change**

Notably, the first few months of 2015 have shown a drastic change in the relations between Iran and the US. Prior to this, the protagonists included in the dispute failed to understand each other.

#### **2.3.2.1. A potential deal**

*"If this framework leads to the final deal, it would make our country, allies and the world safer... Iran will face more inspections than any*

*other country in the world... If Iran cheats, the world will know it... this framework would cut off every pathway that Iran could take to develop a nuclear weapon”*

-President Obama (Labott, E., Castillo, M., & Shoichet, C., 2015)

There are still many details left to work out, but undeniably, negotiators have recently taken a significant step toward a breakthrough on April 2, 2015 with the aim of containing the Iranian nuclear program. Many late-night negotiations among diplomats in Lausanne, Switzerland, led to the announcement of a framework for an agreement that was long in the making. Iran must commit to reducing its stock of low-enriched uranium by 98% and reduce the number of centrifuges. In exchange, the U.S. and E.U. would remove sanctions that have burdened the Iranian economy for a number of years.

For the United States and Iran, the last few months of negotiating were of great significance. Merely two years ago, the countries had not been able to enter dialogue with each other for nearly four decades. U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry told CNN shortly after the framework was laid out that he thought “there was a seriousness of purpose... people negotiated hard. It was tough, very intense at times, sometimes emotional and confrontational. It was a very intensive process, because the stakes are very high, and because there is a long history of not talking to each other. For 35 years, we haven't talked with the Iranians directly like this”. Other world powers involved in the negotiations were Russia, China, France, Germany and the United Kingdom. President Barack Obama referred to the preliminary agreement as a “historic understanding” that would halt Iran from attaining nuclear weaponry while they would experience relief from international sanctions (Labott, E., Castillo, M., & Shoichet, C., 2015).

### **2.3.3. Obama vs. Congress and Israel**

Weeks before the preliminary agreement was announced, the Israeli prime minister expressed concern regarding a potential deal. Many

members of congress also showed skepticism toward an agreement with the Islamic Republic. These sentiments of apprehension have long existed. Looking back at a third debate between president Barack Obama and presidential candidate Mitt Romney in 2012, Obama hyped his hard actions against Iran, proclaiming that his administration had prepared the “strongest coalition and sanctions against Iran in history,” adding that it was “crippling their economy... their currency has dropped 80 percent... their economy is in a shambles” (Goodenough, 2012).

Today, Obama has reached out to his critics both in Congress and Israel, explaining that the agreement was more of an “unprecedented verification”. Obama decreed that starting yet “another war in the Middle East” would push back the Islamic Republic by another couple of years, and enlarge the threat of a potential bomb. The second option, the best option in the president’s opinion, is a “robust and verifiable deal”. The third option would be anticipating the sanctions to do their job, hoping Iran would step up and promise more transparency but “every time we have done so, Iran has not capitulated”. However, Obama mentions how an interim agreement in 2013 achieved exactly what the parties hoped for: Iran rolling back its nuclear development. “At the time skeptics argued that Iran would cheat, and the interim agreement would fail.” Despite these reactions “it has succeeded exactly as intended. Iran has fulfilled all its obligations”. With good reason, of course, given that in return for the limitations on the nuclear program, Iran is promised relief of several sanctions imposed by the EU, US, and UN Security Council. This relief would take place in phases, and sanctions imposed over anything related to terrorism, long-range missiles, and human rights issues, will remain.

*“Iran is not going to simply dismantle its program because we demand it to do so. That’s not how the world works... it is a good deal. A deal that meets our core objectives... [it will] introduce the most robust, intrusive inspections regime ever negotiated for any nuclear program in history” (Obama, 2015).*

Pleading at Congress to refrain from killing the deal, Obama credited them for all they had done developing the sanctions regime.

He said no reasonable alternative would cause the US to be blamed by the entire world as a super power failing at diplomacy. He asked to congress to play a “constructive oversight role” in the upcoming steps of the negotiation. Addressing members of congress, the president explained “The issues at stake here are bigger than politics...International unity will collapse, and the path to conflict will widen”. Specifics of the deal will be worked on through June of this year. (“Obama: Historic deal reached on Iran nuclear program”, 2015).

## **2.4. Parsimonious or precise? Framing, agenda-setting, and priming**

There are three models of media influence applicable to the issue of media bias: framing, agenda-setting and priming. They are all significant theories within the studies of communications and have all received significant attention in previous studies regarding media and international conflicts. The first, *agenda-setting*, entails the media’s tendency to place a stronger emphasis on some issues rather than others. More importantly, agenda-setting concerns the outcome of this effect, which leaves the public placing more importance on some issues rather than others. This could range anywhere from the amount of coverage or the way these issues are placed in the news; in time it can refer to the importance the audience attributes to these issues (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). *Priming*, a second concept, denotes “changes in the standards that people use to make political evaluations” (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987, p. 63). News audiences are provided with some sort of priming platform with which they evaluate the performance of countries, governments or even individual leaders. Priming happens when news content is used as a benchmark by the audience. The two concepts above both stem from memory-based models of information processing. They both define that one’s accessible considerations are what form one’s perception or decision-making process (Hastie & Park, 1986). The third model is *framing*. Framing differs from the previous two because it is not an accessibility-based model. It regards the way an issue is

characterized in news reports, as this has a significant influence on how it is read, and interpreted by the audience.

### **2.4.1. Agenda-Setting**

Agenda-setting defines what is viewed as the *ultimate* problem, what can essentially be ignored and what requires more attention (Weaver, 1975). American newspaper commentator and author Walter Lippmann is often referred to as the father of the agenda-setting concept. In 1954 he noted in *Public Opinion* that ‘the world that we have to deal with politically is out of reach, out of sight, out of mind; it has to be (...) reported and imagined’ (Lippmann, 1954, pp. 3-32). Through manipulation and placement the news media has the ability to direct our attention and alter our discernment of key topics. The agenda-setting function in the media causes a few matters to be placed in the spotlight (McCombs, 2005b, pp. 1-19). The agenda of the media essentially becomes the agenda of the public by means of media influence. Proving, once again, that the media are the primary sources of political information and make up the link between political events and the understanding of them by the public (McCombs, 2005b, p. 2).

There are two levels of agenda-setting, the previous significant concept we deciphered. The second-level agenda-setting laid out by McCombs, Shaw and Weaver (1997) is different from first-level agenda-setting: while the first-level focuses on the relative salience of topics, level two examines their relative salience of attributes of these issues. It is therefore not simply concerned with the presence of subjects on the political agenda but the portrayal of them in the media. It rests on the assumption that the way something is depicted influences the understanding of that issue by the audience (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007, p. 11; Weaver, 2007, p. 142).

This media effect has been studied significantly. Some longitudinal studies (Eaton, 1989) as well as experimental (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987) studies have worked out the details of causal links between the political agenda and the media, which is political agenda-setting. These studies are necessary for the external validity of content analysis, so that the findings can be applied to phenomena



in the real world. We can assume that the agenda-setting function of the media has been substantially supported.

### **2.4.2. Priming**

A second significant concept is priming. Priming, as defined by Iyengar & Kinder in 1987, is the act of drawing attention to certain aspects of political life at the expense of others and the effect of this on the public perception. How this differs from agenda-setting is that the audience member is merely more predisposed and “trained”, if you will, to frame the news in terms of a certain primary issue. With regards to Iran, if the American public feels the slightest threat, they will judge the decisions for and about that country by what their country and any international institution does to stop the other country from attaining nuclear weapons. Iyengar & Kinder (1987) found that this concept is quite pervasive and is often used in tests on topics such as arms control, civil rights, and defense among other things. Priming has also deemed more effective with regards to performance than character, usually concerning a president or authority of such sort. On a presidential level, for example, priming that emphasized the Iranian hostage crisis encouraged viewers to vote based on Carter’s handling of foreign policy. In short, priming has a significant impact on the way individuals make judgments on political decisions. Their standards will change as a result of what has been emphasized by the media. The phenomenon of priming is not a new one; it has been studied by various authors, over many years (Goidel, Shields, & Peffley, 1997; Krosnick & Kinder, 1990; Krosnick & Brannon, 1993; Malhotra & Krosnick, 2007; Mutz, 1998), and experimentally (Holbrook & Hill, 2005; Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; McGraw & Ling, 2003; Miller & Krosnick, 2000).

It is important to note that in the priming process, the impact of different criteria on people will change how they later evaluate things without necessarily changing the ensuing opinion or assessment itself. In other words, priming will not always change the attitude people have toward an issue. Rather, it will change the criteria with which they judge the topic (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; Krosnick & Kinder, 1990; Miller & Krosnick, 2000). Priming thus

groups pre-existing knowledge, views and attitudes in individuals' minds and allows them to evaluate a certain topic in such way.

### **2.4.3. Framing**

*“Media frames are persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion, by which symbol-handlers routinely organize discourse whether verbal or visual. Frames enable journalists to process large amounts of information quickly and routinely: to recognize it as information, to assign it to cognitive categories, and to package it for efficient relay to their audiences” (Gitlin, 1980, p. 7).*

A third concept oriented towards the media agenda, and the public perception of it is framing (d’Haenens, 2005, p. 424). Framing, as a concept, can be traced back to social and cognitive psychology (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989), sociology (Goffman, 1974), journalism, communication and media studies (Scheufele, 1999), and most important to this research, political communications, sciences and studies (Entman, 1993). As a result, there are numerous definitions attempting to explain what the concept entails. Robert Entman’s definition, appropriate for this research, is also the most widely used definition (McCombs, 2005, p. 546). Entman defined that when framing something, a person selects a certain aspect of some perceived reality and renders it more salient in a communicative way (through text, speech, etc.), so that a particular issue definition, an interpretation, a moral evaluation or recommendation is promoted, rather than another (Entman, 1993, p. 52). From this angle, framing does indeed include more cognitive processes than we would assume, even more than the abovementioned ‘second-level’ agenda-setting, which only touches the prominent attributes of objects or subjects (Weaver, 2007, p. 146).

Moreover, the concept of framing continuously describes how the media holds the ability to influence the human perception by giving prominence to these objects and subjects, by placing them in a more visible position, giving them more meaning or making them

more accessible and sensational to the audience. This is not only influential for the public opinion, but this, as mentioned before, may hold the power to shape the public agenda (d'Haenens, 2005, p. 424). As reporters wish, they can make certain information more accessible and prominent by selecting and omitting features, repetition, or the association with culturally familiar symbols (Entman, 1993, pp. 52-54).

#### ***2.4.3.1. Frames in the news***

In 1978, author Gaye Tuchman referred to news as a window of the world, explaining how through its frame, Americans receive the capacity to learn about themselves, learn about others, of their institutions, their own and other leaders, and things about other nations and peoples. In her book, *Making News*, she elaborates by citing that “the view through a window depends upon whether the window is large or small, has many panes or few, whether the glass is opaque or clear, whether the window faces a street or a backyard” (Tuchman, 1978, p.1). So when politicians, or PR-practitioners the same, are able to get their own frame partly or wholly presented in the media, they must adhere to certain news conventions and demands from commercial news organizations which tend to prioritize conflict, struggles of power and drama (Allern, 2001).

The PEW center for journalism and media explains that almost half the time a story may be framed around speculation, being caused by some preview story or even less objective, the journalist's own attempt to analyze or interpret the issue or situation. Further, their research has shown that journalists are more likely to frame stories around conflict rather than some sort of agreement when they themselves initiated the framing through their own enterprise. They also found that journalists had the tendency to associate frames of injustice, wrongdoing and horse race with actions or speech undertaken by the government.

Robert Entman also notes that news is framed in several ways, and that there is no set pattern followed. We must take into account the communicator, the actual text, the receiver and the culture behind it, all the while considering the location (Entman,

1993, pp. 52-53). With these elements, there are several stages to distinguish: the first is frame-building, or how frames emerge about a certain topic or issue; frame-setting, which is how the media frames fit into the audience's predisposed views on the subject; and lastly, the individual or societal level consequences following framing. This thesis restricts itself to the investigation of the second stage, due to the limited amount of time to consider any behavioral effects on the audience, or the media consumer.

#### ***2.4.3.2. Issue-specific vs. Generic frames***

General definitions of frames tend to leave open the operational understanding of the frame concept. Entman (1993) specified what frames should do: define problems, make moral judgments, and support remedies. He provided us with concrete operational guidelines open for the creation of frame indicators. The use of frame definitions is central to the operational validity, that is if the scholar is really measuring what they had intended to measure. The general frames are very broad, however, and Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) have therefore made the distinction between generic frames and issue-specific frames. The latter applies to certain issues, subjects or topics whereas the former is usually a mere description of structural aspects and general attributes of an issue that can be applied across different topics, cultures and even across time. Incomparability is a major limitation of issue-specific framing thus generic frames make up a larger part of this study due to its flexibility of not being bound to a certain subject. As mentioned above by Robert Entman (1993), we should look for identifiable conceptual characteristics, such to identify frames properly, we can have a look at keywords, stereotypes, stock phrases, etc. that reinforce judgments, thus fitting them into a frame, that should be easily distinguished from another frame (p. 52).

