

**A Framing Analysis of News Coverage of Iran's Nuclear Deal with the United Nations
Security Council's Five Permanent Members (the P5+1)
in the *Islamic Republic News Agency* and *The New York Times***

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By: Aria Alavi

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Signed by the final examining committee:

Dr. David Secko _____ Chair

Aphrodite Salas _____ Examiner

Dr. Greg Nielsen _____ Examiner

Dr. Andrea Hunter _____ Thesis Supervisor

Approved by _____

Chair of Department or Graduate Program Director

Dr. Andre Roy

Date _____

ABSTRACT

A Framing Analysis of News Coverage in Iran's Nuclear Deal with the United Nations Security Council's Five Permanent Members (the P5+1)
in the *Islamic Republic News Agency* and *The New York Times*

Aria Alavi

Over the last several years, the issue of Iran's development of nuclear power has caused significant stress among Western democracies. Israel, in particular, has perceived this as an imminent threat to its existence. Iran's nuclear development has led to severe sanctions imposed by the United States and European countries that have severely crippled Iran's economy. The effect of these sanctions prompted the Iranian government to start negotiations with the P5+1 to broker a deal that would see the economic sanctions removed in exchange for putting a stop to its nuclear development plan. Iran had cut political and economic relations with the United States since the 1979 Islamic revolution, so these nuclear deal negotiations were the first face-to-face negotiations with the United States in over three decades. In order to discover how the nuclear deal was presented by the *Islamic Republic News Agency* (IRNA) and the *New York Times* to their readers, this thesis undertakes a textual and framing analysis of the news coverage during the month of July 2015. It concludes that despite the negotiations that reached a signed deal, the IRNA framed the United States as an "enemy" and the *New York Times* framed Iran as an "enemy." This thesis also analyzed the political structure of both countries in relationship to journalistic norms practiced in each country, looking particularly at the notion of objectivity, or fairness and balance.

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1	Introduction	1
Chapter 2	Background and literature reviews	7
2.1	Political Structure of Iran and the United States	7
2.2	Journalistic norms in Iran and the United States	14
2.3	Structuration Theory	21
2.4	Propaganda Model	23
2.5	Framing theory and analysis	25
Chapter 3	Methodology and Findings	28
3.1	Textual Analysis	29
3.2	Framework Analysis	31
Chapter 4	Conclusion	73
List of Figures		
	Figure 1	8
	Figure 2	10
	Figure 3	12
List of Tables		
	Table 1	32
	Table 2	33

Table 3	33
Table 4	46
Table 5	56
Table 6	59

Chapter One: Introduction and Purpose of Thesis

In the last several years, the issue of Iran's development of nuclear power has caused significant stress among Western democracies. In particular, Israel has perceived this as an imminent threat to its existence. From 2006 to 2010, The United Nations Security Council adopted six resolutions and imposed gradual sanctions on Iran, including freezing the assets of individuals and companies connected to the enrichment program and banning the supply of nuclear-related technology to the country (The Guardian, 2015). In September 2009, American President Barack Obama confirmed the existence of an underground enrichment facility in Fordow, near the Iranian city of Qom. The United States then began talking seriously about air strikes against Iran, and Israel threatened to take nuclear action (The Guardian, 2015). This led the European Union and the United States to pass a resolution that would ban all member countries from importing Iranian oil. This was the beginning of a series of crippling economic sanctions made by the United States and the European Union against Iran's government – a country whose main revenue comes from exporting oil to other countries. In September 2013, Iran's government started to negotiate with the United Nations Security Council's five permanent members – China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, the United State, and Germany, countries known as the P5+1 – about curtailing its development of nuclear power in exchange for lifting the economic sanctions.

This thesis aims to examine press depictions of Iran's nuclear deal with the P5+1 in two major newspapers. The study launches an in-depth textual and framing analysis of an Iranian newspaper, the *Islamic Republic News Agency* (IRNA), and an American newspaper, the *New York Times* (NYT), in order to show how they each reported on, and framed, the nuclear deal in 2015. Engaging with Anthony Giddens' (1984) and Vincent Mosco's (2009) structuration

theory, Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky's (1988) propaganda model, and Robert Entman's (1993) framing theory, this thesis aims to explore the tone and language used in both newspapers to frame the nuclear deal and its players to the public.

This thesis examines ideas of journalistic objectivity and media censorship; specifically, this thesis explores how journalistic objectivity and media censorship connect to the political structures of the United States and Iran, and how they manifest when depicting the nuclear deal in the newspapers of both countries. While media coverage of the nuclear deal framework was extensive in both Iran and the United States, the content of the coverage was markedly different.

Motivations for Pursuing this Research

The idea for this research stemmed from what I, as a regular reader of both English and Farsi news, observed about Iran's nuclear deal with the P5+1 countries on a daily basis from 2009 to 2015. When Iran began negotiations regarding the suspension of its nuclear ambitions, it opened a floodgate of debate on the Internet and in major newspapers around the world about whether reaching a nuclear deal with Iran could become a reality. This deal is also an interesting subject to study due to the fractured relationship between Iran and the United States. In the years preceding the 1979 revolution, Iran and the United States had an in-depth socioeconomic relationship. Iran's former King, Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, considered himself a close ally of the United States; however, this ended after the Iranian people overthrew Pahlavi's dynasty. One of the dominant ideologies of the revolution was based upon the motto, *death to America*. This escalated during the diplomatic crisis between Iran and the United States, when American diplomats and citizens were held hostage in Iran for 444 days from November 1979 to January 1981. This hostage crisis cut all political and socioeconomic relations between the two countries for decades until 2013, when Iran's government started to negotiate with the P5+1 countries

about its nuclear activities (Nazir, 2015). The nuclear deal framework was thus a major milestone for both Iran and the United States, as the two nations engaged in some of the first face-to-face debates after 34 years.

For this thesis, I selected the *IRNA* because it is Iran's major state-controlled media and is extremely influential in the media sphere in Iran. Likewise, I chose the *New York Times* due to its reputation as a news leader in the US and its long history as an important benchmark in American journalism.

Iran and the United States have very different political structures, which consequently affects their media operations. Iran's political structure is semi-authoritarian, in which the Supreme Leader has both direct and indirect influence on all social, political, and economic sectors, including the media. As Sadjadpour (2015) writes, "Iran's state media manager is chosen by the Supreme Leader – Ali Khamenei directly" (p. 3). In Iran, censorship is a common practice, mobilized as a tool of political and social control. As Rahimi (2015) describes,

Censorship can be broadly defined as the obstruction and the arbitrary suppression of discourse with the objective of manipulating public knowledge and, accordingly, shaping public opinion in favour of state power. Censorship is the coordinated and sometimes random effort for information management and promotion of distinct communication practices to ultimately legitimize state power through formal and informal measures, legal or otherwise, primarily with the aim to stifle dissent and prevent free diffusion of critical discourses. (p. 27)

Since Iran's state media and newspapers are mandated to follow Ali Khamenei's ideology and political beliefs, it is not surprising that the media either consciously or subconsciously censor some – or all – parts of important news stories to the public.

Conversely, the United States' political structure is a democracy in which freedom of the press is protected within the First Amendment of its Constitution. The law clearly states the following:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, of prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances. (Constitution Centre, 2016, p. 1)

Although it is well known that Iran and the United States have very different political structures that affect how journalism in each country is practiced, there have not been, to the best of my knowledge, any studies that explicitly compare such journalism practices. In fact, there are very few studies that address the practice of journalism in Iran, beyond dealing with censorship. To that end, this thesis aims to contribute to the field of journalism studies by providing a case study that directly contrasts how the same event is covered differently in both Iran and the United States. It aims to provide a nuanced textual analysis of both Iranian and American media, which will ultimately shed light on how Iranian journalistic practices compare to American journalistic practices.

During the years of broken relations between Iran and the United States, it was obvious that Iran's state-controlled media outlets were used as propaganda machines to promote an anti-American movement among the Iranian people. Anything that could be construed as remotely positive about the United States was censored and news outlets were forced to broadcast only negative information (Hunter, 1990). As an Iranian who grew up in Iran and is fluent in Farsi, I am well positioned to understand the political and social structures of Iran and any subtleties that might also exist in news stories.

In order to facilitate the comparison, this study has mobilized several theories and models. I use structuration theory (Giddens, 1984; Mosco, 2009) to contextualize the forces that may be at play and which may influence how news stories are depicted. I also use Entman's (1993) framing theory (or frame theory) to examine how the media in both countries portrayed and framed the deal. Lastly, I use Herman and Chomsky's (1988) propaganda model to guide this research when analyzing which sources the newspapers turned to for news – for instance, the *IRNA* devoted much ink to Ayatollah Khamenei and his supporters' views of the deal, while the *New York Times* gave more equal coverage (meaning, it allocated coverage to include views both for and against the deal).

Given the above, the central research questions that this study asked are:

1. How do the *IRNA* and the *New York Times* depict and frame Iran's nuclear deal, and each country, through their daily news coverage in 2015?
 - a) What kind of language, tone, or approach are these newspapers conveying when depicting Iran's nuclear deal with the P5+1 countries?
 - b) What sources are these newspapers legitimizing and disseminating in their depictions?
 - c) Are the newspapers' depictions of the nuclear deal framed negatively, positively, or more neutrally?
2. What sort of journalistic norms do these newspapers adopt?
 - a) How do the political structures of each country affect the type of reporting done?

Chapter Outline

This thesis is divided into four chapters. This first chapter has introduced the purpose of this thesis. The second chapter begins by outlining the political structures of both Iran and the US, and makes connections to journalism practices and norms in both countries, with a focus on objectivity and autonomy. In addition, the second chapter includes an in-depth review of the literature published in the three main theoretical areas: structuration theory, the propaganda model, and framing theory. Chapter Three outlines the methodology used in this thesis, focusing on framing and textual analysis, and contains both the framing and textual analysis of the *New York Times* and the *IRNA*, and lastly, Chapter Four draws comparisons between the *New York Times* and the *IRNA*'s depiction of the deal, making overall conclusions and suggesting avenues for further research.

Chapter Two: Background and Literature Review

2.1 The Political Structure of Iran and the United States

The political structure of a nation greatly affects how its media operates, and can have a direct impact on the way that journalists report news. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Iran's Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, has absolute authority to appoint the Manager of State Media, which is a powerful organization inside Iran (Sadjadpour, 2015). Conversely, in America's democratic structure, the President or Congress has neither direct nor indirect authority in appointing managers and producers of media (Cornog, 2005).

Iran's political system is an Islamic theocracy and according to the country's constitution, one man, the Supreme Leader, exercises ideological and political control over all sectors of government.

The Supreme Leader is responsible for the delineation and supervision of the general policies of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which means that he sets the tone and direction of Iran's domestic and foreign policies. The Supreme Leader also is commander-in-chief of the armed forces and controls the Islamic Republic's intelligence and security operations; he alone can declare war or peace. He has the power to appoint and dismiss the leaders of the judiciary, the state radio and television networks, and the supreme commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. (Sadjadpour, 2015, p. 3)

The President is the second highest-ranking official in Iran. Although people directly elect the President, he has less power than the Supreme Leader. The people also choose Iran's Members of Parliament; however, in Iran's political structure, nominees for any election must be pre-qualified by the Council of Guardians – a body whose members are chosen by the Supreme Leader directly. In addition, a body named the Assembly of Experts is responsible for appointing

the Supreme Leader; all of its members must be pre-qualified by the Council of Guardians before being elected by the people in a general election. Essentially, in Iran's political structure it is impossible for any organization to challenge the authority of the Supreme Leader and thus, Ali Khamenei holds the final decision-making power in every facet of political spheres.

The following image provides a clear picture of Iran's complex political structure:

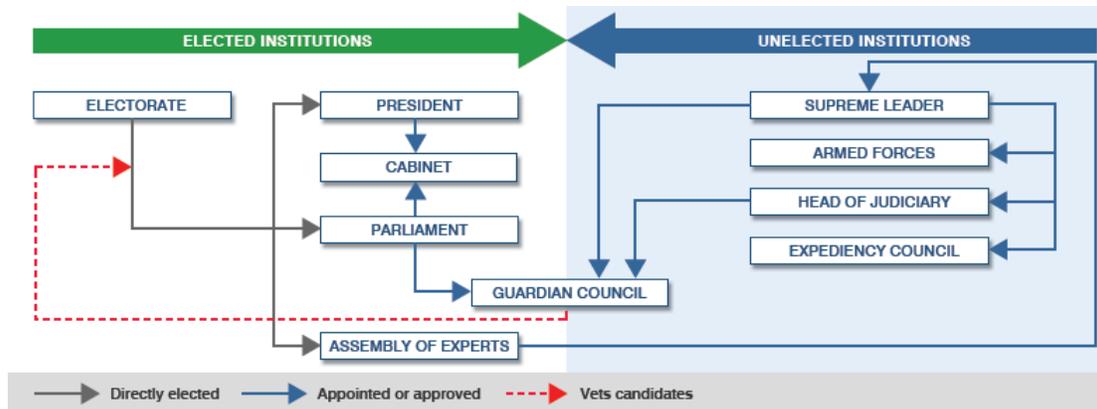


Figure 1. A flow chart depicting the political structure in Iran (BBC News, 2009).

In Iran's semi-authoritarian political structure, Ali Khamenei has constitutional authority over the state-controlled media, the *Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB)*. The government also exerts financial control over state-controlled media. While some of the state-controlled media's revenue comes from advertising, it is a small amount (just over 10%); the rest comes from government subsidies (Khiabany, 2010). Additionally, economic resources are available to publications that are linked directly to the state and various government departments, thus working in favour of those papers and against any unofficial and independent press. As Khiabany (2010) writes,

Subsidies in various forms such as foreign exchange, papers, tax exemption, and so on, are distributed unevenly. Four major dailies *Kayhan*, *Ettelaat*, which are both regarded as public property and their managing directors are appointed by the Supreme Leader,

Hamshahri (owned by the Tehran Mayor's Office), and *Iran* (owned by the *Islamic Republic News Agency-IRNA*) swallow more than 60 percent of foreign exchange subsidies. (p. 88)

As noted above, newspapers that are linked to the state – and, more importantly, that follow Ali Khamenei's ideology – will benefit from government subsidies and have increased access to financial resources compared to those that decide to stay independent and exercise more autonomy in their reporting. Ali Khamenei has demonstrated his views about the media and broadcasting by emphasizing that the media must be aware of the enemy's propaganda against the Islamic revolution, and must respond strongly while staying faithful to the principles of revolutionary Islam (Khamenei, n.d.). His beliefs are centered on the concept that the world is against the Islamic Republic of Iran, and that the media must be ready for counter-attacks at all times:

Never ever screen passive and empty films and useless, hollow programs which aim only at passing time. The IRIB should stand against and defy the propaganda of the enemy against revolution and react strongly to defuse their fabrications. View the IRIB as a university for teaching the principles of revolutionary Islam. This is our approach to the IRIB. Today the world is propagating against us. We are left with IRIB. (Khiabany, 2010, p. 159)

It cannot be expected, then, that the main news agencies such as the *IRNA*, which are controlled by the state and follow Ali Khamenei's views closely, exercise autonomy and independence. As Khiabany (2010) argues, "the state is and has been the principle agent for expansion and development of the press in Iran" (p. 91). The state imposes Islamic principles on the press in order to protect the principles of 1979's Islamic Revolution. Hence, the mandate of the *IRIB*, the

IRNA, and other government-funded news reporting organizations is to uphold the principles of the revolution, and ultimately implement Khamenei's views of the "enemy" – in which the press must play a role in defusing enemy plans against the Islamic Republic government of Iran.

By contrast, the United States is a federal republic of 50 states. The founders of the Constitution, drafted in 1787, wanted to block any individual or group from gaining too much power and, thus, they created a political system of separate institutions that share power. The American Constitution has divided power into three distinct tiers – national, state, and local government – within which American people elect officials to serve them. At the national level, the government is divided into three branches: legislative, executive, and judicial. Each has different responsibilities, but they can partially limit the authority of others through a complex system of checks and balances (Constitution Center, 2016).

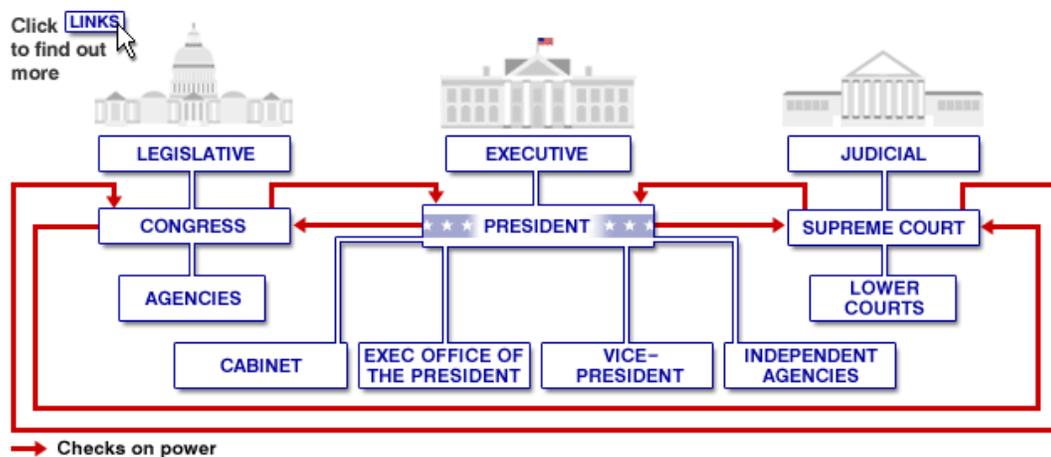


Figure 2. A flow chart depicting the political structure in America (BBC News, n.d.).

Journalists in the United States enjoy legal protection within the Constitution, and the democratic structure under which they work allows them to report freely without being reprimanded by any government official, including the President. More importantly, newspapers, including the *New York Times*, are not government-funded. The media in the United States does

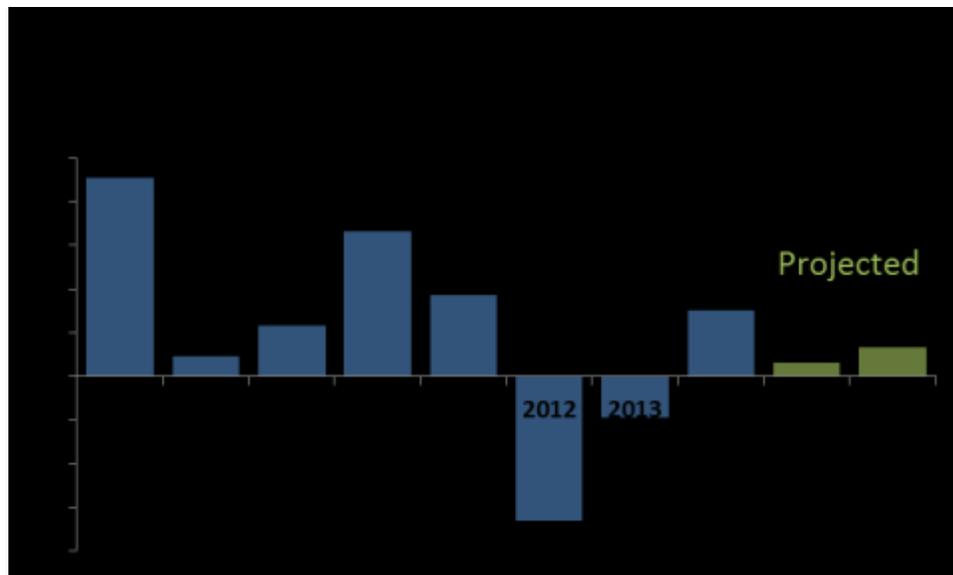
benefit from tax breaks; however, they still remain at an arm's length from any direct influence from the government. As Cowan and Westphal (2010) outline, in America, "federal and state tax laws forgive more than \$900 million annually in taxes related to newspapers and magazines. Print publications received about \$150 million in federal tax breaks in the 2008 fiscal year" (p. 13).

Despite these tax incentives, the difference between the *IRNA* and *New York Times* is clear: one receives its full operating budget from the government, while the other generates its operating revenue from advertisements and subscribers. What is also clear is that the *IRNA*'s funding from the government is contingent upon protecting government interests. For example, in a recent press conference in January 2017, an Iranian Member of Parliament, Hosseinali Haji Daligani, stated that in the government's last budget (2016), the *IRNA* received 30 billion Tomans (approximately \$10 million CAD) more than the calculated budget for its operation. He clarified that the *IRNA* follows the path defined by government and as long as it continues to do this, it will not encounter any financial problems. ("*Granting specific funding for IRAN and Iran Newspapers*, January 24, 2017).

An Overview of Iran's Nuclear Deal with P5+1 Countries

From the mid-1990's, Iran's government has vigorously pursued developing nuclear power, despite strong opposition from the United States and its allies. The situation worsened through to the end of 2011, when Iran's government ignored numerous warnings from the United States and European countries to suspend its nuclear activities. These warnings led to President Obama signing the *National Defense Authorization Act* bill in 2011. The bill, which was passed by Congress, created a law that prohibited American financial firms from conducting business with Iran's central bank. Immediately afterwards, European Union countries followed the same

path as the United States and imposed severe, crippling sanctions against countries and businesses that had economic relations with Iran, all in an effort to force Iran's government to suspend its nuclear power development. Iran's economy suffered dearly from these economic sanctions, which forced Iran's government to start negotiations with the United States and its allies regarding its nuclear development activities. Figure 3 below indicates that in 2012, immediately after the American Congress passed the National Defense Authorization Act, Iran's gross domestic product (GDP) growth dropped to -6.6% compared to the previous year, during which there was a positive growth rate of 3.7%. This negative growth continued into 2013. However, Iran's GDP started to grow positively again in 2014 by 3% due to the ongoing negotiations of P5+1 countries with Iran's government regarding the suspension of its nuclear activity, during which time, certain sanctions against foreign businesses trading with Iran were lifted. In 2015 and 2016, the continuous growth of Iran's GDP was predicted at rates of 0.6% and



1.3%, respectively.

Figure 3. The following image provides a picture of Iran's GDP fluctuation from 2007 to 2016 (Iran Primer, 2015).

In July 2015, after 20 months of intensive negotiations, the P5+1 countries reached an historic deal with Iran that prevented Iran from creating and/or obtaining a nuclear weapon. The deal is also known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). According to the White House (2015), the deal cut off all of Iran's pathways to nuclear weapons; it also put in place vigorous measures that are crucial to ensuring that Iran cannot pursue a weapon and will provide unconditional access to its nuclear sites for inspection purposes. The deal guaranteed that sanctions can be put back into place if Iran violates the deal or stops cooperating regarding its nuclear activities at any time.

According to the White House (2015), the P5+1 negotiations with Iran had five precise goals, and Iran's negotiation team had agreed to all of them. The deal increased the time that it would take Iran to acquire enough material for one nuclear bomb from two to three months to at least a year. It reduced Iran's stockpiles of enriched uranium, which is crucial for the development of nuclear bombs. In addition, it reduced the number of installed centrifuges in Iranian nuclear power plants by two-thirds. The nuclear deal also prevented Iran from producing weapons-grade plutonium. Lastly, the deal would track Iran's nuclear activities with robust transparency and inspections.