#### ***2.4.3.3. Framing of foreign affairs in U.S. media***

It is a peculiar fact that in 1978, the United States and 145 other nations agreed to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) declaration, promising that their

media would eliminate any cultural ignorance or insensitivity in their reporting. Graber (2002) mentions that the U.S. and other foreign presses did not succeed in maintaining the goals of UNESCO and focused mainly on the maximization of revenue. According to Graber, the media “assesses foreign countries largely in terms of U.S. interests, with little attempt to explain their culture and concerns from their own perspective. It does not sensitize Americans to ‘the needs and desires of others’ nor foster ‘respect of the rights and dignity of all nations’. Rather, it reinforces Americans’ preexisting assumptions and stereotypes”.

Using old examples to support these findings, we refer to Robert Entman’s review of the 1988 incident with Iran Air. In this incident, U.S. navy ship Vincennes shot down Iran Air Flight 655. The American press justified the action for the shooting down of the flight as a failure in technology. Graber “2002” hints toward a certain hypocrisy, given the 1983 incident with a Soviet fighter pilot shooting down Korean Airline flight 007, which was presented in U.S. media as morally appalling. The comparison of The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Houston Chronicle, and the Los Angeles Times by Kuang-Ko and Zeldes (2006) in “Three of four newspapers studied favor Israeli instead of Palestinian sources” showed us pro-Israeli partiality stemming from papers characterizing Palestinian activities as suicide bombings while epitomizing Israeli suffering (2006, p.4). The Glasgow Media Group study also provided evidence of a pro-Israel bias on television stemming from a failure to provide a historical context around the news. There was thus a limited understanding of the Palestinian events, justifying the Israeli actions as responses to random acts of violence (Philo, 2002).

#### ***2.4.3.4. The “fourth branch of government”***

The fourth branch of government is a concept which defines the press as a system of checks and balances of American policy. The idea of “free” media – media not regulated by the government – precipitates the picture that the media is a watchdog to the government, with the ability to freely examine and criticize its policy (Bagdikian, 2004). The most crucial role the media undertakes is

providing analysis on foreign policy, especially in the United States, according to mass communication scholars like Kincheloe (2002), given that the citizens generally are at a disadvantage in understanding foreign policy (Bagdikian, 2004; Said, 1997). Misleading is the fact that the United States has fewer people as foreign correspondents permanently stationed in foreign capitals than any other Western nation. This results in a remarkably small pool of resources available to report within their 12 organizations. Other Western governments have the advantage, therefore, of perhaps better understanding other countries more readily than US news services, and eventually the American public (Bagdikian, 2004, p. 94).

#### ***2.4.3.5. The influence of government policy and elite corporations***

There is a speculation that the media is often challenged by a group of elites, forced to enhance government ideals above all else. James Curran, professor of communications at the University of London, assesses the current impact of the media in the U.S., addressing that “while the watchdog role of the media is important, it is perhaps quixotic to argue that it should be paramount... Most modern media are now given over mainly to entertainment. Coverage of public affairs accounts for only a small part of even news media content, and only a proportion of this takes the form of critical scrutiny of government... a large number of media enterprises are now tied to core sectors of finance and industrial capital” (Baran & Davis, 2009, p. 109).

An example of the US media failing to serve as a governmental watchdog can be seen in the May 2003 report on Iranian leaders trying to be transparent and negotiate with the U.S. government over issues, such as support for Hezbollah and Iran’s nuclear energy program. This “grand bargain” was hardly represented in U.S. media. News has spread about U.S. Intelligence concluding that despite Iran possessing uranium, it was also building weapons. After years of the media depicting George W. Bush’s accusations of Iran’s plot to construct nuclear weapons, the opinion from the National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) diverged from the US

media's opinion over Iran's involvement with nuclear weapons. In 2007, the "Grand Bargain" was covered by the U.S. media when The New York Times columnist Nicholas Kristof began to report the U.S. government was recalcitrant about Iran's bargaining offer. The media did not immediately cover the fact that Iran had sent documents to the U.S. government containing a compromise to be transparent with the United States. The columnist explained the lack of media coverage of this occurrence, and his urgency to provide the truth:

*"In general, what journalists are best at covering is what a president or a prime minister would say, [not] complicated processes that don't happen in one day, that can't easily be condensed into a bumper sticker... But it was something we really needed to pursue, especially when it looked like we might bomb Iran because of the view they were utterly recalcitrant, incapable of a diplomatic solution. These documents were an important piece of counter evidence"*

(Umansky, 2008, p. 29).

#### **2.4.3.6. The critical press**

Authors Dorman and Farhang noted in 1987 that the mainstream press does not necessarily criticize directly, but may pick up on the existing criticism of others, and criticize foreign policy only when there is an apparent gap in opinion between certain policymakers. When it is not the reporters who choose to follow the "status quo", Dorman proceeds to mention, they may be encouraged or even forced to do so by their editors. There are exceptions to this unwritten rule, of course, or "flashes of independence" in mainstream reporting as the author refers to it (Dorman, 1986, p. 430). Scholars have observed that sometimes the bias in foreign policy coverage finds roots in the concept of ethnocentrism, which denotes the idea that "one culture has achieved more than another, and, therefore, is superior" (p. 63). Edward Said (1997) recognized this ideology being present in the environment when the press

reported on the Americans burning Iranian flags as a type of patriotism in the unfolding of the 1979 embassy hostage crisis.

Dorman (1979) says “It is the idea of the capacity of the Iranian people that has been most severely damaged by the press. The American public has been encouraged to doubt whether the Iranian people are authentically interested in freedom or whether they are capable of achieving political stability in the absence of a dictator and/or foreign influence” (p. 63). Covering Iran’s religious leaders, for example, the media often used terms such as “blackrobed,” “bearded,” “turbaned,” “sitting cross-legged” to describe them “as if these details had great bearing on what the man thinks or on what his goals may be ” (p. 61). Dorman also noted that in the media coverage of the Iranian revolution, the press depicted the revolutionaries generally as “backward” people opposing the Shah’s progressive and modern agenda. We could identify the concept of priming here, as these messages may have helped empower Washington in pushing through policies that were not only in contrast with the national interests of the United States in that region, but also contrary to the policy makers’ original objectives (p.13).

Returning to the idea of American exceptionalism, Rojecki (2008) refers to the “War on Terror” following 9/11 and states that the ideology frequently hinders accurate depiction in reporting in times of war. The author also refers to the *Abu Ghraib scandal*, erupting when photographs were discovered, exposing US military personnel torturing imprisoned Iraqis. These were “incompatible with an image of the United States as a somewhat naïve but nevertheless well-intentioned moral exemplar to the world” (p. 68). As democracy is dependent on a free media, everything should be produced without external constraints and undue influence. We were reminded of this on January 7<sup>th</sup> of this year with the events that occurred around the satiric magazine *Charlie Hebdo*, in Paris. Dorman noted in 1986 that “it is precisely when a liberal democracy’s state information-gathering apparatus is so highly politicized that journalism can make an important contribution, by providing the public, and especially Congress, with a candid and independent picture of developments abroad. Indeed, the press has



great potential influence on foreign policy, since it serves as the primary source of information and impressions for both the general public and political leaders” (p. 420).



### **3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES & QUESTIONS**

#### **3.1. Research Objectives**

With regards to official threats for the Iranian government, this research will focus on six UN resolutions adopted regarding Iran since 2006. By examining how the media portrayed these events to the public, it is in our highest interest to see if, in fact, the public was aware of the grave consequences these resolutions (and the sanctions that preceded it) were for the Islamic Republic of Iran. In other words: we analyze two important media sources to see how the American public was informed of the resolutions by the UNSC and the situation in Iran. This thesis is restricted to the analysis of the coverage of the Iranian nuclear program in the United States because of the possible impact this reporting could have on the general public and their acuties.

It is becoming more apparent that media myths are shaping the perceptions of individuals world-wide (Public Affairs Alliance of Iranian Americans, 2008). Though this research is not limited to certain age groups, it is important to note that the media myths are especially relevant for the younger generations, who have their acuity so easily shaped without necessarily having any previous knowledge. The media image that is portrayed often interferes with the actual world event. Many believe that media myths ultimately have an impact on the outcome of conflicts; however, research shows that this is not always accurate. Relevant for this particular research, nonetheless, is the formation of perceptions that do tend to influence the population and the government in the long run. Once the myths enter the scene, there is a certain difficulty to overrule them (Hunt, 1997).

## **3.2. Research questions**

The central question in this research is best split into two smaller questions. A first question would concern, very generally, how the media reports on UN resolutions regarding Iran in the US. This would be the qualitative analysis of source documents by use of political framing with the help of NVivo. A second question would require a more theoretical explanation for why the media portrays the country in such a way.

- *How* do the US media report to the larger public after sanctions have been made against Iran in UN resolutions?
- *Why*, or better what are the possible reasons for such portrayal of Iran in the media?

## **3.3. Research Design**

### **3.3.1. Article collection**

This research follows and examines two particular newspapers. After ample assessment, *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* deemed themselves appropriate for this type of research. This is due to the former's rather liberal, national and international news coverage, and the latter's conservative, national and international coverage. Bill Keller, ex-executive editor of The New York Times since 2011, admitted to agreeing with Daniel Okrent, the public editor, that the newspaper is indeed "socially liberal" (Shapiro, 2011). He argued that "we are liberal in the sense that we are open-minded, tolerant, [and] urban. Our wedding page includes-and did even before New York had a gay marriage law-... gay unions. So we're liberal in that sense. Socially liberal." The Washington Post, on the other hand, is known for its slightly conservative undertone. Journalist Max Blumenthal (2006) notes that this newspaper leans to the "hard right, as its favorite targets have ranged from liberal comsymps to President Bill Clinton to, most recently, 'illegal aliens'

and their allies in the ‘open borders lobby.’” The Times has served as a key on the Mighty Wurlitzer, a conservative movement. It often targets liberals almost to show some conservative viewpoints.

Media articles were gathered using the LexisNexis database, a comprehensive news search engine of full text online news, business, financial, legal, medical, biographical, government and domestic and international newspaper resources. The combination of words used to find articles in the database was “IRAN” and “NUCLEAR”.

### ***3.3.1.1. Choice of articles: an important distinction***

It is important to note how and why we made a distinction between news articles. To keep the sources comparable and reliable, this thesis utilizes news-paper articles that do not include opinion pieces. Editorials are left out with the existing risk that they refrain from being value-free. This is the most essential aspect to the entire research. Because of the supposed neutrality taken on by news sources, it is intriguing to decode whether this is really the case. By opting only for breaking news and news stories rather than editorials or opinionated articles, we leave out any possible bias that can explicitly be mentioned in the article. Luckily, when comparing the US printed press to that of France, it was fairly easy to distinguish between these articles. Based on a study by Benson, R., Blach-Orsten, M., Powers, M.; Willig, I. and Zambno, S. in 2012, we found that in print, French newspapers have the most opinion compared to the US and Denmark. Prevalence of opinion in US newspapers increases from print to online (2.8 -12.5%) and stays around the same percentage for France (7.4 – 8.5%). Many may wonder why the American media landscape was chosen for this study, but given the ties between the two countries, it was most interesting to examine the United States media. Important to mention here is that our analysis showed the percentage of opinionated articles amount to 19.4% in the New York Times and an surprising 29.9% in The Washington Post.

### 3.3.2. Methodology

When moving on to the methodology that is intended for this dissertation, there were many different options to consider. There are different methods available to examine media representation. A first method consists of quantitative content analyses of manifest variables (such as predefined framing devices). Secondly, there are experimental studies of different types of framing. There are also interviews with journalists, frame sponsors and audience members regarding the construction and negotiations of frames. For this research we have opted for a qualitative textual (discourse) analysis of framing devices. This study will therefore utilize a method of qualitative content analysis, defined as political framing by Robert M. Entman, in order to logically categorize certain words, themes and tones.

This thesis will aim to analyze *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times* by a comparative technique, not merely to compare between the two news sources but to establish an overall view of what the citizens of the United States were exposed to with regards to the Iranian nuclear debate. This technique is defined by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and perfected by Lincoln and Guba later in 1985. The following four steps make up the approach:

1. Comparative assignment of incidents to categories
2. Elaboration and refinement of categories
3. Searching for relationships and themes among categories
4. Simplifying and integrating data into a coherent theoretical structure

(Wimmer & Dominick, 2006, p. 117).