The nuclear deal framework was a major milestone for both Iran and the US, as the two nations had cut political ties for nearly 34 years. However, why Iran agreed to the deal and what Iran gained from this deal are equally important questions to ask that require further analysis. As mentioned above, Iran's economy gradually declined and spiralled downwards when faced with sanctions imposed by the United States and its allies. The economic sanctions targeted the oil industry and monetary transactions linked to the Central Bank of Iran. With foreign businesses forbidden to conduct business with Iran, the government of Iran faced the severe dilemma of

finding ways to sell its oil. Inside Iran, the inflation rate rose substantially, while the value of Iran's currency depreciated considerably; consequently, the Iranian people faced severe financial challenges trying to purchase daily necessities due to a massive increase in prices. In such a hostile environment, Iran's government agreed to negotiate and convinced the P5+1 to lift the sanctions in exchange for stopping its nuclear development activities. To answer the second question of what Iran's government gained from the deal, exactly how much money was released as part of the negotiations is not clear. However, the figure has been reported as being more than \$100 billion, which provided significant economic relief to both the Iranian government and the Iranian people, respectively.

2.2 Journalistic Norms in Iran and the United States

This thesis focuses on autonomy and objectivity as two journalistic norms that are central to American journalistic practice, but yet are troublesome in Iran. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Iran's political system is not a democracy, and it is therefore not surprising that journalistic norms in Iran are comprehensively different than those in the US. While in the US, the norms of autonomy and objectivity influence journalistic practice a great deal, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to operate freely as a journalist in Iran. Generally, *autonomy* in journalism practices refers to the freedom to speak and publish, and the absence of interference from sociopolitical institutions in those processes, notably from the state and the market. Simply put, journalists must have considerable latitude in investigating, reporting, and criticizing public figures, and ought to be free from all forms of censorship. In order for journalists to be autonomous, the absence of institutional pressures and the fear of persecution from the state is imperative.

According to Reich and Hanitzsch (2013), journalistic autonomy can be restricted in two ways, externally and internally:

The external dimension is related to coercive forces restricting the political autonomy of the news organization, including policy, state censorship, legislation and regulation.

Internal restrictions relate to journalists' freedom to make decisions free from management pressures, commercial factors and forces inside the news environment. (as cited in Sjøvaag, 2013, p. 156)

In Iran's case, the "external dimension" applies significantly due to the semi-authoritarian political structure of the country. As the dominant ideology, Islam has been blended into the political system of Iran after the 1979 Revolution, in which all people must listen to and follow the directions of the Supreme Leader closely. The rationale behind this comes from Islamic beliefs that the Supreme Leader in a Muslim country is the only person qualified to show the path to salvation. In such a religious country, if journalists report something against the Supreme Leader, they can face dire consequences; this is because nobody in this ideology is religiously qualified enough to challenge the decisions of Ali Khamenei due to his religious standing in Iran's political structure.

In Iran, then, journalists encounter many systematic restraints from the government, and must function under strict censorship rules. The Islamic Revolutionary Court's closed-door hearings and denial of access to attorneys have restricted journalists' autonomy severely, to the extent that the government can interpret any journalistic activity as treason against Islamic values, which can ultimately lead to a lengthy prison sentence. According to Abbas Ghanbari Baghestan (2013), the law surrounding media is unclear:

The lack of clear definition of “media offense” and “media court” has exposed the law of press to broad interpretation and arbitrary application in its sweeping prohibition of “discourse harmful to the principles of Islam” or to the “public interest.” The terms of the Press Law give little meaningful guidance to journalists and editors, and sometimes resulted in self-censorship, unequal exerting of law. (p. 252)

In addition, according to the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance (MCIG, 1979), any media or newspaper outlet must first obtain permission from the government before operating legally. Iran's government also strictly filters the Internet and other communication channels. The government's pressure has led to a negative view of journalism – and journalists – in Iran. The government shuts down any media outlet that refuses to follow the strict guidelines defined and imposed by the MCIG, and journalists are under constant pressure by top government officials and Islamic security forces to publish pro-governmental news to the public.

There have been moments in Iran's history where journalists tried to write independently. For instance, in 1997, after Mohammad Khatami became Iran's President, many reform newspapers developed, which became known as a journalistic ‘spring’ in Iran. However, the situation did not last long due to the non-democratic structure of Iran and Ali Khamenei's negative views of reform newspapers. Khamenei called reformist newspapers an “enemy base” – and that was sufficient enough for the judiciary system to shut down these reformist newspapers. (BBC, 2004, p. 1). One of the famous reformist journalists in Iran, Mashallah Shamsolvaezin, who was arrested and imprisoned during the crackdown on reform newspapers, has an interesting observation of journalism practices and the political structure of Iran¹:

¹ In this thesis, the author has translated all direct quotations from Iranian sources into English from Farsi. Rather than including the original, untranslated Farsi quote as text in the document or as a footnote – which would monopolize large portions of text and affect the readability of the thesis for audiences unfamiliar with the language – only the translated version is included in-text.

Newspapers in Iran are shutting down due to what is called the “threat to National Security.” In Third World countries, that is the sole justification used to limit journalists and the free press. In Iran, we do not have a specific definition for “National Security.” I have always said that working as a journalist in Iran is like walking through a landmine field. However, we are blind in the landmine field. The difference between journalism freedom in Iran and the Western countries is not that the redline exists only in Iran, and not in Western countries. In the Western world, the redline exists too. However, the difference is that in the Western world, there is a map for the landmine field so that journalists are aware of it. In Iran, the landmine field map is in the hands of those who insert landmines, not in the hands of journalists. Thus, whenever the State feels threatened by journalists, it brings up the issue of National Security to take legal action against them. (Mehdizadeh, 2016, p. 3)

By contrast, in a democratic structure, journalists can seek the truth more easily, produce credible news without fearing state punishment, and can strive for objectivity in their journalistic practice without facing severe admonition and/or disciplinary action by government officials. In the United States, the official regulation of media content is minimal and, compared to Iran, has a diverse media landscape and strong legal protections for freedom of expression. American journalists report on, criticize, and challenge people in authority freely. However, this is not to say that American media operates completely autonomously. Reich and Hanitzsh's (2013) definition of *internal restrictions* certainly applies to the United States; for instance, journalists may face commercial pressure, pressure from management, or other institutionalized pressures to report news a certain way. This is a point that has received significant academic attention (Herman & Chomsky, 1988; McChesney, 2004). Despite these internal restrictions, according to

Reich and Hanitzsch (2013), overall, “journalists working in Western countries or full democracies perceived more autonomy than colleagues in flawed, authoritarian or hybrid regimes” (as cited in Sjøvaag, 2013, p. 149). In summary, then, because of the democratic system and laws that protect journalists and the free press, journalists in the US are not subjected to the same type of strict governmental rules that journalists face in Iran. However, American journalists do face commercial and institutional pressures that may affect their ability to be autonomous.

Turning now to objectivity, the notion of objective reporting has a long history in American culture. For instance, in 1931, Walter Lippmann, who worked as an editor of the *New York World*, called the move toward objectivity a ‘revolution’:

The most impressive event of the last decade in the history of newspapers has been the demonstration that the objective, orderly, and comprehensive presentation of news is a far more successful type of journalism today than the dramatic, disorderly, episodic type. (Strekfuss, 1990, p. 981)

Objectivity can be defined as, “(1) truthfulness, a commitment to reporting information that is factually correct; (2) neutrality, striving for fairness, balance and impartiality; and (3) detachment, separating ‘fact from comment’” (Calcutt & Hamond, 2011, as cited in Hunter, 2015, p. 276). However, the notion of objectivity has been the subject of much scrutiny: is it even possible to be objective when reporting, and is it desirable? One critique of objectivity is that it is a myth that is impossible to achieve, as news workers will make decisions about what stories they deem important, and then exercise their own judgment as to how a story should be reported. A second critique is that objectivity encourages restricted formats and the superficial reporting of official facts. Finally, some argue that a non-objective press, where a variety of thoughts and

views compete in a marketplace of ideas, is more desirable, as it would provide readers with more choice in reading different news and viewpoints, and can thus better serve democracy.

Additionally, the notion of objectivity, which has roots in North American culture, does not necessarily translate well to other countries. As Maras (2013) describes,

The American model of objectivity is by far the best known professional model worldwide, yet it has too many flaws to be used as an object of imitation. The ideal of objectivity, central to the model, has been incisively critiqued...and so has the possibility of value neutrality ... Across the Atlantic, the objectivity norm has not taken root and journalists preferred championing favoured values and ideas. (p. 209)

In a non-democratic structure such as Iran, it would be both difficult and dangerous for journalists to subscribe to the North American norm of objectivity while, at the same time, working under tremendous pressure from government officials. As Maras (2013) explains, “the Western professional ideal of objectivity, which assumes an institutional separation of broadcasting and the state ... does not exist in every country” (p. 203).

In addition, cultural norms play a crucial role in how journalists adopt the norm of objectivity. In Iran, Islamic culture and practices have either direct or indirect effects on the sociopolitical structure of the country. Journalists who work in newspapers and state-controlled media must adopt the Islamic norms of the government. As an example, in a meeting with *IRIB* employees, Ayatollah Khamenei said, “Our people have special ideological beliefs about religion, family, the issue of ‘man and woman,’ independence, countering foreigners, Islamic democracy and various cultural issues, and the other countries are making efforts to tamper with or change these beliefs” (Khamenei, 2004, p. 1). The meaning behind his speech was that journalists and the press must adopt Islamic norms and heed the rulings of the Supreme Leader

unequivocally. As another example of how the news media is viewed in Iranian society, a senior official from the MCIG divided Iran's newspapers into four categories: (1) *progressive and goal-oriented papers*, which had a correct understanding of society and dealt with sensitive social issues; (2) *neutral papers*, whose presence did not make a difference; (3) *superficial publications*, such as commercial sports newspapers; and (4) *sleepers*, which are affiliated with the country's intellectuals and whose papers would write about the most banal issues in the most remote corners of the world (Shahidi, 2007, p. 52). For Iran's government, progressive and goal-oriented papers have the utmost value due to their adherence to Khamenei's views. Not surprisingly, other papers, including the neutral and sleeper papers, have no value in this Islamic country (Shahidi, 2007).

As Shahidi (2007) writes, laws that govern the media in Iran are very strict: "[S]ix press laws have appeared in Iran in less than a century, each drawn up in highly polarized political conditions, and almost always seen by the press as being aimed at controlling, rather than safeguarding, its freedom" (p. 135). As an example of the control Khamenei holds over the press in Iran, during the parliamentary election held in Iran on February 18, 2000, reformists won the majority of the seats, which was perceived as an astonishing victory for the former reformist President, Mohammad Khatami. One of the key events of that year was the fact that the reformist "parliament called for a review of the restrictive Press Law passed by the previous parliament and appealed to the judiciary to reopen newspapers, which had been closed since April 2000" (Khiabany, 2010, p. 112). The reformist parliament wanted to discuss and vote on amendments, which would have made the closure of newspapers before any fair trial illegal. However, Ali Khamenei, who has the final say in all state matters, sent a letter to parliament and forced them to abandon the debate. Khamenei wrote,

If the enemy infiltrates our press, this will be a big danger to the country's security and the people's religious beliefs. I do not deem it right to keep silent. The present press law has succeeded to a point to prevent this big plague. The proposed bill is not legitimate, nor in the interests of the system and the revolution. (Khiabany, 2010, p. 113)

The effect of this letter was swift: the elected reformist parliament shut down the debate because the Speaker of the House argued that Khamenei had absolute power based on Iran's Constitution, and Members of Parliament must follow his directions closely. The above example thus illustrates how Khamenei favours restrictive press laws and will intervene when he deems necessary. Hence, expecting journalists to practice objective reporting in such a hostile environment is likely impossible.

Theory

In this thesis, Anthony Giddens' (1984) and Vincent Mosco's (2009) structuration theory, along with Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky's (1988) propaganda model, are used to examine how journalism is practiced in both Iran and America. Additionally, this thesis relies on framing analysis (Entman, 1993) in order to examine how the nuclear deal was framed in both Iran and the United States.

2.3 Structuration theory. *Structuration theory* deals with the relationship between agency and structure, and the complex interactions between the two. According to Mosco (2009), *structuration* is the following:

[A] process by which structures are constituted out of human agency, even as they provide the very "medium" of that constitution. Social life is comprised of the mutual constitution of structure and agency; put simply, society and the individual create one another. (p. 185)

Likewise, according to Giddens (1984),

Structure is regarded as rules and resources recursively implicated in social reproduction; institutionalized features of social systems have structural properties in the sense that relationships are stabilized across time and space ... Social systems are organized hierarchically and laterally within societal totalities, the institutions of which form articulated ensembles. (p. 170)

This thesis uses structuration theory in its discussion of journalistic norms of objectivity and autonomy, as well as the way the nuclear deal was framed, in order to explore the sociopolitical relations of power between government officials and journalists. As Giddens (1984) writes,

Rules cannot be conceptualized apart from resources, which refer to the modes whereby transformative relations are actually incorporated into the production and reproduction of social practices. Structural properties thus express forms of domination and power. (p. 18)

This is critically important, because in non-democratic structures like Iran, most social rules are interpreted by the government and are based on Islamic beliefs, which are vastly different than the rules in the United States. Structuration theory posits that there are rules which journalists in both Iran and America are bound to follow in their journalism practices. The relationship between these rules and the political structure will clearly illustrate the differences that exist between the journalism that the *IRNA* and the *New York Times* produce.

This thesis also examines the kind of agency journalists are able to exert in their work. Giddens (1984) argues that human agency and social structures are in a recursive relationship, and it is the repetition of the acts of individual agents that reproduce the structure. This means that there is a social structure – traditions, institutions, moral codes, and established ways of

doing things – but it also means that these can be changed when people start to ignore them, replace them, or reproduce them differently (Gauntlette, 2002). Therefore, as a matter of repeating the same journalistic practices in Iran, the lack of autonomy is shaped and legitimized. At the same time, journalists are forced into these practices due to overarching political and cultural norms. For this reason, structuration theory is suitable to contextualize why journalists in Iran do not necessarily subscribe to objectivity – a North American journalistic norm that does not work in a non-democratic structure with severe press restrictions.

2.4 The propaganda model. In comparison to Iran, journalists appear to be much more autonomous in America. However, in the case of the United States, what is required is a careful consideration of how autonomy may be restricted less overtly – for instance, by examining who journalists rely on as sources, and what voices might be left out when only certain sources are made available to journalists. To this point, it is important to look at Herman and Chomsky's (1988) *propaganda model* and its concept of systematic biases in the mass media. The propaganda model contains five different filters that determine the type of news that is presented in news media. The fundamental argument put forward in the propaganda model is that structural, political-economic elements influence overall patterns of media performance.

In Herman and Chomsky's argument, the third filter – *sourcing mass-media news* – is most pertinent to this thesis. In this filter, news media relies too heavily on official sources. Furthermore, Herman and Chomsky (1988) clearly argue that,

If ... the powerful are able to fix the premises of discourse, to decide what the general populace is allowed to see, hear and think about, and to 'manage' public opinion by regular propaganda campaigns, the standard [liberal-pluralist] view of how the media system works is at serious odds with reality. (p. xi)

The propaganda model argues that reporters perceive officials of the government and corporations as credible sources. As Herman and Chomsky (1988) state,

Newsworkers are predisposed to treat bureaucratic accounts as factual because news personnel participate in upholding a normative order of authorized knowers in the society. Reporters operate with the attitude that officials ought to know what it is their job to know ... In particular, a newsworker will recognize an official's claim to knowledge not merely as a claim, but as a credible, competent piece of knowledge. This amounts to a moral division of labor; officials have and give the facts; reporters merely get them. (p. 19)

There has been critique of the propaganda model. Lang and Lang (2004), for instance, observe that the media covers and scrutinizes the corporate scandals and misdeeds of both the United States and its allies. Indeed, there are numerous examples of this, such as when journalists uncovered the Watergate scandal, and, more recently, when many newspapers criticized the United States' war with Iraq. Lang and Lang (2004) believe that American journalists reported freely on scandals and wars without pressure from government officials. In response to this claim, Herman and Chomsky (2010) have this rebuttal:

Since we focus on how the available evidence was selected and interpreted, we were very definitely concerned with how newsworthy facts are located, who the media rely on as sources, how critically they treat them, what forces determine what is newsworthy in the first place – and how stories are inflated, repeated or dropped, and how politically convenient fabrications may survive and even become institutionalized. Our model deals with these matters explicitly in describing sourcing processes, flak, ideology and other matters. *But we put our main emphasis on the empirical results of media selection*

processes, which are crucial facts about the media. (as cited in Mullen & Klaehn, 2010, p. 222)

The purpose of using the third filter in this thesis is to contextualize how often official sources, in both America and Iran, are used in reporting the nuclear deal to the public. In this thesis, sources that journalists used to cover the nuclear deal have been analyzed in order to see how the use of these sources framed the news coverage. In sum, the idea of the third filter has been used to contextualize what the researcher finds about how much, or how little, journalists rely on official sources in both countries.

2.5 Framing theory and analysis. A *frame* is a social framework, or a mental schema, that allows users to organize experiences. According to Goffman (1974), *framing* is to form an answer to the question, “what is it that’s going on here?” (p. 8). Framing theory is useful in journalism studies because the media has a great capacity to generate and change social frameworks in society.

Entman (1993) describes framing theory as involving *selection* and *salience*:

To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, casual interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for item described. (p.

52)

In addition, Tolley (2016) defines a *frame* as, “the angle, schema, or narrative arc that journalists use to highlight one or more aspects of an event, issue or actor ... frames refer to the elements that are included, excluded, emphasized, or downplayed when a story is reported on” (p. 18). For Entman (1993), *repetition*, the different location of information in the texts and the association with certain social and cultural symbols, is a key strategy employed by the media to give greater

or lesser emphasis to an aspect of reality. According to Van Gorp (2007), a *frame* is an invitation to read a story in a particular way; this invitation is often overlooked because framing is part of culture, so the construction process is hidden. This does not mean, however, that there is only one way to explain things. On the contrary, in any given culture, there are more frames than those selected to represent reality and echo truth to the general population in the narrated story. *Media frames* can be described as the central organizing idea for news content that provides a context. In their work, journalists suggest what the issue is through the use of words, which events they emphasize, what they exclude and what they elaborate on.

Frames in political news have important implications for political communication. According to Entman (1993), “frames call attention to some aspects of reality while obscuring other elements, which might lead readers to have different reactions. Politicians seeking support are thus compelled to compete with each other and with journalists over news frames” (p. 55). As Entman (1993) points out, just because a journalist claims to be objective does not mean that they are not inadvertently framing an event or news story:

Journalists may follow the rules for “objective” reporting and yet convey a dominant framing of the news text that prevents most audience members from making a balanced assessment of a situation. Now, because they lack a common understanding of framing, journalists frequently allow the most skillful media manipulators to impose their dominant frames on the news. (p. 57)

Framing political news stories is the process by which a journalist defines and constructs a political issue or spreads public controversy. In political frames, journalists create new political orders in which news stories either support certain political ideologies or involve multiple ideologies and political opinions concurrently. Texts in political frames can make information

more salient by connecting them to cultural symbols. Edelman (1993) highlights the way that frames exert their power through the selective description and omission of the features of a situation:

The character, causes and consequences of any phenomenon become radically different as changes are made in what is prominently displayed, what is repressed and especially in how observations are classified...The social world is...a kaleidoscope of potential realities, any of which can be readily evoked by altering the ways in which observations are framed and categorized. (p. 232)

This thesis uses framing theory to show how journalists for both the *IRNA* and the *New York Times* framed Iran's nuclear deal with P5+1 countries, paying particular attention to what aspects of the deal were emphasized and how the deal was characterized.

Chapter Three: Methodology and Findings

This thesis focuses on how the public was informed by both English and Farsi language newspapers during a four-week period: the two weeks before and after Iran's deal was signed by P5+1 countries in July 2015. Formal negotiations regarding Iran's nuclear deal program began with the adoption of the Joint Plan of Action, an interim agreement signed between Iran and the P5+1 countries in November of 2013. For the next 20 months, Iran and the P5+1 countries engaged in negotiations, and in April 2015, they agreed on a nuclear deal framework. The final agreement was signed on July 14, 2015.

This thesis mobilizes the methodologies of both textual and framing analysis. It presents a textual analysis of selected news articles in order to determine the frames produced by American and Iranian journalists alike. As part of the framing analysis, this research analyzes the types of articles published, and the diversity of sources used and presented within the coverage. The analysis also concentrates on attitudes, thoughts, and direct quotes published by the two news organizations, and whether any special consideration was given to people in authority. For example, did the *IRNA* mostly cover Ali Khamenei and his supporters' views, or did they adopt a balanced approach by covering various thoughts and beliefs about the deal? Did the *New York Times*'s articles mostly cover the thoughts and concerns of Democrats and White House officials, or did they adopt a more balanced approach by covering the ideas of Republicans and opposition groups, as well?

This thesis examines both the news and opinion coverage in the *New York Times* and the *IRNA* of the nuclear deal. These newspapers were selected because they are widely read and influential in their respective countries, and are seen to have had robust coverage on the nuclear deal. Each news outlet also represents a distinct political and ideological perspective in each

country. For instance, the *IRNA* is the major state-funded newspaper that publishes Ayatollah Khamenei's views closely in Iran; conversely, the *New York Times* has a longstanding history in American culture and operates independently. For this thesis, certain words were entered into search databases in order to retrieve relevant articles that covered the nuclear deal within the specific timeframe that this thesis concentrated on. The word search to locate articles in the *IRNA*'s archive was typed in Farsi and consisted of “انرژی هسته ای” [Nuclear Power], “۱+۵” [P5+1], “برجام” [Nuclear Deal], “خامنه ای و برجام” [Khamenei and Nuclear Deal], “توافق هسته ای” [Nuclear Deal], “آمریکا و برجام” [United States and Nuclear Deal], while the *New York Times* search in English consisted of the same.