This choice of research design may seem dubious but it is inspired by the point that Maykut and Morehouse (1994, p18.) address: "words are the way that most people come to understand their situations; we create our world with words; we explain ourselves with words; we defend and hide ourselves with words". With this in the back of the researcher's mind, it becomes clear that it is "the task of the researcher to find patterns within those words and to present those

patterns for others to inspect while at the same time staying as close to the construction of the world as the participants originally experienced it.” That is ultimately the final goal of qualitative data analysis and presentation.

Choosing these two newspapers, the dissertation aims to provide clear difference between the two to establish the average portrayal that occurs in the United States. The gathered information will be presented by means of graphs and charts. Noticeable nuances and connotations will be explained and dissected. After all of the information has been gathered and evaluated, we can formulate a final conclusion, which will form the final piece of this work.

Lastly, when determining exactly how this coding and de-framing will occur, we refer to Nvivo. Nvivo is a qualitative data analysis computer software package that allows deep levels of analysis in multimedia field research such as this one. It is intended to help users in the organization and analysis of non-numerical data (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006). By grouping sources, users can classify, sort and arrange their information in an orderly manner. This way the unstructured data is divided by its examined relationships, by withlinking, and searching constantly for certain trends by means of cross-examination. The goal by using Nvivo is to make observations to support their case or project’s hypotheses. In this case there will be a cross-examination looking for evidence of media bias; of recurring patterns of language use in the coverage of Iran. It is important to stress that the software does not replace the researcher in doing the task of cross-examining data. It is merely used as a tool to ease the examination process, rather than a tool that conducts this process on its own. The main purpose of using Nvivo is creating a better overview of the research being conducted. It provides the researcher as well as those interested in the research with more transparency. The manual mapping allows the researcher to access the data and information with more ease.

### **3.3.3. Applicable Frames**

As explained in the above section, framing often occurs on the basis of common meanings carried by media texts, and expressed by

syntactical, script, thematic and rhetorical framing devices which include key concepts, catch phrases, stereotyped images, metaphors, symbolic devices, and clusters of judgments or facts (Entman, p. 53). Methodologically, however, it is an intricate task to consider and identify all of the abovementioned aspects, without the use of some kind of frame book. The Policy Frames Codebook used in this research provides a system for categorizing frames across policy issues. It provides a common framework for cross-project comparison and replication, while remaining general enough to allow project-specific code development based on idiosyncrasies of individual issues and research questions about these issues.

For the sake of this research, we first adopted Scheufele's (1999) nomenclature of media frames to differentiate broadly between three frames so the articles can be generally coded. These three frames are defined as thematic units, and are made up of a series of topics and subtopics, each with their own values, which together comprise an "interpretive package" (Gamson & Modigliani, p.3). The three frames are: political, economic and socio-cultural, and only one frame should apply to an article. These frames answer several theoretical and methodological considerations of ours, given that they are generic enough to group a large number of articles under a certain category, yet constraining them to specific realms (politics, economy and society) gives us the ability to identify some values or tropes that pertain to each of these domains. McCombs (2002) showed us that these generalized frames fail to unpack the topical content of frames as second-level agenda items, thus offering very little information about the nature of the debate and how it may shift from one substantive dimension of the issue to another. We can thus identify more discrete, area-specific units and evaluate their impact in time. The method for frame analysis that we proceed with, was inspired by the policy frames codebook, laid out in a collaboration by several researchers in September of 2013 (Boydston, Gross, Resnik & Smith, 2014). They describe the benefits of framing schemas which hold the ability to cross-cut policy issues. This combination of general frames and their framing schema can provide us with the



right instrument to perform a qualitative frame analysis in this dissertation.

Inspired by Nahirana Teresa Zambrano Uzcategui (2008) we group the long list of frames from the policy frames codebook and proceed to create a frame funnel, allowing us to deconstruct the topics and sub-topics and examine them carefully. We move from the larger frame, a list of three major topics (politics, economy and society) to the smaller frames, i.e. a list of relatively detailed sub-topics. Articles which cannot be identified with any of these frames receive the label “no frame”. The policy Frames Codebook at our disposal was created with the intention to provide the best of both worlds: a general framing system across policy issues, with the ability to be specialized in issue-specific contexts. It consists of 14 categories, or dimensions, and an “other” category which holds anything that doesn’t fit the mold of the other categories. The dimensions are as follows:

1. **Economic frames:** The costs, benefits, or monetary/financial implications of the issue (to an individual, family, community or to the economy as a whole).
2. **Capacity and resources frames:** The lack of or availability of physical, geographical, spatial, human, and financial resources, or the capacity of existing systems and resources to implement or carry out policy goals.
3. **Morality frames:** Any perspective—or policy objective or action (including proposed action)—that is compelled by religious doctrine or interpretation, duty, honor, righteousness or any other sense of ethics or social responsibility.
4. **Fairness and equality frames:** Equality or inequality with which laws, punishment, rewards, and resources are applied or distributed among individuals or groups. Also the balance between the rights or interests of one

individual or group compared to another individual or group.

5. **Constitutionality and jurisprudence frames:** The constraints imposed on or freedoms granted to individuals, government, and corporations via the Constitution, Bill of Rights and other amendments, or judicial interpretation. This deals specifically with the authority of government to regulate, and the authority of individuals/corporations to act independently of government.
6. **Policy prescription and evaluation:** Particular policies proposed for addressing an identified problem, and figuring out if certain policies will work, or if existing policies are effective.
7. **Law and order, crime and justice frames:** Specific policies in practice and their enforcement, incentives, and implications. Includes stories about enforcement and interpretation of laws by individuals and law enforcement, breaking laws, loopholes, fines, sentencing and punishment. Increases or reductions in crime.
8. **Security and defense frames:** Security, threats to security, and protection of one's person, family, in-group, nation, etc. Generally an action or a call to action that can be taken to protect the welfare of a person, group, nation sometimes from a not yet manifested threat.
9. **Health and safety frames:** Healthcare access and effectiveness, illness, disease, sanitation, obesity, mental health effects, prevention of or perpetuation of gun violence, infrastructure and building safety.
10. **Quality of life frames:** The effects of a policy on individuals' wealth, mobility, access to resources, happiness, social structures, ease of day-to-day routines, quality of community life, etc.

11. **Cultural identity frames:** The social norms, trends, values and customs constituting culture(s), as they relate to a specific policy issue
12. **Public opinion frames:** References to general social attitudes, polling and demographic information, as well as implied or actual consequences of diverging from or getting ahead of public opinion or polls.
13. **Political frames:** Any political considerations surrounding an issue. Issue actions or efforts or stances that are political, such as partisan filibusters, lobbyist involvement, bipartisan efforts, deal-making and vote trading, appealing to one's base, mentions of political maneuvering. Explicit statements that a policy issue is good or bad for a particular political party.
14. **External regulation and reputation frames:** The United States' external relations with another nation; the external relations of one state with another; or relations between groups. This includes trade agreements and outcomes, comparisons of policy outcomes or desired policy outcomes.
15. **Other frames:** Any frames that do not fit into the above categories.

By a mix of inductive and deductive methods, the creation of this codebook has allowed us to easily apply it to our study.

### 3.3.4. Tones

A second codebook was prepared by the researcher, in which definitions from Merriam-Webster online (2015) acted as guidelines to code an article with a certain tone: positive, negative, or neutral. Ambivalent articles were coded with the neutral tone to avoid any bias.

- “Positive” (z.d.) was defined to be
  - “Contributing toward or characterized by increase or progression”
  - “Have a good effect: Favorable”

- Be “Marked by optimism”

In order to determine if the article tone was positive, the article must have contained adjectives or adverbs that commend Iran as a country or governmental actions. The article must have shown that Iran was willing to cooperate with U.S. ideals.

- The “neutral” (z.d.) tone was defined as the following:
  - “Not engaged on either side; specifically: not aligned with a political or ideological grouping”
  - “Of or relating to a neutral state or power”
  - “Not decided or pronounced as to characteristics: Indifferent”

In order to determine if the article tone was neutral, the article must not have possessed any adjectives or adverbs that diminished or praised the country of Iran or depicted that the country was in conflict or in cooperation with U.S. ideals.

- “Negative” (z.d.) was defined as:
  - “Marked by features of hostility, withdrawal, or pessimism that hinder or oppose constructive treatment or development”

For the purpose of this study, an article tone was considered negative if there were hostile or critical adjectives or adverbs that described Iran or its leaders’ characters, if the article focused on the government’s repressive or shocking actions (such as harsh language or hate speech), if the article hinted toward Iran being disobedient, or if the article opposed a solution or compromise between the governments of the two countries involved.

### **3.4. Relevant Articles**

After leaving certain sections of each newspaper, we came up with a total of 140 articles to decipher. All of the sections that were left out of our article selection were “editorials”, “opinion” and “book

*review*”, with the intent to leave out any indication of a personal viewpoint by the author.

### 3.4.1. The New York Times

**Table 1: Number of relevant articles in the NYT**

	Total Articles	Relevant Articles	Editorial/Opinion
<b>Resolution 1696</b>	14	11	3 (21.4%)
<b>Resolution 1737</b>	25	21	4 (16%)
<b>Resolution 1747</b>	15	13	2 (13.3%)
<b>Resolution 1803</b>	5	4	1 (20%)
<b>Resolution 1835</b>	14	12	2 (14.3%)
<b>Resolution 1929</b>	25	18	7 (28%)
<b>TOTAL</b>	98	79	19 (19.4%)

There were a total of 79 articles found for the New York Times. The left column shows the percentage of articles that were left out due to their nature being loaded with opinion.

### 3.4.2. The Washington Post

**Table 2: Number of relevant articles in TWP**

	Total Articles	Relevant Articles	Editorial/Opinion
<b>Resolution 1696</b>	18	10	8 (44.5%)
<b>Resolution 1737</b>	17	12	5 (29.5%)
<b>Resolution 1747</b>	11	8	3 (27.2%)
<b>Resolution 1803</b>	20	18	2 (10%)
<b>Resolution 1835</b>	9	6	3 (33.3%)
<b>Resolution 1929</b>	12	7	5 (41.7%)
<b>TOTAL</b>	87	61	26 (29.9%)

There were a total of 61 articles found in the Washington Post. Most significant is that with the first and last resolution, nearly half of the articles found were irrelevant, as they were either editorials or opinion pieces (44.5% and 41.7% respectively).

### **3.4.3. Relevant articles discussed**

Noteworthy in the comparison between the NYT and TWP and their relevant articles is that the findings for the first resolution in TWP consisted of 44.5% editorial or opinion pieces, which this research disregarded. In the NYT the articles not included in the research following the first resolution made up 21.4% of the total findings. For the second resolution, that percentage was 29.5% in TWP and 16% in the NYT. Resolution three in the NYT had only 13.3% of the articles opinion or editorials, while TWP held more than double, at 27.2%. The fourth resolution, 1803, consisted of 10% opinion or editorial pieces in TWP and, again, double that percentage at 20% in the NYT. The fifth resolution in the NYT consisted of 14.3% editorial or opinion pieces and 33.3% in TWP. The sixth and last resolution held 28% editorial or opinion pieces in the NYT and 41.7% in TWP. What should be remembered most in examining the relevant articles is that 19.4% of the total findings in the New York Times were disregarded, while this number made up 29.9% of the Washington Post articles. That is more than ten percent more articles left out of The Washington Post analysis.

### **3.5. Intercoder Reliability**

Because of the inherent danger of researcher bias in qualitative research, the researcher opted for an intercoder reliability test, meeting with two intercoder reliability participants to determine whether or not the results were replicable. Because there were 79 relevant articles in the New York Times and 61 in The Washington Post, so 140 articles in total, the researcher asked the participants to simply code every 14<sup>th</sup> article, randomly selected, regardless of

which newspaper they were published in. The articles were rendered independent from the newspaper in order to remove any further bias from their judgments. The researcher supplied each of the participants with a codebook (see Appendix A), consisting of three parts. The participants were asked to determine the tone, general frame and issue-specific frame(s) of *ten* articles. There were three general frames to choose between, three tones and fifteen issue-specific frames. There were thus 210 total answers. For the issue-specific frames, if the researcher opted for several frames, the researcher looked at the comparable frames.

### 3.5.1. Intercoder Reliability Results

The researcher made use of the formula provided by Holsti (1969, pp. 138-141) to determine reliability. The formula is as follows:  $C.R. = 2M/N_1 + N_2$ , where “M is the number of coding decisions on which the two judges are in agreement, and  $N_1$  and  $N_2$  refer to the number of coding decisions made by judges 1 and 2, respectively” (p. 140).

Cleveland State University professor Kimberly A. Neuendorf (2002) wrote that with regard to content analyses, coefficients of .90 or greater are nearly always appropriate. Coefficients of .80 or higher are in the satisfactory range, and coefficients of .70 or higher were proper for exploratory studies such as this one. For the sake of this research, a coefficient of .70 or higher was sought for with this intercoder reliability test.