3.1 Textual Analysis

In qualitative analysis, data can be in-depth descriptions of circumstances, people, events, thoughts, beliefs, and, sometimes, direct quotes from people who have experienced or are concerned about a particular phenomenon (Creswell, 1998). Cultural theorist Stuart Hall (1975) defined *texts* as, “literary and visual constructs, employing symbolic means, shaped by rules, conventions and traditions intrinsic to the use of language in its widest sense” (p. 17). In this thesis, the data – text – refers to written words only, as photographs and other visual elements of the news articles were not studied. In qualitative research, researchers attempt to understand the relationship between texts, culture, and society, which can include examining the sociopolitical structure under which texts were produced, if it is necessary. As Brennen (2012) describes,

While some qualitative researchers identify multiple ideological positions in texts, others focus on understanding how dominant ideological power relations within race, class, age, gender and ethnicity are encoded in texts. Maintaining the texts help to construct our knowledge, values, and beliefs, and reinforce our common sense understandings, these

researchers examine the political, economic, and/or ideological perspectives that shape texts. In other words, these researchers understand that power can operate within the realm of ideas, and so they see texts as sources of power. (p. 202)

Brennan describes textual analysis as an, “act of interpretation of both the surface meanings and the underlying intentions of a text” (p. 163). According to Brennan:

When we do textual analysis, we evaluate the many meanings found in texts and we try to understand how written, visual, and spoken language helps us to create our social realities. Rather than only judging the strengths, weaknesses, accuracy or inaccuracy of texts, qualitative researchers look at the social practices, representations, assumptions and stories about our lives that are revealed in texts. (p. 194)

Furisch (2009) concurs that textual analysis allows, “the researcher to discern latent meaning, but also implicit patterns, assumptions and omissions of the text” (p. 241).

The textual analysis began by identifying themes in each article. Themes that appeared most and least frequently were identified. The analysis also consisted of examining quotations, looking at who was quoted in the articles and the sources used. According to Yang and Miller (2008), this form of analysis, “is the systematization of text analysis. It analyses the form and substance of communication. Underlying meanings and ideas are revealed through analyzing patterns in elements of the text, such as words or phrases” (p. 689). The themes that were identified were then used to identify major overarching frames that were produced.

3.2 Framework Analysis

As Srivastava and Thomson (2009) describe:

Framework analysis is a qualitative method that is better adapted to research that has specific questions, a limited time frame, a pre-designed sample and a priori issues. In the analysis, data is sifted, charted and sorted in accordance with key issues and themes using five steps: familiarization; identifying a thematic framework; indexing; charting and mapping and interpretation. (p. 72)

Each of the five steps outlined by Srivastava and Thomson were employed rigorously in this thesis in order to identify the frames presented by journalists in both countries. Firstly, *familiarization* refers to the process where the researcher becomes familiarized with the transcripts of the data collected. Here, the researcher becomes aware of key ideas and recurrent themes, and makes note of them accordingly. Secondly, *identifying a thematic framework* refers to the process where key issues, concepts, and themes that were expressed by the participants can be used to filter and classify the data. Thirdly, *indexing* refers to collected data that match with certain themes and are applied in textual analysis. Fourthly, *charting* means that the data is lifted from its original textual context, and is placed in a format that consists of the headings and subheadings that were drawn out from the thematic framework. Lastly, *mapping and interpretation* involves the analysis of the key characteristics as they are laid out in the charts. In this stage, the general context of the news frames is extracted.

In this thesis, there were various ways that both English and Farsi were used to make both direct and indirect points to readers. An in-depth textual analysis of written texts using the five-step analysis from Srivastava and Thomson (2009) produced frames that revealed

overwhelmingly that both countries saw each other as non-trustworthy enemies. These frames are expanded upon in the next section.

Findings

This section is divided in two separate periods. The first period is dedicated to articles that were published during the first two weeks of July 2015 (from July 01 to July 15) before Iran's nuclear deal with the P5+1 was signed. The second period is dedicated to articles published during the last two weeks of July 2015 (from July 15 to July 31), after the nuclear was signed and agreed upon by all involved countries. The main purpose of doing this was to analyze how Iran and the United States were painted and presented to audiences after many years of hostility toward each other, and to compare the before and after period around the signing of the deal.

Table 1 and Table 2 below indicate the number of articles and the sections from which they were retrieved from each newspaper's archive.

Table 1

Number of Articles Found in the New York Times for Iran's Nuclear Deal with P5+1

The New York Times	Iran's Nuclear Deal with P5+1	July 2015
Total Numbers of Articles Analyzed	All retrieved from the <i>New York Times</i> archive	40
Number of Articles in the First Two Weeks of July 2015	<i>The New York Times</i>	23
Number of Articles in the Last Two Weeks of July 2015	<i>The New York Times</i>	17
The First Two Weeks of July 2015	Middle East Section	21
The Last Two Weeks of July 2015		13
The First Two Weeks of July 2015	Politics Section	1
The Last Two Weeks of July 2015		2
The First Two Weeks of July 2015	Opinion/Editorial Section	1

The Last Two Weeks of July 2015		2
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Table 2

Number of Articles Found in the IRNA for Iran's Nuclear Deal with P5+1²

The Islamic Republic News Agency	Iran's Nuclear Deal With P5+1	July 2015
Numbers of Articles Analyzed	All retrieved from the <i>Islamic Republic News Agency</i> Archive	50
The First Two Weeks of July 2015	General News Section	7
The Last Two Weeks of July 2015		34
Numbers of Articles Repeated in the Last Two Weeks of July 2015	General News Section	9

The *New York Times* News Coverage Analysis Before the Nuclear Deal

This section of the study presents an analysis of the *New York Times's* nuclear deal coverage during the first two weeks of July 2015, summarized in Table 3 below.

Table 3

Frames and Themes Identified in the NYT Before the Nuclear Deal

Frames	Major Themes	Minor Themes
Iran is an untrustworthy enemy that is hostile toward the US	Iran is a repressive regime that is home to radicals	Iran is willing to compromise
	Iran is unpredictable and untrustworthy	America is irrational
	Iran is secretive	America is strong

Major Themes

Below is a description of the three major themes highlighted in the textual analysis of the *New York Times* in this study, as summarized above in Table 3.

² The *IRNA* published 9 identical articles twice in the last two weeks of July 2015. Thus, the *IRNA* analysis of the nuclear deal for the month of July 2015 produced more articles than the *NYT*.

Iran is a repressive regime that is home to radicals. During the period before the signing of the nuclear deal, one of the most prominent repeated themes in the *New York Times* news coverage was that Iran is a repressive regime that is home to radicals who are silencing the majority. One example of this major theme came in an article written by Thomas Erdbrink (July 1, 2015) titled, "Divide on Iran Nuclear Deal: Hard-Liners vs. Invisible People." In the title, "hard-liners" referred to Khamenei's supporters in Iran, while, "invisible people" referred to the Iranian people who supported the nuclear deal. The article squarely focused on Iranians as radicals, as the story began by describing a group of about 200 Iranian hard-liners gathered at a rally against the nuclear deal around the Freedom Tower in Tehran. It described speakers rallying against, "the devil, a.k.a. the United States and its "oppressive actions" (p. 1). Erdbrink wrote that, "The usual chants of "Death to America" could be heard from participants at the rally, who "called for a 'good nuclear deal'" (p. 1). Erdbrink's article mentioned that hard-liners were desperately looking to hold on to the lingering sentiments of the Islamic Revolution of 1979, during which America was characterized as a "great Satan" (p. 2). The article's choice of the term "hard-liners" indicated that these perceived radicals in Iran were rigid, inflexible, and not rational. It also painted them as fear-mongering, such as in this quote from Ali Reza Zakani, a former Revolutionary Guards Corps official who was present at the gathering: "Oh lofty Iranians, wake up! Don't trust the foreigners" (p. 2).

The article also touched on the theme of Iran being a repressive regime by turning its focus to the "invisible people" in Iran who supported the nuclear deal. It contained the story of a 35-year-old factory worker named Ali, who had difficulty making ends meet despite working double shifts at his job. This, Ali said in the article, was due to crippling sanctions that had paralyzed Iran's economy. Ali is quoted as saying – referring to the rally – "These people do not

represent me; they are 200 out of 12 million” (p. 2). The clear message behind this story is that most Iranians living in Tehran supported the nuclear deal, while only a small margin of people were actually against it; however, these supporters were scared to speak out for fear of punishment. For instance, Ali requested that his last name be withheld from the article in order to avoid retribution.

That said, Erdbrink did quote some people by name, such as Saeed Laylaz, a political activist, who said, “There is a sea of invisible people out there who seem voiceless, but they strongly yearn for a deal” (p. 3). The article also quoted an Iranian 23-year-old interior design student named Monir Davari as saying, “I want a deal because it will mean we will become less isolated ... I just want to be in touch with the world” (p. 3).

Erdbrink's article also demonstrated that in Iran's news media the debate regarding the nuclear deal was stilted and those in favour of a deal were treading far more carefully than the critics were. Unsurprisingly, Erdbrink noted in his article that one of Iran's hard-liners, Hussein Shariatmadari – the Editor-in-Chief of the Kayhan newspaper, who is directly appointed by Ali Khamenei – stated in his own newspaper that, “There will be no nuclear deal. Like in the past 12 years of negotiations it will fail again in the final phase” (p. 3).

Erdbrink's article demonstrated that ordinary Iranians were yearning for a nuclear deal in exchange for a more predictable and stable future. Conversely, the hard-liners wanted “no deal” (p. 4) with countries it considered untrustworthy, like the United States and its allies. This article thus represented both views on the deal, but the clear theme that appeared throughout is that Iran is home to radicals who are repressive and create a culture of fear.

Similar themes were raised in an article by Erdbrink a few days later titled, “Iran's Hard-Liners Sharpen Attacks on U.S. as Nuclear Talks Continue” (July 8, 2015). Again, using the term

“hard-liner” this article painted radicals as violent people who should be feared for their desire to destroy America. It focused heavily on Khamenei’s supporters, who continued to take to the streets to chant “Death to America” and burn American flags, as the United States and Iran came closer to signing the nuclear accord. The article quoted the influential Ayatollah Ali Jannati, who told a Farsi news agency the following regarding anti-nuclear deal protests: “It goes far beyond (the deal). We also march against the arrogant powers, Europe, and particularly, the United States” (p. 1). The article also quoted the anti-American rally organizer Alireza Mataji:

What will be left of our revolution, of our position in the Islamic world if we start relations with a country devoted to oppressing us and many others?.... We will not let America destroy us by an iron fist covered in a velvet glove. (p. 2)

Within this article, the *New York Times* noted that Iran’s state-controlled television still reminded its viewers every day of all the “evil acts and ‘crimes’” (p. 3) committed by the United States. The television channels, for instance, were said to broadcast the official message of the founder of the Islamic Republic, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, which is: “America needs to be punched in the mouth” (p. 3). The article finished by quoting the preferred slogans of Iran’s Coordination Council of Islamic Propaganda website: “Please shout the messages of all the times, which are ‘Death to America,’ ‘Death to Israel,’ ‘Death to global arrogance,” and, ‘Death to international Zionism’” (p. 4).

Yet another example of the theme that Iran is home to radicals came a few days later in an article titled “Iran Opens Campaign to Lay Blame on U.S. if Nuclear Talks Fail” (Erdbrink, July 10, 2015). The article was published on Quds Day, or Jerusalem Day, in Tehran, and while the article partly focused on how talks were stalled, the focus was also on the annual

demonstrations against Israel and how protestors chanted, "Death to America" and, "Death to Israel."

This type of reporting, which focussed on anti-American sentiments, was common during the period leading up to the signing of the nuclear deal. Even articles that were devoted primarily to dealing with the intricacies of negotiations would inevitably focus, at some point, on anti-American, radical sentiments coming from Iranians, including both leaders and people 'on the street.' For example, an article a few days later, which detailed some of the major sticking points in the way of a deal also focused on anti-American rhetoric coming from Iranian leaders (Gordon, July 12, 2015). The article's focus was on John Kerry's main concern that Iran was insisting on lifting the ban on shipments of conventional weapons; however, it also drew the reader's attention to radical anti-American sentiments, such as this quote from Ali Khamenei:

The struggle with the arrogant power does not end after a deal, it will continue. If we do not struggle with the arrogant power, we are not following the precepts of the holy Quran. America is the quintessential arrogant power. Be ready for struggle with the arrogant power. (p. 2)

An article published a few days later, continued to paint Iran as a repressive nation, focussing on its aggressive nature (Hubbard, July 14, 2015). The article quoted Saudi journalist Jamal Kashoggi as saying the following:

Iran is an aggressor. It has ambitions and plans that it is implementing in the region, and it is using force, not diplomacy. Iran under sanctions was a pain in the neck for the Saudis, and it will be more of a pain in the neck without sanctions. There is no sign that Iranians are going to change and bring peace. (p. 2)

The article also reminds readers that Iran supports terrorist groups in the Middle East region, further emphasizing that Iran is home to radicals: “[Iran] spent years investing in proxy forces such as Hezbollah in Lebanon and Shiite militias in Iraq, groups whose rallies are punctuated by chants of, ‘death to America’ and, ‘death to Israel’” (p. 2).

Iran is unpredictable and untrustworthy. The second major theme that became apparent in an analysis of the *New York Times* coverage of the nuclear deal was that Iran was painted as being unpredictable and untrustworthy. For example, in the opinion pages, Friedman’s piece (July 1, 2015) titled, “A Good Bad Deal?” warned that the nuclear deal, “could be as big, if not bigger (than) an earthquake in the Middle East as the U.S. invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq” (p. 3). Friedman writes that, “An Iran that is unshackled from sanctions and gets an injection of over \$100 billion in cash will be even more superior in power than all of its Arab neighbours” (p. 3). Here, Friedman means that lifting the economic sanctions could begin a confrontation between Iran’s Shiites government against the Sunni Arabs, and could exacerbate Iran’s belligerence toward Israel. The subtext in this article is that Iran will be untrustworthy and unpredictable if it gets too powerful. The article implies that the American government must be extremely cautious in dealing with Iran because a “good bad deal” could easily start a regional war. The purpose of this article was to send a cautionary signal to the White House indicating that a restricted nuclear deal might not be effective – as Ali Khamenei was continuing to insist that Iran would not allow international inspections of any military sites that were suspected of enriching uranium for nuclear programs.

As negotiations progressed, the majority of articles pointed to the idea that Iran could not be trusted, referencing past behaviour. An article a week earlier outlined Khamenei’s demand that, “all economic, financial and banking sanctions, implemented either by the United Nations

Security Council, the United States Congress or the administration, must be lifted immediately when the deal is signed” (Erdbrink & Sanger, July 2015, p. 3). In this article, Khamenei went on to criticize the verification mechanism imposed by the International Atomic Energy Agency:

We have said from the first place that we want cruel sanctions to be lifted ... You cannot ask us to fulfill our commitments and wait for the I.A.E.A.'s confirmation for removing the sanctions. We completely disagree with it. (p. 3)

However, throughout the article, it was also made very clear that Iran cannot be trusted to keep promises, pointing out that in April of 2015, Iran had agreed that it would not operate new, advanced centrifuges for more than a decade and yet, in this article, Khamenei is quoted as dishonouring that agreed-upon condition. Immediately after the previous statement, Khamenei promised to maintain an active nuclear program for peaceful purposes, stating that, “[f]reezing Iran’s research development for a long time, like 10 years or 12 years, is not acceptable” (p. 4).

Another article published a week later focussed on President Obama’s warning that he was prepared to walk away from any agreement that proposed a flimsy verification regime consisting only of a “few inspectors wandering around every once in a while” (p. 1). The article reported that Obama’s comments followed objections by Ali Khamenei to what he deemed as “highly intrusive inspections” (p. 1). The comments also “came at a moment when the White House was trying to respond to criticism by Republicans and a few Democrats that it was too eager to get the accord” (p. 1).

The theme of untrustworthiness appeared quite directly in the following sentences where Obama is quoted as saying that the deal is going to have to be rigorous as he references Iran’s track record:

Given past behavior on the part of Iran, that simply can't be a declaration by Iran and a few inspectors wandering around every once in a while.... That's going to have to be a serious, rigorous verification mechanism. And that, I think, is going to be the test as to whether we get a deal or not. (p. 2).

This statement is crucial, as Obama implied that both the past behaviour of Iran and Khamenei's objections had made it difficult for P5+1 countries to agree on a good deal with Iran and thus, Obama warned of his willingness to walk away from the negotiation table. The "past behaviour" of Iran is an indication that the American government did not see Iran as a "trustworthy" nation.

An article a few days later titled, "U.N. Nuclear Chief Is Optimistic About Iranian Cooperation on Review" (Gordon & Sanger, July 4, 2015) is interesting in that the headline and the first part of the article seemed to point towards optimism that a deal would be reached, however, by the end of the article the theme that Iran is untrustworthy had been reinstated. This article reiterated statements from the State Department, which condemned Iran's support of the President of Syria, Bashar-al-Assad and terrorist groups, citing a report that was written a month before that said that Iran was continuing "to provide arms, financing, training, and the facilitation of primarily Iraqi Shia and Afghan fighters to support the Assad regime's brutal crackdown" (p. 3). It went on to feature this report, writing that: "Iran had continued its terrorist-related activities by supporting Palestinian militants in Gaza: the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah; and Iraqi Shiite militias that carried out human rights abuses against Iraqi Sunnis" (p. 3). In sum, this article focused upon some of the obstacles during the nuclear deal negotiation for P5+1 countries with Iran and Israel's concerns that the nuclear deal would not stop the terrorist activities of Iran's government throughout the Middle East region.

A day later, another article by the same authors (Gordon & Erdbrink July 5, 2015) continued to focus on the theme of untrustworthiness. The article was headlined: "Iran Faces Hard Choices in Nuclear Talks, Kerry Warns" and the reporting detailed how Iran's negotiation team was struggling to settle some major issues primarily because they had not been able to secure the necessary flexibility from Ali Khamenei. The article made it clear that the United States was not willing to compromise, the subtext being that Iran is not a trustworthy nation, therefore a deal must be iron clad. In the article, Kerry is quoted as saying,

We are not yet where we need to be on several of the most difficult issues. We want a good agreement, only a good agreement, and we're not going to shave anywhere at the margins in order just to get an agreement. (p. 1).

This article also made a point of focusing on Republican senator, Bob Corker, the chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, who "accused Kerry of rushing to get a deal so that the congressional review period would not be extended to 60 days" (p.2). The theme of untrustworthiness appeared when Corker is quoted as saying, "I urged him (Kerry) to please take their time.... We have the issues of, are we going to have anytime, anywhere inspections? Will we know what their past military dimensions were? It's very important" (p. 3). The clear focus in this reporting was that the United States was pessimistic about Iran's trustworthiness and consistently reminded the Iranian negotiation team that the US was sceptical about whether the deal was being negotiated in good faith.

Iran is Secretive

Another prominent theme that appeared over these two weeks was that Iran is secretive. While this theme is closely related to the theme of untrustworthiness, it is highlighted as a separate theme because it focuses on ideas of lack of transparency. For instance, throughout the

reporting on the negotiations articles highlighted efforts by the American negotiators who were insisting Iran be open and transparent in allowing for inspections. The focus was on how difficult it was to get Iran on board. As an example, an article titled "Iran Nuclear Talks Could Stall Over Access to Scientists and Sites" highlighted how Iran was not cooperative and transparent in its nuclear development activities (Sanger & Gordon, July 1, 2015). The article detailed how the Chief of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Yukiya Amano, went to Tehran to meet with Iran's president and Iran's top national security officials to convince them to agree on a plan for "interviewing scientists," "examining their documents," and gaining "access" to a lengthy list of locations where the agency asserts that Iran's government conducted "nuclear-related experiments" (p. 1). The focus of this article indicated that Western countries perceived Iran as a secretive regime and thus needed access to all of these sites in order to check for themselves.

The article mentioned that Iran's Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, had repeatedly insisted that allowing foreigners to question his nation's scientists and visit military sites was "off limits" (p. 2). This theme of secretiveness was reinforced through a quote from Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister, Majid Ravanchi, who said:

We will not allow anybody to enter the military complexes. Because the document governing intrusive inspections by the I.A.E.A, called the additional Protocol, isn't about letting inspectors visit and have a free hand in wherever they want to go, whatever they want to do, and talking about whoever they want to talk to. (p. 3)

There was also a focus throughout the *New York Times* coverage on Iran's "opaque political system" (Gordon and Sanger, July 7, 2015), which was making it difficult for negotiations to take place.

In sum, throughout coverage, due to Iran's non-democratic political structure and its hostility toward the United States, the theme that Iran is secretive was a main concern for U.S. politicians.

Minor Themes

Iran will Compromise

Interestingly, while the themes of repression and radicalization, unpredictability, untrustworthiness, and secretiveness were paramount, there was also a recurring minor theme that despite Iran's resistance to the deal it was willing to compromise in its nuclear development activities in order to get relief from crippling sanctions. For example, Mohammad Javad Zarif, the chief Iranian negotiator, is quoted as saying: "No deadline, perhaps, but plenty of urgency" (Gordon & Stranger, July 7, 2015, p. 2). The urgency he referred to is the need to be done quickly in order to lift the sanctions on oil and financial institutions. This meant that Iran was willing to compromise some of its own 'red lines' in order to reach an agreement with the United States. Throughout the coverage the theme of compromise was inextricably linked to sanctions. It could be argued that compromise is perhaps not the right word, and that Iran was feeling forced to negotiate because the sanctions imposed by Western countries were no longer tolerable by many Iranians. However, often the coverage was couched in terms that promoted the idea of compromise over force. For example, an article titled "Signs of a Compromise Over Inspections in Iran Nuclear Talks" (Sanger and Gordon July 2, 2015) used language of bridge building: "Tehran was trying to bridge the gap between Western demands for inspections of any suspected nuclear-related facility" (p. 1). This was in contrast to numerous statements by Ali Khamenei that foreigners would not be allowed to enter military sites or interview Iranian scientists. This article was primarily devoted to exploring the inspection issue, which was the toughest problem

negotiators were facing. The article mentioned that Ali Khamenei softened his tone on inspection issues on a few occasions, as he began qualifying that there could be no “unconventional” inspections conducted (p. 2). Ali Khamenei did not explicitly indicate what he meant by “unconventional” inspection; nonetheless, that served as sufficient for Iranian negotiators to move a step closer to reaching the nuclear agreement with the Western world. This article thus demonstrated that Iran’s government was willing to make compromises on the inspection issue and would perhaps commit to forgoing 96% of its stockpile of nuclear fuel, which American officials insisted upon as a condition for lifting the crippling economic sanctions placed upon Iran.

US is Irrational

In contrast to the major theme of Iran as the irrational actor in the negotiations, it was interesting that in an American paper there was also a minor theme that appeared to position the United States as the irrational actor in the negotiations. In one instance this portrayal came from a politician vying for the President’s job. Jim Webb was more critical than rest of Democrats on President Obama’s efforts to reach a nuclear deal with Iran, saying that the whole thing could backfire and “The end result of this could well be our acquiescence in allowing Iran to develop a nuclear weapon” (Fandos, July 2, 2015, p. 1). The implication throughout this article was that Webb believed that President Obama was acting irrationally to reach a deal with Iran. In another instance, this theme appeared when an Iranian official painted the United States as fanatical in terms of their stance on sanctions. The official accused the United States and its allies of having “an emotional obsession with sanctions that needs to be abandoned” (Gordon & Sanger, July 10, 2015, p. 2). The same Iranian official went on to tell the *New York Times* reporter that Iran’s government was ready to grant reasonable access to its nuclear sites – as long as it would not

jeopardize Iran's military secrets. Clearly the official was painting Iran as the rational player in these negotiations and the United States as unnecessarily emotional and obsessive.