Thus, with use of Holsti’s formula, the researcher attained the following results:

$$\text{Reliability Coder 1} = 2(147) / 210 + 210 = 0.70$$

$$\text{Reliability Coder 2} = 2(165) / 210 + 210 = 0.786$$

There are limitations to the intercoder reliability results, as some write that the formula “does not take into account the extent of intercoder agreement which may result from chance (Bennett, Alpert, & Goldstein, 1954). By chance alone, agreement should increase as the number of categories decreases” (p. 140). The researcher, however, concludes that the number of agreements in coding can account for reliability with regards to an evaluative content analysis.





## 4. QUALITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

With the abovementioned classifications to consider, the research will be laid out as followed. We have found 140 articles in total. The way these were chosen was by choosing a time frame and systematically applying the same method of choosing the articles. Departing from the UN resolutions and the day they were confirmed, we chose any articles that were published from two weeks before that date to two weeks after. In chronological order, the dates were as follows:

- Resolution 1696 articles collected were published between July 17<sup>th</sup> and August 14<sup>th</sup>, 2006.
- Resolution 1737 articles collected were published between 9<sup>th</sup> of December, 2006 and the 6<sup>th</sup> of January, 2007.
- Resolution 1747 articles collected were published between March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2007 and April 7, 2007.
- Resolution 1803 articles collected were published between February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2008 and March 17<sup>th</sup>, 2008.
- Resolution 1835 articles collected were published between September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2009 and October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2008.
- Resolution 1929 articles collected were published between May 26<sup>th</sup>, 2010 and June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2010.

Under this section, findings will be presented for each part of the frame-funnel: the general frames, issue-specific frames and the tone of the article. Patterns and coding results will be discussed in detail and then compared, aiming to answer the first research question: *how* do the US media report to the larger public after sanctions have been made against Iran in UN resolutions?

### 4.1. General Frames

The following charts indicate the placement of the abovementioned relevant articles in a certain frame, whether political, economic or

socio-cultural. The framing was based on the overall theme and message of the article. Since a frame is a latent variable and thus not directly measurable, they must be identified by examination—taking into account the presence, or absence of keywords, metaphors, catch-phrases, images, or sentences that reinforces the theme (i.e., manifest variables) (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989).

#### 4.1.1. The New York Times

**Table 3: General frames in the NYT**

	<b>Political</b>	<b>Economic</b>	<b>Socio-cultural</b>
<b>Resolution 1696</b>	5 (45.4%) (8.5%)	4 (36.4%) (44.4%)	2 (18.2) (18.2)
<b>Resolution 1737</b>	14(66.7%)(23.7%)	3 (14.3%) (33.3%)	4 (19%) (36.4%)
<b>Resolution 1747</b>	11 (84.6%) (18.4%)	1 (7.7%) (11.1%)	1 (7.7%) (9.1%)
<b>Resolution 1803</b>	4 (100%) (6.8%)	0 (0%) (0%)	0 (0%) (0%)
<b>Resolution 1835</b>	11(91.6%) (18.6%)	0 (0%) (0%)	1 (8.3%) (9.1%)
<b>Resolution 1929</b>	14(77.8%) 23.7%)	1 (5.6%) (11.1%)	3(16.7%) (27.3%)
<b>TOTAL</b>	59 (74.7%)	9 (11.4%)	11 (13.9%)

Table 3 shows the framing of the relevant articles laid out in section 4.1. The first number in each section refers to the amount of articles for that resolution that was framed in either of the three categories. The first percentage refers to the percentage of articles that fell under that certain frame. The second percentage refers to the percentage of articles found under that frame for a certain resolution. The first resolution, 1696, has 5 articles framed under politics. 45.4 percent of the articles found for resolution 1696 were political, and these articles made up 8.5 percent of the total political frame. The total percentage of political articles for the New York Times is 74.7. Nearly three-fourth of the articles found were of political nature. The aforesaid logic can be used to decipher the entire figure, and the one below.

#### 4.1.2. The Washington Post

**Table 4: General frames in TWP**

	<b>Political</b>	<b>Economic</b>	<b>Socio-cultural</b>
<b>Resolution 1696</b>	6 (54.5%) (13.3%)	1 (9.1%) (25%)	4 (36.4%) (33.3%)
<b>Resolution 1737</b>	9 (75%) (20%)	0 (0%) (0%)	3 (25%) (25%)
<b>Resolution 1747</b>	6 (75%) (13.3%)	0 (0%) (0%)	2 (25%) (16.7%)
<b>Resolution 1803</b>	12 (70.6%)(26.7%)	2 (11.8%) (50%)	3 (17.6%) (25%)
<b>Resolution 1835</b>	6 (100%) (13.3%)	0 (0%) (0%)	0 (0%) (0%)
<b>Resolution 1929</b>	6 (85.7%) (13.3%)	1 (14.3%) (25%)	0 (0%) (0%)
<b>TOTAL</b>	45(73.8%)	4(6.6%)	12(19.7%)

General frames found in the Washington Post were 73.8% political, 6.6% economic and 19.7% socio-cultural. Some major findings were that resolution 1803 accounted for 50% of the total economic framing.

#### 4.1.3. General frames compared

When comparing the general frames in the two newspapers, we can make the obvious observation between the political frames found in each of the newspapers, which lie quite closely together, at 74.7% in the NYT and 73.8 in TWP. In that political frame, the greatest difference can be found in the publication following resolution 1803, which accounts for 6.8% of the total political frame in the NYT and 26.7% in TWP. The economic frame accounts for 11.4% in the NYT and 6.6% in TWP. The largest difference within the economic frame can be found, again, with resolution 1803, which accounts for 50% of the total economic frame in TWP. There was no economic frame used in the reporting following resolution 1803 in the NYT. The socio-cultural frame holds 13.9% in the NYT and 19.7% in TWP, a difference of nearly 6%.

## 4.2. Tone

The following charts will be a mere presentation of the categorization of the relevant articles under certain tones. In section 4.4, under the issue-specific frames, we will refer to certain aspects of articles which rendered them with a given tone.

### 4.2.1. The New York Times

**Table 5: Tones in the NYT**

<i>THE NYT</i>	<i>POSITIVE</i>	<i>NEUTRAL</i>	<i>NEGATIVE</i>
<i>Resolution 1696</i>	1 (9%)	4 (36.4%)	6 (54.5%)
<i>Resolution 1737</i>	1 (4.8%)	5 (23.8%)	15 (71.4%)
<i>Resolution 1747</i>	2 (15.4%)	2 (15.4%)	9 (69.2%)
<i>Resolution 1803</i>	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4 (100%)
<i>Resolution 1835</i>	1 (8.3%)	6 (50%)	5 (41.7%)
<i>Resolution 1929</i>	2 (11.1%)	4 (36.4%)	12 (66.7%)
<i>TOTAL</i>	7 (8.9%)	21 (26.6%)	51 (64.6%)

The way the articles were coded with a tone was explained in section 3.3.2.2.. The most important remark to make with regard to the New York Times is that over one fourth of the articles found contained a “NEUTRAL” tone. In addition, almost 65% (64.6%) denoted a negative tone.

#### 4.2.2. The Washington Post

Table 6: Tones in TWP

<i>TWP</i>	<i>POSITIVE</i>	<i>NEUTRAL</i>	<i>NEGATIVE</i>
<b>Resolution1696</b>	4 (40%)	2 (20%)	4 (40%)
<b>Resolution1737</b>	3 (25%)	1 (8.3%)	8 (66.7%)
<b>Resolution1747</b>	1 (12.5%)	0 (0%)	7 (87.5%)
<b>Resolution1803</b>	2 (11.1%)	5 (27.8%)	11 (61.1%)
<b>Resolution1835</b>	0 (0%)	3 (50%)	3 (50%)
<b>Resolution1929</b>	0 (0%)	1 (14.3%)	6 (85.7%)
<b>TOTAL</b>	10 (16.4%)	12 (19.7%)	39 (63.9%)

The Washington Post held a similar “NEGATIVE” tone ratio, also nearing 65% with 63.9%. Remarkable is that the percentage of “NEUTRAL” toned articles is an astonishing 6.9 % less than in the New York Times. Another finding is the near double amount of “POSITIVE” articles found in the Washington Post, as defined in section 3.3.2.2.

#### 4.2.3. Tones compared

The first noticeable difference between the newspapers is that the “POSITIVE” tone was found nearly twice as much in the NYT than in TWP, with 16.4% and 8.9% respectively. The other two tones are remarkably close, as the “NEUTRAL” tone makes up 26.6% in the NYT and 19.7% in TWP. The “NEGATIVE” tone is even closer as it makes up 64.6% of the total number of articles found in NYT and 63.9% in TWP.

#### 4.3. Issue-Specific Frames

After coding the articles in general frames and determining their tone, the articles were categorized within issue-specific frames.

Because of time restraint and willingness to conduct the research very precisely, articles framed in the “economic” frame, as well as articles coded with a “neutral” tone were not investigated further. The other articles were analyzed, looking for words or phrases that would stand out. Significant quotes or words from the article will be presented in the following section, and possibly the weighted percentages of the most frequent words in the article will be excerpted. References to the article will be made in order to support the labelled tone. It is important to note that not each resolution will receive an even amount of attention in either of the newspapers, as some contained more “NEUTRAL” frames or consisted of little issue-specific evidence.

### **4.3.1. The New York Times**

#### ***4.3.1.1. Resolution 1696***

The first resolution passed by the SC followed a 14 to 1 vote on the 31<sup>st</sup> of July, 2006 (United Nations Security Council). It demanded that Iran suspend its uranium enrichment within a month. It did not yet impose sanctions, but vowed true to adopting “appropriate measures” if Iran failed to comply with the resolution. Russia showed concern, claiming that the resolution may be interpreted as a form of authority that could open the door to the use of military force against Iran. The SC claimed it was acting under Article 41 of the U.N. Charter, which empowered them to use measures that excluded armed force. Qatar opposed the resolution and voted against it, after expressing concern regarding the potential effects on the stability in the region, amidst a 2006 Israel-Hezbollah war in Lebanon. Iran declared the resolution an “unlawful, destructive and unwarranted” decision. The Iranian U.N. envoy noted that the supreme leader had issued a religious decree in 2005, forbidding the development or use of nuclear weapons (Starr, z.d.). They had no place in Iran’s military doctrine (Wright, 2010).

A first article published around the time of the first UNSC resolution fit in the socio-cultural frame. The title resembled some negativity, with the words “U.S. Ambassador in Iraq says Iran is inciting Attacks”. Quotes that supported the negative tone were

“there is evidence that Iran is pushing for more attacks, he said, without offering any specifics... Despite the recent attacks by the splinter groups, Mr. Khalilzad insisted that the most powerful Shiite leaders in Iraq had not yet pushed for more violence against the Americans, even though Iran would like them to.”

Another article heightened concern by comparing the gains and losses with sanctions and the importance of having Iran pay so the rest of the world can remain still or gain: “but even a temporary shut-off would be a huge psychological blow to the global market (referring to Oil reserves) and Iranian leaders may calculate that there would be an advantage in the economic damage to Europe and the United States.” Further exemplifying this belief, one article noted “we are not going to allow Iran’s supposed oil power to exert any leverage over us.” Facts to support these statements were depicted as follows: “Indeed, according to Cambridge Energy Research Associates, each 5 dollar increase in oil prices translates into 84 million dollars a week for Iran’s bank account, emboldening its leaders and making whatever aid it supplies to Hezbollah easier to finance even as the crisis threatens to spread.” “Today the Bush administration faces rising criticism from hard-liners that its Iran policy is not stiff enough... but if the diplomatic course is challenging, analysts say it would almost certainly drive the price of oil even higher.”

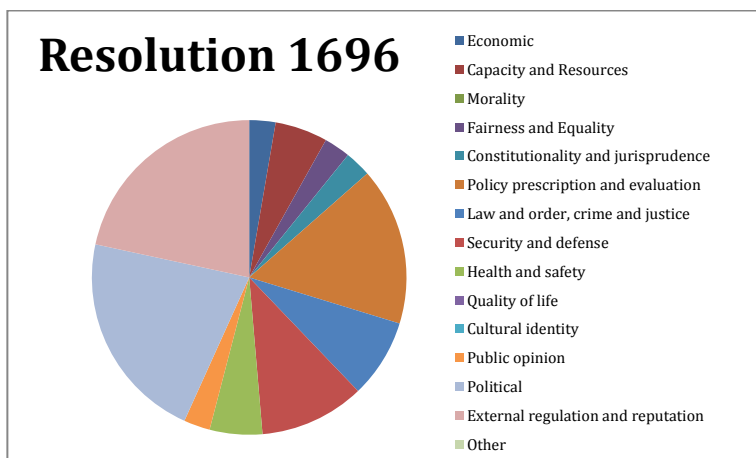
There is also much reference to Israel. One article denotes that ‘Israeli leaders have been sharply critical of Syria and Iran, which support *Hezbollah*’. It could seem that by using these words, or combination of words, the media is trying to trigger fear among the American people: “If we all missed the degree to which Iran has Hezbollah, what else have we missed in their nuclear program?” Kristol summarized this position well when he wrote that ‘while Syria and Iran are enemies of Israel, they are also enemies of the United States.... This is our war, too’ he added, controversially, that it was time to strike at Iran’s nuclear facilities. “Why wait?”

A last noticeable trend was the reference to the lack of hard measures taken against Iran by both the Council and the United States. One article is titled “Us Treads Softly Over Iran’s Role in Crisis” and goes on to mention that “the resolution is the first by the



Council on Iran’s nuclear program that is legally binding and carries the threat of sanctions, though *it is not as strong as a measure sought by the United States and Europe.*” Regarding the weighted percentages of words, what stood out most in the articles published following the adaptation of resolution 1696 was the use of “Hezbollah” which was repeated many times throughout the articles. For three articles, the word “Hezbollah” made the top three of the most frequently used words, with weighted percentages of 1.48, 1.63 and 1.41. Important to note here is that the longer the article, the smaller the weighted percentage amounts to be, yet still very significant.

**Figure 1: Issue-specific frames for article 1696 in the NYT**



#### 4.3.1.2. Resolution 1737

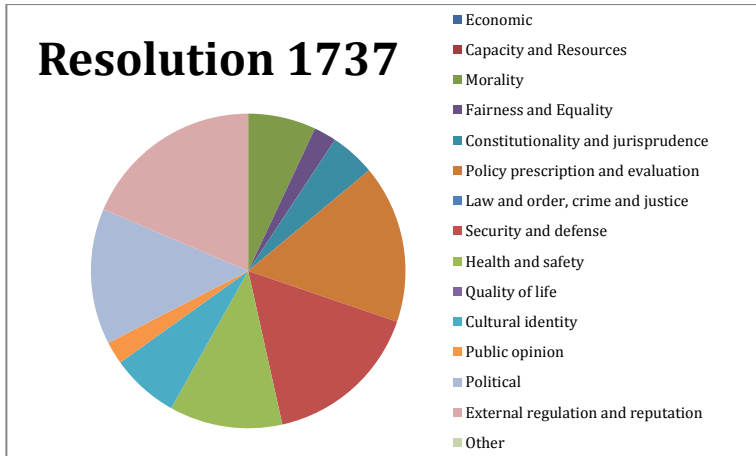
The second resolution passed unanimously by the Security Council on December 23, 2006, imposed the first U.N. sanctions on Iran with the claim that it had failed to comply with the rest of the international community, not committing to the previous agreements. This

resolution directed the U.N member states to halt their supply, sale or transfer of materials to Iran that could serve for nuclear or ballistic missile purposes. In addition, it called for the freezing of financial assets of 22 corporations and individuals involved in the nuclear or ballistic missile programs (United Nations Security Council, 2006).

Resolution 1737 articles came with the sudden use of the word “ nuclear” that was much higher than around the adaptation of the first resolution. One article notes “Saudi officials have warned that a nuclear Iran could cause a regional arms race, suggesting that Saudi Arabia would be forced to acquire nuclear technology, too”. It is seemingly obvious that the articles had the intention to raise concern among news consumers. Another article quotes Kofi Annan when mentioning “that confronting the threat posed by Iran’s nuclear program militarily would be ‘disastrous’. There is also much reference to the Holocaust, and the statement made by Ahmadinejad who has his doubts regarding the Holocaust and the course of events. In the article with the highest reference to Israel’s concern, with a weighted percentage for the word of 3.2%, we read that “Israel’s overriding concern is the rise of Iran and its nuclear program, especially because Iran’s president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, has called often for Israel to be wiped off the map and has dismissed the Holocaust as a myth.” The word “nuclear” topped the frequency lists of eight of the seventeen relevant articles, with an average weighted percentage of 2,6%. In 20% of the articles which frequently mentioned the word “nuclear”, the word “security” also ranked top 3 of most frequent used words.

Moreover, in comparison to the Hezbollah references that were mainly used in the publication of articles following the first resolution, the second resolution sparked some dislike for the attitude of President Ahmadinejad and his government, who is defined as ignorant and “defiant”, as he “[vows] to U.N. it will continue nuclear efforts”. Furthermore, they mention that “In a defiant presentation, Foreign minister Manouchehr Mottaki also insisted that the United States stop campaigning against Iran’s nuclear program.” The bottom line of the articles is that the August 31 deadline given to Iran by the United Nations was “ignored” and the west “tries a new tack to block Iran’s nuclear efforts” which at this point were still unclear.

**Figure 2: Issue-specific frames for article 1737 in the NYT**



#### **4.3.1.3. Resolution 1747**

The United Nations Security Council (2007) unanimously adopted Resolution 1747 on March 24, 2007. It prohibited member states from procuring combat equipment or weapons systems from Iran, and called on states to “exercise vigilance and restraint” in supplying such items to Iran. It also called on member states and global financial institutions not to enter new financial commitments with Iran’s government—including grants or concessional loans—except for humanitarian and developmental purposes. Resolution 1747 added the names of 18 individuals, companies and banks associated with Iran’s nuclear and ballistic missile programs. It also added seven individuals linked to the Revolutionary Guards, including Mohammad Reza Zahedi, the commander of IRGC ground forces; Morteza Safari, the commander of the IRGC navy; and Qasem Soleimani, the commander of the elite IRGC Qods force (Starr, z.d.). Finally, it strengthened the previous resolution’s travel ban provision by requiring any member state to notify the Security Council

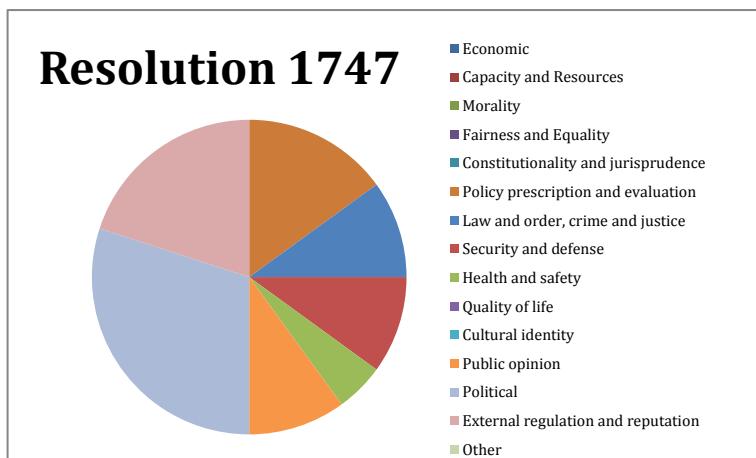
whenever an Iranian official designated for ties to Iran's nuclear or missile program entered or transited its territory (Resolutions on Iran, z.d.).

Russia agreed to support Resolution 1747 after accusing Iran of delinquency in payments for Bushehr. Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki charged that in passing the resolution, the Security Council had taken "unnecessary and unjustifiable action" against a peaceful nuclear program that "presents no threat to international peace and security and falls, therefore, outside the council's charter-based mandate."

The most prominent aspect of the third resolution is the disappointment of Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki, who expresses disgust with the passing of the resolution. He blames the Security Council for taking "unnecessary and unjustifiable action" against the peaceful nuclear program presenting "no threat to international peace and security" and in his vision falls "outside the council's charter-based mandate" (Starr, z.d.).

In this sense, it is clear, that the reactions to the discontent that awoke in Iran, were accusations that rendered Iran disobedient, or unwilling to cooperate. Words such as "defiant" are frequently used, however not in the top three of any article. "President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad issued a defiant statement that "Iran's enrichment of uranium is a legal issue". Another interesting find is the end sentence for one of the relevant articles regarding this resolution, which reads "the Council would insist on not being treated like a 'rubber stamp'".

**Figure 3: Issue-specific frames for article 1747 in the NYT**



#### **4.3.1.4. Resolution 1803**

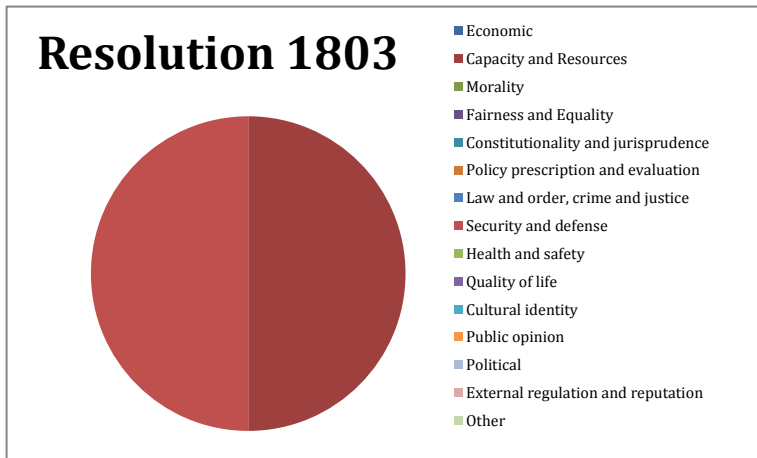
What stood out most with regards to this resolution is that it was only categorized in two issue-specific frames, which were the “capacity and resources” frame and the “security and defense” frame. Reasons for these articles fitting into these frames could be a general fear world-wide that while Iran continued the enrichment of uranium, it had the right to do so under the IAEA’s standards and practices (e.g. development of nuclear power plants) and had to pull these strings to arouse certain sentiments among news consumers.

It is interesting that resolution 1803 was passed on March 3, 2008 by a vote of 14-0-1 after a long and intense debate. Ironically, a U.S. National Intelligence Estimate issued in December 2007 concluded “with high confidence” that Iran’s nuclear program had been suspended in the fall of 2003. As a result, several council members initially questioned the need for further sanctions against Iran. Libya, South Africa, Indonesia and Vietnam were especially hesitant to pursue new punitive measures, arguing that Iran had begun to cooperate with IAEA inspections (Starr, z.d.). However, U.S. and European officials wanted to tighten existing measures

because of Iran’s failure to comply with earlier resolutions (UN Sanctions against Iran, z.d.).

Ironically, we could note that the media feared that the general opinion would sway toward that of the council members who found no threat in the situation at that time. The word “nuclear” ranked second (after Iran) in each of the articles applicable to resolution 1803, with an average weighted percentage of 2.17%. In fifty percent of these articles, the word “weapons” third most frequently used, with an average weighted average of 1,26%.

**Figure 4: Issue-specific frames for article 1803 in the NYT**



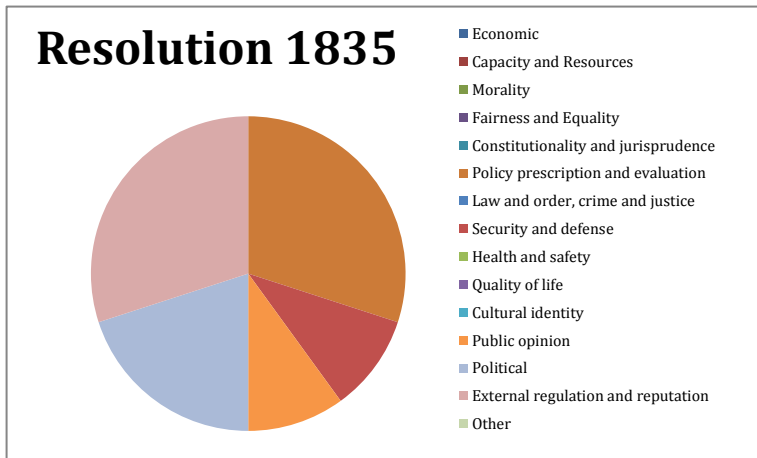
#### 4.3.1.5. *Resolution 1835*

Resolution 1835 adopted on September 27, 2008 is said to be the weakest of the SC’s first six resolutions (Starr, z.d.). A compromise resolution was accepted due to a hesitant Russia for more sanctions. This resolution therefore imposed no new sanctions but reaffirmed the four earlier resolutions.

There were only five articles to examine that did not fall under the neutral tone category or economic frame, and what stood out most was a quote regarding the Iranian president at the time,

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. The quote read “once a year, the Israel-threatening, Holocaust-denying, nuke-building and child-hanging president of Iran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, comes to New York for the opening ceremonies of the United Nations General Assembly.” The articles found for this resolution had two prominent issue-specific frames: “external regulation and reputation” and “policy prescription and evaluation”. This could be linked with the fact that this resolution reaffirming the previous resolutions and therefore evaluates previous policies, while keeping in mind the external regulation and reputation of Iran.