The United States is Strong

As a counterbalance, another minor theme that appeared throughout the coverage is that the United States is strong. As an example, this was clearly laid out in the headline of an article by Gordon & Sanger (July 10, 2015) that read: "In Iran Nuclear Talks, U.S. Will Not Be Rushed." The headline implied that the United States was strong in that it would take its time (and by extension was able to take its time), was in charge of negotiations, and would take the upper hand if necessary. The article began by quoting John Kerry, the United States' Secretary of State, who noted that though caution would be exercised in dealing with Iran's nuclear problem, America was ready to call an end to nuclear deal talks if tough decisions were not made by all parties. Several other articles also focussed on the United States's strength in negotiations, but instead of painting their insistence in negotiations as an inability to compromise, it was characterized as principled strength of character.

Frames Produced in the *New York Times* before the nuclear deal signed

Looking at the major themes that were produced during this time period - Iran is a repressive regime home to radicals, Iran is unpredictable and untrustworthy, and Iran is secretive - the prominent frame that emerged is that Iran is an untrustworthy enemy that is hostile toward the United States. When analyzing the coverage it also became apparent that the *New York Times* primarily adopted a pessimistic tone and used words that communicated skeptical language to readers.

John Kerry advocated passionately for the nuclear deal before Congress and the Senate. He tried to assure both Democrats and Republicans that a very tight verification mechanism

would be in place if Iran broke conditions in the nuclear deal. However, while many Democrats were willing to support President Obama's agenda and vote in favour of the deal, some were skeptical about whether verification mechanisms would work or not. Republicans were more apt to see Iran as an enemy of the United States, and believed that Iran's hostility toward the United States and Israel would continue even if the nuclear accord was signed. Republicans painted Iran as manipulative and were not convinced the verification process was sound. The coverage of the speeches and quotes from Ali Khamanei and his supporters that were used in the articles clearly demonstrated a very severe hostility toward the United States. However, it was also apparent that the *New York Times* was attempting to be fair and balanced, even objective, in its approach to reporting, in that it covered the views of the two major political parties in the United States as well as independent politicians, without concentrating on a single political group.

After the Nuclear Deal was Signed

Table 4

Frames and Themes identified in the New York Times After the Nuclear Deal Signed

Frames	Major Themes	Minor Themes
Iran is an untrustworthy enemy that is hostile toward the United States	Iran is Untrustworthy	Iran is Manipulative Iran has a Rational side
	Iran is home to Terrorists and Radicals	
	Iran is Unpredictable	

Themes

Iran is Untrustworthy

The prominent theme that continued to re-appear after the nuclear deal was signed was that Iran is untrustworthy and could not be counted on to uphold its side of the deal. For example, an article by Harris & Shear (July 15, 2015) published just after the deal was reached,

quoted Senator Tom Cotton as saying the deal was a “nuclear agreement with an outlaw regime and the American people will repudiate this deal and Congress will kill the deal with a veto proof majority” (p. 2). Clearly, what was meant by the term outlaw regime was that Iran is untrustworthy, and Congress must work quickly to put an end to a deal with this type of nation. The theme of Iran being untrustworthy revolved mainly around distrust of the verification measures put into place in the deal. For instance, an article published on the 15th of July was typical of this type of coverage. It focused on reactions from the Orthodox Union and the Rabbinical Council of America. They had issued a joint statement claiming that “they had scrutinized the deal and found it seriously wanting calling the inspection mechanism system insufficient and the release of the billions of dollars in sanctions as being unacceptable” (Harris & Shear, July 15, 2015, p. 2).

In another article that same day, the theme that Iran is untrustworthy came up when Senator Angus King, an Independent in Senate, is paraphrased as saying “he would seek consultation from a former weapons inspector and a nuclear physicist before agreeing to side with Democrats” (Steinhauer & Weisman, July 15, 2015, p.1). The article concluded by focusing on the theme that Iran is untrustworthy again by stating that even though a deal had been reached there were still concerns:

The most significant worry for Democrats and Independents is the inspection regime in the nuclear deal, which falls short of decreeing it can be done, anytime, anywhere – which ultimately is what caused Democrats to remain truly undecided until the hearing date on the nuclear accord in Congress. (p. 3).

It became apparent through the coverage during this period that the deal was based on a foundation of lack of trust. This distrust that Iran would honour its obligations continued to dominate coverage in the days after the deal was reached. As Sengupta (July 20, 2015) reported five days after the deal had been reached, an American ambassador was insisting that “sanctions relief would start only when Iran “verifiably” met its obligations under the deal” (p. 2) The verification mechanism had been a dragging issue for the United States and its allies, as Khamanei was soundly against any military sites’ inspections.

The theme that Iran is untrustworthy was echoed most prominently in reporting that focussed on Republican reaction to the deal. For instance, Senator Bob Corker was quoted as saying “we’re driving at this based solely on our own instincts” (Baker, July 15, 2015, p. 6), meaning that United States Congress could not trust Iran’s words and commitments to the deal. Also, Senator Lindsey Graham of South Carolina was quoted as saying “Mr. Kerry’s argument that the deal would empower Iranian moderates is a gross misunderstanding of Iran” (p. 6). Graham was implying here that there is no such thing as a moderate in Iran and all Iranians are radicals who cannot be trusted.

In another article Senator Jim Risch, a Republican in Idaho, told John Kerry that: “One thing that bothers me is the billions of dollars that Iran is going to get if sanctions are lifted...Everything we are trying to do in the world has their fingerprints on it trying to do us in” (Steinhauer, July 23, 2015, p. 2). Republicans were concerned that Iran would use this money to help terrorist organizations like Hezbollah and Hamas to fight against Israel. Simply put, Republicans did not trust Iran, citing its ties with terrorist organizations. They were wary about what would happen if sanctions were lifted. A day later, another article again focused on

Republican Senator Bob Corker's deep skepticism about the deal, quoting him as saying, "What you have done is codify a personally aligned pathway for Iran to get a nuclear weapon. I believe you've been fleeced" (Weisman & Gordon, July 24, 2015, p. 2).

The theme of untrustworthiness also appeared in articles where the details of the deal were being critiqued. As an example, an article by Gordon (July 23, 2015) quoted a former high-ranking official at the IAEA who said the "24-day adjudicated timeline reduces detection probabilities exactly where the system is weakest: detecting undeclared facilities and materials" (p. 1). The implication here was that the nuclear deal had given the opportunity for Iran to cheat. Another example from the same article was much more direct. David Albright, the president of the Institute for Science and International Security and a former weapons inspector in Iraq claimed: "Iranians are practiced at cheating. You can't count on them to make a mistake" (p. 1). Another example further on in the article added more fuel to the fire, focussing on the idea that it was probable that Iran would, or would if able, carry on illicit activity, and that the deal that was reached was not strict enough to counteract this. Robert J. Einhorn, a former official who served on the American delegation to Iran nuclear talks from 2009 to 2013 said:

No notice inspections were clearly unachievable, but a limit shorter than 24 days would have been desirable. While evidence of some illicit activity – construction of a covert enrichment facility or work with nuclear materials – would be difficult or impossible to hide or remove in 24 days, incriminating evidence of lesser activities probably could be removed... But it is probably the case that the greater the significance of a covert activity, the more difficult it will be to remove evidence of it in 24 days. (p. 2).

Thus, this article clearly demonstrated the view of experts who believed that Iran is untrustworthy and would likely cheat on the nuclear accord, whether it left traces or not.

Overall, the coverage in this period focussed a great deal on the strong opposition of Republicans to the nuclear deal and how they perceived Iran as an untrustworthy country. Much of the coverage focussed on the Republican campaign to oppose and defeat the deal in Congress. That said, there was some coverage that was pro-deal, which also implied that Iran was an untrustworthy nation, and the deal was the best way forward. In an article by Freilich on July 19, 2015) titled: "A Good Deal for Israel" the focus was on how the nuclear deal was the only way forward for the United States, if they wished to protect their ally Israel. Freilich wrote:

The agreement's detractors have been long on invective, short on suggestions. A collapse of the talks would have freed Iran to go forward and left America struggling to maintain a sanctions regime weakened by international disunity. Israel would have remained isolated, left only with military option. There are hardly desirable outcomes. (p. 2).

The article mentioned that military action would only postpone Iran's nuclear activity in the short term, while a deal imposed specific restraints on Iran and violation of the agreement would make Iran a truly isolated state again. The subtext of this article was that Iran was not to be trusted and that a deal whose violation would impose stiff sanctions was the only way forward.

Iran is home to Terrorists and Radicals

The theme that Iran is a terrorist nation that is home to radicals appeared frequently in this coverage period as people opposed to the deal expressed their disappointment and fears. At some points, this was very overt. For example, in one article General Martin E. Dempsey was

quoted as telling Congress that the “nuclear deal with Iran would not stop the Iranian government from funding organizations that the United States labeled as being terrorist groups” (Cooper & Harris July 29, 2015, p.1). During the same hearing, Republican senator Ted Cruz said: “Kerry should apologize to families of American military forces who were killed in Iraq by Shiite forces using weaponry provided by Iran” (p.3). Again, another example of directly saying that Iran is a country that supports terrorist groups and organizations.

The coverage during this period also focussed on opposition to the deal in Iran and the idea that while a deal had been reached, not everyone was happy and Iran was still a country of radicals. For example, an article by Erdbrink on July 16, 2015, was titled: “Iranian Hard-Liners Say Nuclear Accord Crosses Their Redlines.” The use of the term ‘hard-liners’ conveys an image of rigid, radical people. This is reinforced in the article as it is made clear that Khamanei is not happy with the deal. Hamidreza Taraghi, a political analyst closed to Khamanei is quoted as saying that Khamanei’s “reaction was cold. Notice how he only thanked the negotiators but did not congratulate them on the victory. Our leader is worried about several points in the deal” (p. 1). Although a deal had been reached, it was clear that Khamanei and his hard-liner supporters were not happy with the deal.

A couple days later another article by Erdbrink (July 18, 2015) continued to focus on this theme of Iran as home to radicals. Khamanei was painted as a radical leader who sees the United States as the enemy and the nuclear deal as not changing anything, as they were forced into negotiations. Khamanei is quoted as saying;

We do not negotiate with the US about different global and regional issues. We do not negotiate about bilateral issues. Sometimes, in some exceptional cases, like the nuclear deal, and due to the expediency, we may negotiate. (p. 3)

The article also focused on a speech by Khamanei that furthered this idea: "Americans can support the child-killing Zionist government, and call Hezbollah terrorist? How can one interact, negotiate or come to an agreement with such a policy" (p. 4)? The article noted that immediately after these incendiary remarks, worshipers began chanting "death to Israel" and "death to America." This article clearly indicated that Iran was home to "radicals."

Iran is Unpredictable

Another prominent theme that appeared during this time period was that Iran is unpredictable and that even with this deal there would still be uncertainty about whether Iran would abide by it. The editorial in the New York Times on July 18th, titled "The Morning After the Iran Deal," focussed on this point. It stated outright that Obama and his administration knew that there were no guarantees that Iran would be less disruptive in the future. It was further pointed out that on issues like "human rights, terrorism, and ballistic missiles, sanctions under United States law, will remain in place indefinitely in order to keep pressure on Iran" (p. 1). Thus, making it very clear that Iran is unpredictable and must be controlled by other pressure mechanisms.

This theme of unpredictability appeared notably in articles that focussed on why the deal should be ratified. For instance, an article by Gordon & Sanger (July 19, 2015) focused on Kerry's warning to Congress about voting against the deal: "If Congress says 'no' to this deal,

then there will be no restraints on Iran. There will be no sanctions left. Our friends in this effort will desert us” (p. 2). This statement clearly meant that Iran is unpredictable, and it was in best interests of the US and its allies to ratify the nuclear deal.