**Figure 5: Issue-specific frames for article 1835 in the NYT**



**4.3.1.6. Resolution 1929**

Resolution 1929 was the first resolution to pass under the Obama administration. On June 9, 2010, after months of intense and at times even rancorous diplomacy, the resolution passed by a 12-2-1 vote. This resolution followed two major events: a first regarding revelations that Iran had, according to September 2009 speculations, built a secret uranium enrichment facility at Qom. A second was the Iranian rejection of a deal that would send uranium enriched at low-level to Russia and then to France for further enrichment and the

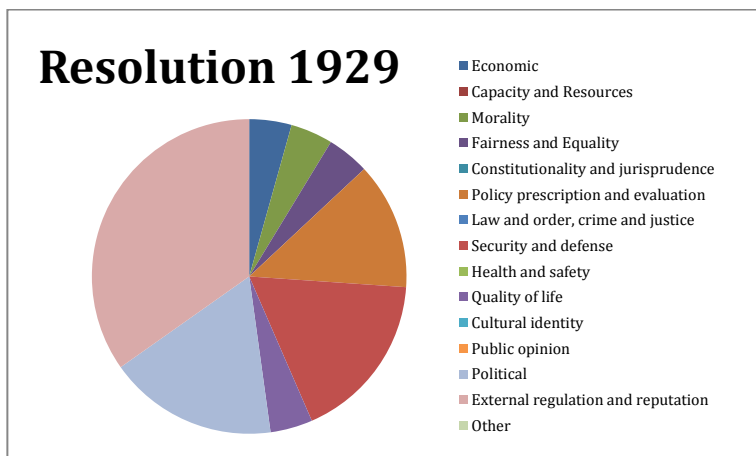
creation of nuclear fuel rods (Starr, z.d.). The U.S. and European officials pushed for new sanctions when the deal was rejected. Russia and China maintained a diffident position, but ultimately opted for the resolution as well (Resolutions on Iran, z.d.).

Turkey and Brazil eventually gained Iran's approval for a "fuel swap" arrangement. Key nations decided that this would not suffice, as it could not account for the doubling of enriched uranium in Iran since October of 2009. Turkey and Brazil denied the resolution, and Lebanon withdrew itself. In addition to the sanctions, the SC named several areas of cooperation for engagement with Iran to end the nuclear impasse (Starr, z.d.). The proposal promised energy, economic, agricultural, civil aviation, political and humanitarian incentives, if Tehran would suspend uranium enrichment. Iran's UN ambassador answered that no effort would break the nation's determination to pursue a legal and inalienable right to keep enriching uranium (UN Sanctions against Iran, z.d.).

When examining the articles published regarding this resolution, we see that the most frequently used words were nuclear, Israel and sanctions. Most significant, the word nuclear averaged to a weighted percentage of 2.1%. The publication of articles in the New York Times included some sentiments of uncertainty with regards to the sanctions that were now put into place. One of the articles noted that 'like sanctions; this effort is unlikely to do more than delay the day of reckoning (by Iran); unless Mr. Obama gets lucky'. One of the articles was titled "Iran is said to have fuel for two nuclear weapons". We may conclude that with such titles, the general public may receive a skewed perception, turning assumptions into their vision.



**Figure 6: Issue-specific frames for article 1929 in the NYT**



### **4.3.2. The Washington Post**

#### **4.3.2.1. Resolution 1696**

Similar to The New York Times findings on the first resolution, articles published in The Washington Post often referred to the threat of Hezbollah, and the role of Iran in this. This can be seen in one of the articles, which notes “several U.S. policymakers suggested privately that the main advantage of the resolution at this point was to “put the focus back on Iran” as one official said. “The fighting in Lebanon had taken pressure off Iran’s nuclear program, and they were benefiting,” the official concluded. Some articles spoke of “war” and “terror”. One article notes that “at the heart of the crisis for the US is a broader struggle with Iran for influence in the Middle East, one that arguably has been going on since the Islamic revolution of 1979 and that has escalated during Bush’s presidency. The US not only backs Israel in the current war but also has accelerated weapons delivery to Israel. Hezbollah; on the other hand, has long acted as a surrogate for Iran, and in the past three weeks it has shown off Iranian weapons never before used by the radical

group.” President Bush is mentioned often, wanting to “rally world leaders against Iran’s nuclear program.”

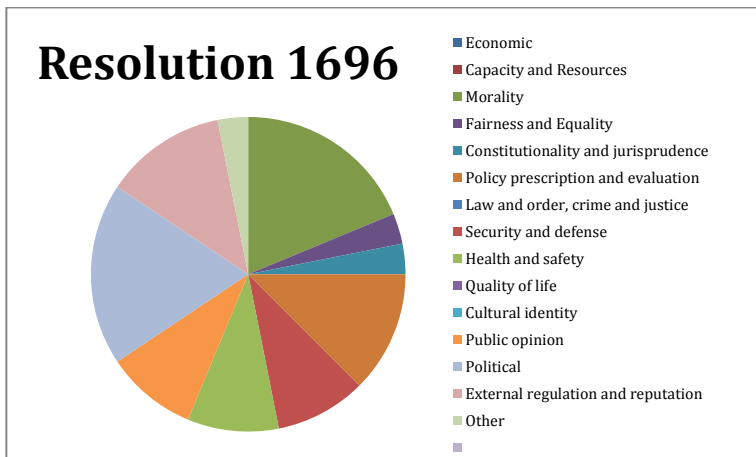
An example of a positive tone can be found in the article titled “The Anti-Bush movement”. With “Bush” as the most frequently used word, and “war” the second most frequent, the article mentions how Bush maintains that everyone “wants the violence to stop” and continues to denote this. “Of course this isn’t true” the article indicates, “if it were, he could have imposed a cease-fire in the first few days.” One more disapproving article, and thus positive in the sense of this research, writes about Bush: “He seems to care nothing about winning hearts and minds in other countries. Foreign leaders say he lectures but does not listen. He does not have the long telephone conversations late at night that former President Clinton loved to keep him in touch with what others were thinking.” Another article with a similar headline, refers to a late Washington Post poll, noting that “a near-majority of Americans – 46 percent – strongly disapprove of the job Bush is doing. That’s strongly. Another 12 percent somewhat disapprove.”

It should be noted that in examining the articles published with regards to the first resolution, the Washington Post included four positive articles, two neutral and four negative. It was clear that the positive articles came from those who remained skeptical of Bush’s motives. One article refers to an official, quoting “a Pentagon consultant told me that intelligence about Hezbollah and Iran is being mishandled by the White House the same way intelligence had been when, in 2002 and early 2003, the Administration was making the case that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction.” We see in the word usage that the most frequently used words with reference to the first resolution are “Hezbollah”, “terror”, “war”, and “Israel[i]”. Therefore, even the official quoted in one of the articles expressed concern noting that “the big complaint now in the intelligence community is that all of the important stuff is being sent directly to the top – at the insistence of the White House – and not being analyzed at all, or scarcely” continuing to stress that “it’s an awful policy [which] violates all of the N.S.A.’s structures, and if you complain about it you’re out” noting that Cheney had played a large roll in this. A separate article notes that “six years into the Bush-

Cheney era, no one should be surprised at the levels the vice president can reduce himself to in his unending efforts to smear his political foes. Yet, he continually comes up with new approaches... the shameful smears of patriotic American voters by Mr. Cheney and White House apologists can't disguise how utterly they and their ilk have failed America. Their unspoken fear is that America is finally on to them."

Despite the positive tone in some articles, other articles refute this position by placing Iran in a position that would not serve the American public well. One quote that exemplified this was regarding "the war between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon" which "has created widespread public support for the militant Shiite group among people across the Arab world". It goes on to mention that "leaders appear uneasy about the conflict" because of an underlying "fear [that] it could boost the influence of Hezbollah's *patron* Iran." The word "patron" puts all responsibility with Iran. "Washington is pressing to keep the focus on Hezbollah as the source of the problem. The United States and Britain pushed for a Security Council statement that would express concern for the "deteriorating situation" in the Middle East and condemn "extremist forces" and their backers, an implicit reference to Syria and Iran."

Figure 7: Issue-specific frames for article 1696 in TWP

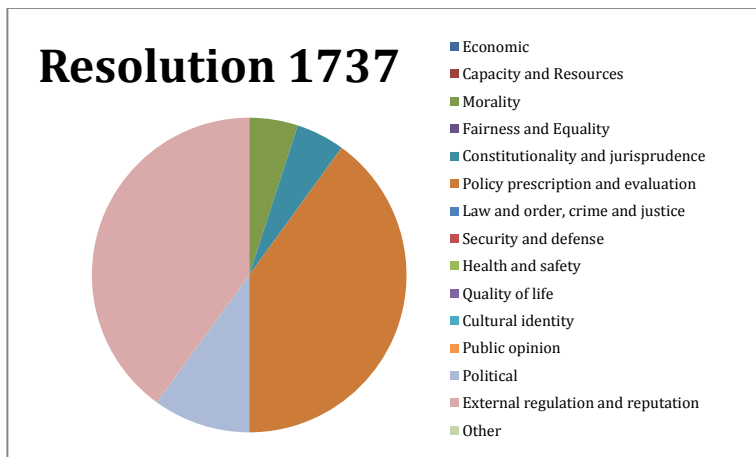


#### 4.4.2.2. Resolution 1737

Much like what happened with the second resolution in the *New York Times*, the word “nuclear” was most frequently used in all of the articles found for *resolution 1737*, ranking higher than word “Iran”, with a weighted average of 3,0 %. Different than the first group of articles, these articles tried to spark concern about other issues than the abovementioned Hezbollah. One of the articles mentions President Bush’s message to the Iranian people, as he shares a message with the Iranian people: “my message to the Iranian people is: You can do better than to have somebody try to rewrite history”. This is the end of that given article, which leaves the readers with that in mind. Another article ending mentioned the chanting of Iranian legislators as they yelled “Death to America” after a significant vote.

Significant is that the two most prominent issue-specific frames in these articles were both “external regulation and reputation” and “policy prescription and evaluation” with a strong focus on ties between the United States and Iran, as well as the efficacy of the Iranian government.

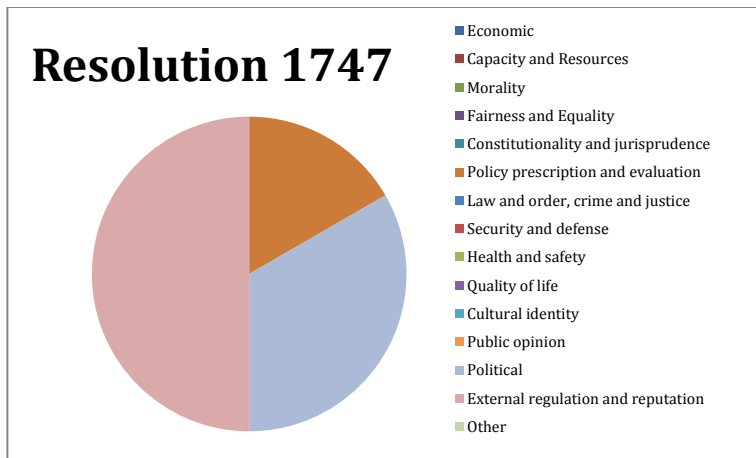
Figure 8: Issue-specific frames for article 1737 in TWP



#### 4.4.2.3. Resolution 1747

Resolution 1747 was framed in the Washington Post as a resolution whose sanctions would finally bring change in the nuclear proliferation. The term “nuclear” coined a weighted average of 2.54 throughout fifty percent of the articles for this resolution (1747). Regarding the sanctions, one article notes “the financial and military restrictions are ‘rather limited and toothless’ but they are having a profound psychological impact on investors and eroding President Ahmadinejad’s standing in Iran”. President Ahmadinejad, in another article’s title, was referred to as the “hard-liner president”, exemplifying his unwillingness to compromise. Another one of the articles also mentions how “Iran has taken advantage of the failure of the peace process and the vacuum in Arab leadership”.

Figure 9: Issue-specific frames for article 1747 in TWP



#### 4.4.2.4. Resolution 1803

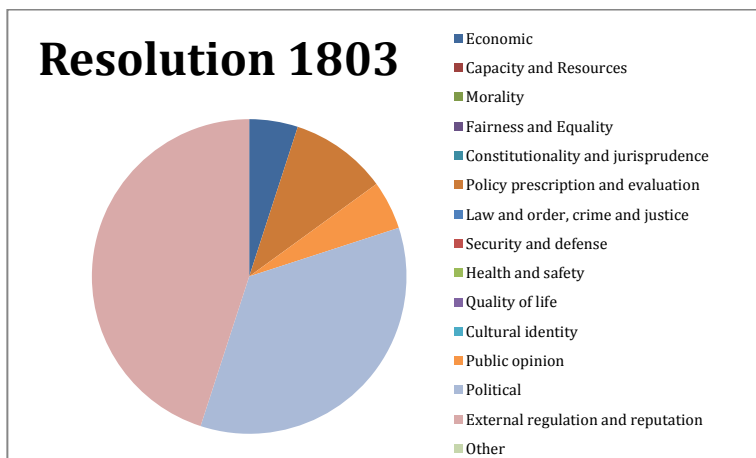
What stood out most regarding this resolution was that most articles were framed in the “external regulation and reputation” or “political” frames, with 50 percent fitting in the first frame, 33 percent fitting in the political frame and the remaining 17 percent fitting in the policy

prescription and evaluation frame, referring to previous sanctions and why they have or have not succeeded in curbing the Iranian nuclear program.

The Security Council passed Resolution 1803 on March 3, 2008 by a vote of 14-0-1 after intense debate. A U.S. National Intelligence Estimate issued in December 2007 concluded “with high confidence” that Iran’s nuclear program had been suspended in the fall of 2003. As a result, several council members initially questioned the need for further sanctions against Iran. Libya, South Africa, Indonesia and Vietnam were especially hesitant to pursue new punitive measures, arguing that Iran had begun to cooperate with IAEA inspections. However, U.S. and European officials wanted to tighten existing measures because of Iran’s failure to comply with earlier resolutions.

Resolution 1803 contained several suggested measures for member states, but few mandatory actions. It called on states to “exercise vigilance” when providing export credits, guarantees and insurance to Iranian entities. It also called on states to voluntarily limit their interaction with Iranian banks operating in their territories. The resolution specifically urged states to cut ties with Bank Melli and Bank Saderat, which the United States accused of providing financial services for Iran’s nuclear and ballistic missile programs, in addition to facilitating money transfers to terrorist organizations. Resolution 1803 subjected 13 individuals and 12 companies to travel restrictions and asset freezes. Finally, it authorized inspections of air and sea cargo traveling to or from Iran if “reasonable grounds” suggested the vessel was transporting illicit materials. Iran’s Ambassador to the IAEA called the resolution “irresponsible,” and described the agency’s information on its nuclear program as “forged and fabricated” (Starr, z.d.)

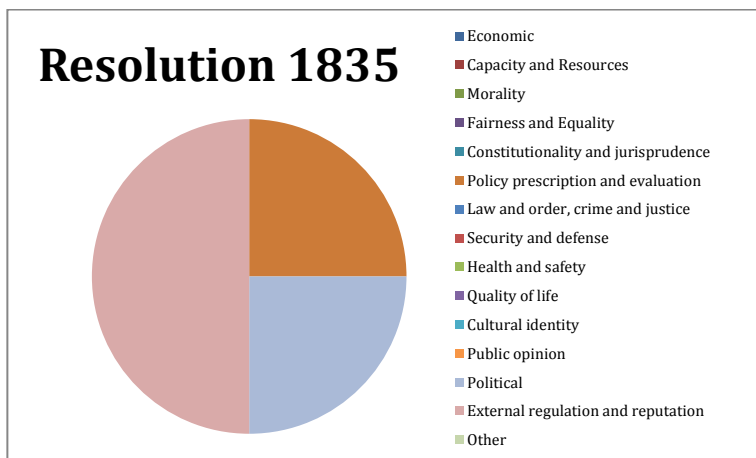
**Figure 10: Issue-specific frames for article 1803 in TWP**



#### **4.4.2.5. Resolution 1835**

As mentioned before, this resolution imposed no new sanctions but reaffirmed the previous four. Reports on this resolution included the fact that U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said that she would ask for a Security Council meeting to discuss Iranian threats against Israel. "It is important to take note of the really terrible things that have been said by the Iranian president about the state of Israel," Rice said. "It simply isn't appropriate in civilized company." Another article mentions Republican Sarah Palin's plans with regards to Iran as she says "I will continue to call for sustained action to prevent Iranian President Ahmadinejad from getting these weapons that he wants for a second holocaust". Noteworthy is that fifty percent of the issue-specific frames were made up of the external regulation and reputation frame, and the other fifty percent consisted of the political frame, and policy prescription and evaluation.

**Figure 11: Issue-specific frames for article 1835 in TWP**

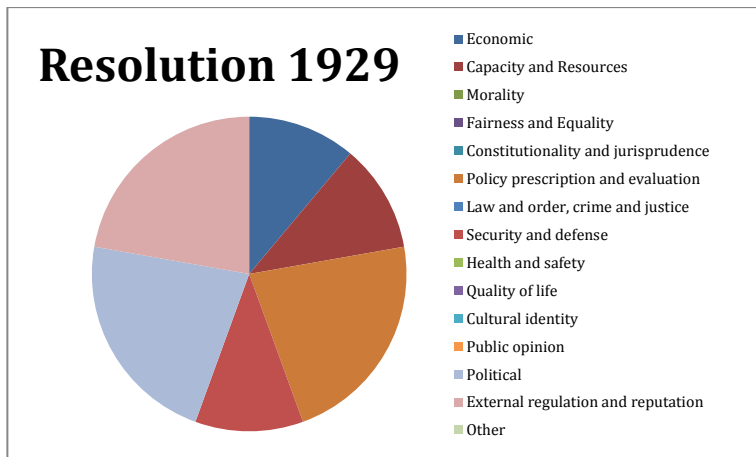


#### ***4.4.2.6. Resolution 1929***

The most obvious observation here was that the second most used word in each article was sanctions in 50 percent of the cases, and nuclear in the other 50 percent. The word “sanctions” amounted to a weighted average of 2.72. The word “nuclear” amounted to an average of 2.35 percent, weighted. Three issue-specific frames each made up 22% of the articles: “external regulation and reputation”, “policy prescription and evaluation” and “political”. The three others each made up 11%: “economic”, “capacity and resources”, and “security and defense”. One article writes that President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad “openly mocked the U.N. resolution, which he likened in a speech to ‘used napkins that need to be thrown in the garbage can.’” Another article writes on the basis of an International Atomic Energy Agency suggestion that “Iran may be seeking to soften its image with its proposed nuclear deal with Brazil and Turkey, but the Islamic republic continues to play hardball with U.N. nuclear inspectors”.



**Figure 12: Issue-specific frames for article 1929 in TWP**



### **4.3.3. Issue-specific Frames compared**

#### **4.3.3.1. Resolution 1696**

The most important findings when comparing the issue-specific frames for the two newspapers with regard to the first resolution included that the “morality” frame attributed to 19% of the total articles found for resolution 1696 in TWP attributed. In the NYT, this was 0%. The “external regulation and reputation” frame made up 22% of the total frames in the NYT and 13% in TWP. The “political” frame accounted for 22% in the NYT and 19% in TWP, which is fairly close. “Public opinion” was used three times as much in TWP, at 9% while this was only 3% in the NYT. There was harmony in the two newspapers for the frames “fairness and equality” and “constitutionality and jurisprudence” which made up 3% per frame in each newspaper.

#### **4.3.3.2. Resolution 1737**

A first noteworthy observation is that there were twice as many total frames used in the articles in TWP than in the NYT. The frame “external regulation and reputation” received more than twice as much attention in the NYT articles, at 40%, than in TWP which came in at 19%. The “policy prescription and evaluation” frame attained a value of 16% in the NYT but 40% in TWP, which is more than double. The “security and defense” frame makes up another 16% of the total articles in the NYT but is not at all present in TWP. The “political” frame is comparable, at 14% for the NYT and 10% for TWP. “Morality” has similar comparable figures, at 7% and 5% respectively. The last frame, “Constitutionality and jurisprudence” receives 5% of the total issue-specific frames in each of the newspapers.

#### ***4.3.3.3. Resolution 1747***

For the third resolution, our first remark consists of the NYT having four more frames than TWP. In TWP, the frame “external regulation and reputation” makes up 50% of the total issue-specific frames, while this is only 20% in the NYT. The “political” frame makes up 33% of the total frames in TWP, while also making up 33% in the NYT. “Policy prescription and evaluation” also range closely to each other, with 15% in the NYT and 17% in TWP. “Law and order, crime and justice”, “security and defense”, “health and safety” and “public opinion” together all account for 35% in the NYT.

#### ***4.3.3.4. Resolution 1803***

The most interesting find regarding the fourth resolution is that half of the frames in the NYT are “security and defense” and the other half “capacity and resources”. The Washington Post on the other hand is made up of five frames: “external regulation and reputation” which accounts for 45%, the “political” frame which makes up 35%

and the last two: “policy prescription and evaluation” and “economic and public opinion” at 10% and 5%, respectively.

#### ***4.3.3.5. Resolution 1835***

Resolution 1835 has only three frames in the Washington Post. These are “external regulation and reputation” at 50%, “policy prescription and evaluation” at 25%, and “political” at another 25%. The New York Times has the same three frames, but adds “public opinion” and “security and defense”, each coming in at 10%, taking a few percent from the other three frames.

#### ***4.3.3.6. Resolution 1929***

The last resolution was marked by six frames in the Washington Post. These were “external regulation and reputation”, “political”, “security and defense”, “policy prescription and evaluation”, “capacity and resources”, and “economic”. They all accounted for either 11% or 22%. The New York Times had, in addition, the “fairness and equality” frame as well as the “morality” frame, and the “quality of life” frame, which all hovered around 5%.



## 5. CONCLUSION

The central goal of this research was to determine whether or not the American media effectively published only neutral news about Iran following the passing of six United Nations Security Council resolutions between 2006 and 2010. Two different newspapers – a more liberal *The New York Times*, and the more conservative *The Washington Post* – in which 140 articles were found (79 in the NYT and 61 in TWP) – were examined two weeks before and after each United Nations Security Council resolution. The second research question, concerning *why* there is a bias, finds its answers in a review of the theoretical framework as we apply it to our findings discussed in the previous section.

### 5.1. Reflections on the findings

An overview of the findings shows us that the most used frames were “external regulation and reputation” and the “political” frame. These frames both apply to our research topic: the news coverage of *UN resolutions between 2006 and 2010*. Notable is how the “external regulation and reputation” frame was used much more frequently than the political frame. This may suggest, as we saw in section 4.4, that much of the publication concerned the ties between the United States and the Islamic Republic of Iran. Moreover, much focus was placed on the “evaluation” of Iranian politics in reference to the politics of the United States. Another frame frequently used was the “security and defense” frame, creating the image that all of the decisions were made based on the need for security, and to defend the country of the United States. In other words: that the integral danger of a “nuclear Iran” was inevitable, and what had to be done was, therefore, done to stop the country from presenting any danger.

Moving on to the tones used to report on the Iranian nuclear debate, we saw that for both of the newspapers, the “NEGATIVE” tone was used in almost 65% of the articles. An article by

Newsbaster Noel Sheppard in 2013 satirically referred to the fact that in the Yale College Writing Center's guide to what's considered a "scholarly source," the New York Times and Washington Post are depicted as having developed "a national or even worldwide reputation for fairness and accuracy" (Sheppard, 2013). When confronted with their lack of neutrality, a *Post* spokeswoman told The Huffington Post that "the depth, quality and fairness of [their] coverage is visible every day to every one of our readers," adding that "assertions of bias just don't square with the reality of [their] journalism." A *New York Times* reporter responded by claiming that the accusation is a "pretty critical ... take on a type of time-intensive journalism (long form bio/vetting) that it generally avoids." BuzzFeed's Michael Hastings alternately responded by headlining a story: "News Organization Clearly Very Envious of Rival News Organization's Great Story." (Calderone, 2012).

## **5.2. Reflections on the theoretical framework**

As laid out in our theoretical framework, we were shown many possible theoretical explanations for certain ways of media reporting. A second part of our research question concerns the reasons *why* the media reports on certain events in a particular way. This section will attempt to tie the framework to the results found in this research.

A first phenomenon we found in previous studies showed us that there is a tendency for a distinction between "the self and the enemy". Given our high percentage of the "NEGATIVE" tone, as well as much reference to the evaluation of Iran's nuclear program, we can assume that the United States media fails to remain neutral at all times when referring to Iran and their nuclear program, making Iran the "enemy" when referring to the "self" (Carpentier, 2005). Looking into the discourse theory, we notice in this research that the it may explain why Iran is perceived, as a whole, as a country that is difficult to identify with. The antagonistic identity construction present will cause the United States identity to be formed, while the other's identity is exemplified (Cottle, 2006). Thus, as long as the

media maintains the image of the other as it is formed, these identities remain equally dependent.

The media is also thought to be manipulated most by one side of the story, in this case the United States' government. It is difficult to work toward a change in reporting as journalists continue on the framing scheme established by the government. Hunt (1997) explained that the course of the conflict determines the media's reaction, which is usually in the hands of those who are in power, in this case the United States. The first two phases of Hunt's conflict model explained how stereotypes were spread in a first phase, and in a second phase, these stereotypes and other explanations were utilized to justify the conflict. With regard to the resolutions passed by the United Nations Security Council, and the many sanctions that followed, much of the reporting aims to substantiate the need for such measures against Iran. Many consumers of the news may start to believe that doubting what they are being told is not possible, given the Manichean "with us or against us" argument classified as "black propaganda" (Hunt, 1997). It is easier, therefore, to believe that Iran is, in fact, the "evil regime" it is described to be.

We can accept that agenda-setting has positioned the Iranian nuclear program in the spotlight for these last years. Manipulation of placement of the potentially dangerous statistics regarding the nuclear proliferation have given the media the ability to direct the public's attention toward something negative, altering the judgment of the news consumers on these key topics. Seemingly, by priming the consumers of the idea that all was done for their security and defense, the general public will also be more at ease with the idea that one country is being placed under sanctions, so that their health and safety is rendered firm. It is important to re-emphasize that priming has caused consumers to change the criteria with which they judge a topic, rather than their overall opinion (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987). Lastly, framing of the nuclear proliferation has surpassed second-level agenda setting and its prominent attributes of subjects, by making the subject, or rather the overall topic, more sensational and visible to the public. By touching upon culturally familiar symbols or morals, the public will disapprove of the other side with more ease.

We can also assume that it is particularly difficult for consumers of the news to change their perception of Iran, being so far removed from the Iranian culture and its people. Galtung and Ruge referred to this as a lack of “proximity” (Harcup & O’Neill, 2001). It is apparent that since the revolution in Iran in 1979, the entire world has had little to no exposure to the reality of life in Iran. The last months leading up to a potential deal between the United States and Iran have allowed many sources to start exploring, however limited the scope, what life is *actually* like in the Islamic Republic. Images of young people roaming the streets, as well as stories of tourists crossing the country may have a minor impact on peoples’ predisposed conceptions. However, the lack of cultural proximity between Americans and Iranians living in the Islamic Republic as it exists today, allows for little change or contrast to what the average consumer is reading in the newspaper.

A first paradigm we discussed by Simon Cottle (2006) presented us with five different factors that could bear an influence on reporting. As they are each important to our research, we discuss the factors and try to confirm them with supportive evidence. We begin by grouping the first three factors, as they all portray financial factors: *ownership of media machines*, *commercial investments* and the “*flak*” factor, which gives dominant social institutions the power and freedom to force the spreading of propaganda. It has been examined and proven many times over the last few years that the Jewish ownership of media in the US is very high. Given the ties between Israel and Iran, we found it appropriate to analyze what this meant for the newspapers in our interest: *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*. Our research confirmed that TWP rests on a non-Jewish origin. It was established in 1877 by Stilson Hitchens, and later purchased from him by the McLean family. In June 1933, with the Great Depression, the newspaper declared bankruptcy. The newspaper was sold at a bankruptcy auction to Eugene Meyer, a Jewish financier. Eugene Meyer’s granddaughter, Meyer Graham, now runs TWP. Eugene is now the principal stockholder and board chairman of TWP. *The New York Times* is controlled by the Sulzberger family, which was Jewish in origin (Weltner, z.d.). Important here is that these explanations are merely theoretical, and



the facts are no guaranteed cause for a lack of neutrality in reporting (Dershowitz, 2010).

A fourth factor was referred to in this research as the “anti-terrorist” or “anti-Islam” factor rather than the old “anti-communism”. By spreading the idea that enemies are bound to attack us, the general public is more inclined to fully support those in charge, in this case the United States government and what is reported of it by the media. Building on the last factors we refer to *The Israel Lobby* by John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt (2007), who write that “beginning in the 1990s, and especially after 9/11, U.S. support for Israel has been justified by the claim that both states are threatened by terrorist groups originating in the Arab or Muslim world, and by a set of ‘rogue states’ that back these groups and seek WMD... Israel is thus seen as a crucial ally in the war on terror because its enemies are said to be America's enemies” (p.32). The close ties between Israel and the United States have undoubtedly changed the relations between Iran and the United States. To what extent this has influenced the media’s portrayal of Iran is unsure, but surely a question worth pondering in future research.

The last factor was the limitation of any alternative interpretations. The public fails to acknowledge that “even if these states acquire nuclear weapons — which is obviously not desirable — it would not be a strategic disaster for the United States.” (Mearsheimer & Walt, p. 33). Mearsheimer and Walt continue by noting that President Bush accepted this idea, stating that “the threat from Iran is, of course, their stated objective to destroy our strong ally Israel.” Consequently, Mearsheimer and Walt go on to mention that the lobby has pursued the ability to shape the core elements of the United States foreign policy for the Middle East . This way, the lobby has convinced the US for a long time to take aim at Israel’s primary regional adversaries – Iran, Iraq, and Syria. (Posen, 2006). “Furthermore, the U.S. relationship with Israel makes it harder to deal effectively with these states. Israel's nuclear arsenal is one reason why some of its neighbors want nuclear weapons, and threatening these states with regime change merely increases that desire.” (Mearsheimer & Walt, p. 33). Here we could ask the

question what the latest negotiations and potential deal will mean for these arguments.

A second paradigm classified by Simon Cottle is the media contest paradigm, referring to the way the political process influences the media more so than the other way around. Certain viewpoints are emphasized while others are disregarded. Alexander Wendt (1992) recognized that states always begin their interaction with a blank slate. They are predisposed to neither conflict nor cooperation. What's critical, according to Wendt, is the early interaction between the two states. He claims that the inter-subjective experience and meaning construction are at this time set between two countries, either largely positive or negative. Dr. Christophe Ferrero (z.d.) argues on the US-Iran relations website that a possible explanation for the persistent conflict is the profoundly negative trajectory following the tumult of the revolution in Iran in 1979. Such constructivism could account for the portrayal of Iran in such a way that leaves consumers of news media hesitant to consider any other interpretation of the country. Any other view is now considered irrational, when the biggest question remains just how rational these decades of narration have been in each of these countries. Perhaps this is a larger issue than has previously been imagined. The core of the problem is very seldom touched upon.

The third paradigm, the media culture paradigm, similarly applies to our case on the coverage of the Iranian nuclear ordeal. When consumers of a news medium start accepting the media culture in which they are embedded, they may find it hard to distance themselves from these cultural ties and elements which compose their framework. Kellner (1995) supported Simon Cottle's idea that the media culture is a "contested terrain across which key social groups and competing political ideologies struggle for dominance and that individuals live these struggles through the images, discourses, myths and spectacles of media culture" (p.2). It is true that today, political conflicts are more often played out in the media culture. As a result, the gap between the mediatized culture, in this case that of the United States, and the culture of Iran, is rendered larger.

### **5.3. Future studies and limitations**

When evaluating the research and its future prospects it should be noted that the time and methodological restraint account for some limitations regarding the choice of data collection and research design. By choosing the qualitative analysis of newspaper articles from a different country than the one in which the research is mainly conducted, for example, the research renders itself dependent on the ability to access the abovementioned sources online. Another limitation to this research is the idea that other factors than those being tested could be leading to a possible bias in the US media regarding Iran. This can lead to a miscalculation. Without the control of other factors, this blindness could lead the research to the wrong conclusion. One can argue that by drawing tones from each article, there was some partition involved.

Observing the theoretical framework, the paradigms used in this research have met some criticism over the years from a different school or researchers. The degree of media influence on public perception is a widely discussed topic in the academic world. While the first school echoes authors such as Walter Lipmann with a ‘powerful media paradigm’, the second school, that of the ‘limited effect paradigm’, believes that media consumers do not passively receive information. Because of the consumer’s individual selection, the media proves to have limited potential and fails to impose the way of thinking (Weimann, 2000). Their criticism could well apply to this research. Without knowing the exact outcome of the media influence, it is difficult to predict what the information can mean for consumers.

Because of the limited time in which this research is conducted, the research is simplified to only hold the qualitative analysis of the articles. However, we can establish that when a combination of research is done, the answers to the general questions of “if” and “why” could be answered more easily. Perhaps an enlargement of the data selection would also be desired. When there

is more data being deciphered, the collected information could be more viable and reliable. From this date, the next aim could be to identify and assess empirical patterns in which frames are selected in policy debates regarding Iran. It would be an interesting phenomenon to discover how these frames evolve in the debate, and identify the conditions under which they are spread from one issue to another (e.g. from the media to Congress).

#### **5.4. Concluding Thoughts**

We began this research with the general question of how exactly the Iranian nuclear issue was framed in United States media. Though it remains impossible to formulate a definitive answer to that question, research has shown us that beside a very *political* construction in reporting on the nuclear debate and its consequences for Iran, the media tends to emphasize the *negative* aspects of the Iranian government, leaders and decisions throughout the debate, referring to the faulty regulation and reputation of Iran's government. By leaving out most other news, like economic advances or socio-cultural news, and refraining from reporting on other aspects of the Iranian life, the media leaves no room for the consumers to convey their own insight of Iran. Consumers who seek no further than reading the newspaper to alter their depiction of the country and its people are predisposed to a very specifically calculated vision of Iran, with which they are expected (by the media) to judge that country's decisions, culture, etc. Their surmise of an "evil Iran" is something dangerous and unfortunate in today's international relations.



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## 7. APPENDIX A

### Codebook

Record	Key/Explanation
<b>Article General Frame</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Political</li> <li>2. Economic</li> <li>3. Socio-cultural</li> </ol>
<p><b>Article Tone</b></p> <p><b>Note:</b> In order to determine if the article tone was <u>positive</u>, the article must have contained adjectives or adverbs that commend Iran as a country or governmental actions. The article must have shown that Iran was willing to cooperate with U.S. ideals.</p> <p>In order to determine if the article tone was <u>neutral</u>, the article must not have possessed any adjectives or adverbs that diminished or praised the country of Iran or depicted that the country was in conflict or in cooperation with U.S. ideals.</p> <p>An article tone was considered <u>negative</u> if there were hostile or critical adjectives or adverbs that described Iran or its leaders' characters, if the article focused on the government's repressive or shocking actions (such as harsh language or hate speech), if the article hinted toward Iran being disobedient, or if the article opposed a solution or compromise between the governments of the two countries involved.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Positive</li> <li>2. Neutral</li> <li>3. Negative</li> </ol>

**Article Issue-Specific  
Frame**

1. **Economic frames:** The costs, benefits, or monetary/financial implications of the issue (to an individual, family, community or to the economy as a whole).

2. **Capacity and resources frames:** The lack of or availability of physical, geographical, spatial, human, and financial resources, or the capacity of existing systems and resources to implement or carry out policy goals.

3. **Morality frames:** Any perspective—or policy objective or action (including proposed action)—that is compelled by religious doctrine or interpretation, duty, honor, righteousness or any other sense of ethics or social responsibility.

4. **Fairness and equality frames:** Equality or inequality with which laws, punishment, rewards, and resources are applied or distributed among individuals or groups. Also the balance between the rights or interests of one individual or group compared to another individual or group.

5. **Constitutionality and jurisprudence frames:** The constraints imposed on or freedoms granted to individuals, government, and corporations via the Constitution, Bill of Rights and other amendments, or judicial interpretation. This deals specifically with the authority of government to regulate, and the authority of individuals/corporations to act independently of government.

6. **Policy prescription and evaluation:** Particular policies proposed for addressing an identified problem, and figuring out if certain policies will work, or if existing policies are effective.

7. **Law and order, crime and justice frames:** Specific policies in practice and their enforcement, incentives, and implications. Includes stories about enforcement and interpretation of laws by individuals and law enforcement, breaking laws, loopholes, fines, sentencing and punishment. Increases or reductions in crime.

8. **Security and defense frames:** Security, threats to security, and protection of one's person, family, in-group, nation, etc. Generally an action or a call to action that can be taken to protect the welfare of a person, group, nation sometimes from a not yet manifested threat.

	<p>9. <b>Health and safety frames:</b> Healthcare access and effectiveness, illness, disease, sanitation, obesity, mental health effects, prevention of or perpetuation of gun violence, infrastructure and building safety.</p> <p>10. <b>Quality of life frames:</b> The effects of a policy on individuals' wealth, mobility, access to resources, happiness, social structures, ease of day-to-day routines, quality of community life, etc.</p> <p>11. <b>Cultural identity frames:</b> The social norms, trends, values and customs constituting culture(s), as they relate to a specific policy issue</p> <p>12. <b>Public opinion frames:</b> References to general social attitudes, polling and demographic information, as well as implied or actual consequences of diverging from or getting ahead of public opinion or polls.</p> <p>13. <b>Political frames:</b> Any political considerations surrounding an issue. Issue actions or efforts or stances that are political, such as partisan filibusters, lobbyist involvement, bipartisan efforts, deal-making and vote trading, appealing to one's base, mentions of political maneuvering. Explicit statements that a policy issue is good or bad for a particular political party.</p> <p>14. <b>External regulation and reputation frames:</b> The United States' external relations with another nation; the external relations of one state with another; or relations between groups. This includes trade agreements and outcomes, comparisons of policy outcomes or desired policy outcomes.</p> <p>15. <b>Other frames:</b> Any frames that do not fit into the above categories.</p>
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