Republicans also used unpredictability as a reason to reject the deal, arguing that it was not robust enough. Underlying the unpredictability was the idea that Iran would continue to be a threat to the United States, despite the deal. In an article by Weisman (July 23, 2015) titled: “Campaign for Congressional Backing of Iran Nuclear Deal Begins,” the idea that Iran is an unpredictable threat was underscored through this quote by Republican Senator Ted Cruz:

Democrats will have to choose whether to vote to protect the national security of this nation, to stand with our friend and ally the nation of Israel and to protect the lives of millions of Americans, or in the alternative, whether to value partisan loyalty to the White House above the most solemn responsibility each and every one of us has (p. 2).

It is interesting to note that both sides of the political spectrum in the United States, to further their own purposes, used the same themes and ideas.

Minor Themes

Iran is Manipulative

The minor theme that Iran is manipulative came in the analysis during the aftermath of the deal, as journalists parsed the details and got reaction. An article by Erdbrink (July 20, 2015), focussed on criticism from the Commander of Iran's Revolutionary Guard, General Mohammad Ali Jafari, who was appointed directly by Iran's Supreme Leader. Jafari is quoted as saying:

“some of the points inserted in the draft are clearly in contradiction to the Islamic Republic of Iran’s major red lines” (p.2). The theme that Iran is manipulative then came when “Farshad Ghorbanpour, a political analyst close to Iran’s government, asserted that Jafari wanted this in the deal in case things went wrong so they could say: “we told you so” (p.1). Overall, the message being sent through the coverage was that hard-liners in Iran continued to criticize the nuclear deal and send mixed messages about their views on the United States and its allies.

Iran has a Rational side

Although much of the coverage overwhelmingly focussed on Iran as unpredictable, untrustworthy, and as an irrational country that supports terrorists and radicals, at times there was some coverage that appeared to support the notion that Iran has a rational side. This was a very minor theme; however, it is noteworthy when we think about whether American media takes a more balanced approach to reporting than Iranian media. This theme appeared in Erdbrink & Gladstone’s article (July 23, 2015) titled: “Iran’s President defends Nuclear deal in blunt remarks.” This article covered the views of Iran’s president Hassan Rouhani, who appeared to support the deal, in stark contrast to supporters of Ali Khamenei who were consistently vehemently critical. Rouhani is quoted as saying “This is a new page in history. It didn’t happen when we reached the deal in Vienna on July 14; it happened on the fourth of August 2013, when the Iranians elected me as their president. (p.1). This statement indicated that Iran was willing to reach a nuclear deal and had a rational side that propelled the country to reach an agreement with the United States, even though it considers the United States an enemy. Rouhani’s statement also implied that Iran had had a moderate side for a couple years before the deal was negotiated,

giving the impression that perhaps Iran was not as unstable or unpredictable as other coverage suggested.

Frame(s) Produced in *The New York Times* After the Nuclear Deal Signed

The *New York Times* was consistent in the frames that were developed through its reporting on the nuclear deal before and after it was signed. During this two-week period the same frame that “Iran is an untrustworthy enemy that is hostile toward the United States” appeared again. However, the negative tone was heavier than during the first two weeks reporting, with a focus on language used by United States politicians who maintained that Iran would cheat and not fulfill its promises. The *New York Times* reported both concerns and support for the nuclear deal, while at the same time framing the deal negatively. It was clear the newspaper was using a fair and balanced approach to reporting. Democrats continued to be skeptical about Iran honouring conditions in the deal. However, as it was getting closer to the deadline for Congress and Senate to vote, Democrats did end up supporting President Obama and voted in favour of the deal. Conversely, Republicans remained consistently against the deal, framing Iran and the United States as enemies, and Iran as an untrustworthy, unpredictable, and manipulative nation that supports terrorist organizations and is home to radicals. While there was the minor theme that Iran was perhaps rational in the small amount of reporting that focussed on the support from the President of Iran for the deal, the focus in the *New York Times* was largely on opposition to the deal and based on themes of unpredictability, untrustworthiness and the radical/terrorist nature of Iran.

The IRNA News Coverage Analysis

Table 5

Themes identified in the IRNA Times before the Nuclear Deal Signed

Frames	Major Themes	Minor Themes
The United States is an Enemy	Iran is Strong (America is Weak)	America is to Blame
		America must be Destroyed

Major Theme

Iran is Strong

The prominent theme throughout the *IRNA* articles in this period was that Iran is strong and would not give in to the United States' demands. For example, an article published on July 1st, titled "Short-term Extensions of Talks Will Take the Opportunity of Defeating the Opposition in the United States," analyzed the various delays in reaching an agreement with Iran regarding the nuclear deal. It specifically highlighted the pre-conditions that Iran referred to as "red lines" before negotiating with the P5+1 nations, emphasizing that these were non-negotiable. The article quoted the *New York Times*, which reported "Khamenei's speech the previous week on Iranian television emphasized the complete and immediate removal of the sanctions, which was contrary to earlier agreements reached by Iran's Foreign Minister, Zarif in Lausanne" (p.1). The entire article emphasized Iran's strong position in the nuclear deal negotiations, its unwillingness to waver in its position over sanctions, and by extension its strength in the face of the United States' demands.

In an article a couple days later (*IRNA* July 3, 2015) the theme appeared again, painting Iran as a strong nation and simultaneously America as weak. According to the article, it was the

Americans who wanted to negotiate with Iran and in fact had “begged” for a resolution, because they wanted the sanctions lifted. The article says: “Americans requested for an intermediary and one of the region’s respecters came to Iran to meet with Khamenei, and said that the President of the United States had begged him to resolve the nuclear issue with Iran – that America wanted to lift the sanctions, too” (p. 1). Interestingly, the article did not provide sources for this claim.

Two days later another article continued to emphasize Iran’s strength. The issue of access to military sites was urgent for the United States in the nuclear deal negotiations. However, the article focused on remarks from Iran’s Ambassador to France, Ali Ahani, who emphasized that “Iran would not allow access to its military sites, simply because Iran is not looking to build nuclear weapons” (IRNA July 5, 2015, p.1). Ahani is also quoted as saying: “Americans have been struggling to destabilize the Islamic Republic of Iran over the past 35 years and have noticed that the political system is solid and has a strong influence in the region” (p.1). The above statement positioned Iran as a strong and stable country, with America as an enemy bent on destabilizing it. The article also continued to position Iran as unrelenting in its negotiations for access to military sites.

Shortly before the deal was reached, the *IRNA* continued to publish articles that positioned Iran as steadfast in its principles. Khamenei is quoted as saying: “Iranian negotiating authorities only had the right to negotiate about the nuclear issue, and while the US occasionally raised issues in the region – including Syria and Yemen. Iranian officials would not negotiate on those issues at all” (IRNA July 12, 2015, p.2). Khamenei also described the United States as arrogant and as a bully, from which Iran would never back down: “the struggle against arrogance and domination, based on the Quranic principles, is never closed” (p. 2).

Minor Themes

America is to Blame

One minor theme that appeared in the coverage was that the United States was to blame for any stalled negotiations. It is interesting that the major theme that ran through the coverage was Iran as a strong nation that would not budge in its principles, yet if there were any issues with advancing in negotiations, it was the fault of the United States. As an example, the theme appeared overtly when the *IRNA* quoted the *Keyhan* newspaper, whose Editor in Chief is picked by Ali Khamenei, as saying: "America must be blamed for the deadlock in negotiation" (*IRNA* July 12, 2015, p.1). The article did not provide reasons for its claims. This was typical of much of the coverage – statements of fact without proof or reasons.

America must be Destroyed

Another minor theme that ran through the coverage was the threatening message that America must be destroyed. For example, an article on July 10th was titled "Death to America and Death to Israel Loudly Echoed." The article reported on slogans crowds was shouting on Quds Day: "Allah Akbar, our leader is Khamenei, death to America and death to Israel" (*IRNA* July 10, 2015p.1). The article clearly painted the animosity of the Islamic Republic of Iran toward the United States.

Frame produced in IRNA before the nuclear deal signed

The prominent frame that was produced in this coverage through the major and minor themes was that the United States is Iran's enemy. This type of framing is perhaps not surprising,

due to the non-democratic structure of Iran and hostility toward the United States that formed after 1979 revolution, as well as the *IRNA*’s political stance that supports Khamanei’s views. For Khamanei’s supporters, the nuclear deal was a rare and isolated incident and was not to be interpreted as Iran’s desire to open further negotiations with the United States in other regional issues. It was interesting to note that some of *IRNA*’s articles were very short, consisting of just a few sentences with the overt message of death to America and Israel. This is critically important, because the *IRNA* was demonstrating to its readers that the United States remained Iran’s enemy and the nuclear deal would not change anything. These short messages communicated messages of animosity toward the United States directly and explicitly to readers. There was no nuance at all, just direct threats and message about how the United States should be perceived. The *IRNA*’s reporting was very subjective. All sources were from Khamanei and his supporters. Again, perhaps not surprising as the authoritarian political structure of Iran dictates the Supreme Leader has the final say on everything and his views must be covered and reported fully.

Table 6

Themes identified in the IRNA Times After the Nuclear Deal Signed

Frames	Major Themes	Minor Themes
The United States is an enemy	America is Untrustworthy	US is Criminal, aggressive and cruel
	America is an Arrogant, terrorist nation.	
	Iran will remain hostile toward the United States	
	Iran is Strong	
	Khamanei is in charge	

Major Themes

America is Untrustworthy

One of the prominent themes painted in the last two weeks of July 2015 in the IRNA was that the United States is untrustworthy. To make this point, the *IRNA* looked back in history. For example, an article on July 14th talked about how, in the current realm of international relations, trust does not exist at all, which is illustrated when certain countries break their promises frequently. The article stated that: "The United States is one of those countries that in its history of relations with Iran, has shown that it will not fulfill its obligations" (p. 2). The article went on to say that during the late Dr. Mossadegh's visit to the United States and Washington's initial patronage regarding the "nationalization of oil, the United States did not, in the end, honour its promise; the rejection of Mossadegh's government by the US led to the tragic coup of 1953" (p. 3). The article concluded, from historical examples, that the United States is untrustworthy and that Iran's reasons for believing this characterization were justified. The article attributed credit for the nuclear deal agreement to Ali Khamenei and stated that in the end, the Iranian government would not have been able to achieve this historic deal if Ayatollah Khamenei had not supported Rouhani's negotiating team.

A day later, another article noted that in a letter, Rouhani thanked Khamenei for his thoughts and advice during the nuclear negotiation. Later, Khamenei responded to Rouhani's letter, emphasizing that some of the "six countries are not trustworthy, and warned Rouhani about this characterization" (IRNA July 15, 2015, p.1). The next day another article continued in the same vein describing again Ali Khamenei's view that some of the "six countries involved in the nuclear deal were untrustworthy" (IRNA July 16, 2015, p. 1). The implication was clearly

that the United States is one of those countries. In addition, the article noted that Khamenei emphasized that once the nuclear agreement was approved in Iran's parliament, Rouhani must be careful of possible contraventions from other countries. Again, the indirect implication here was that the United States is deceitful.

In another example, a few days later the newspaper focused on the speech made by Kazem Jalali, the head of a research center with ties to the Iranian Parliament. Jalali is quoted as saying:

Some of the American Senators accused Obama of passing the nuclear agreement in the Security Council before American Senators themselves had a chance to review it in the Senate – which they characterized as a cheat of the system (IRNA July 20, 2015, p.1).

Jalali was directly saying that even some United States Senators did not trust Obama and his deal with Iran and thus, it was natural that Iran should not trust the United States, since its own Senators do not trust their own President. Continuing with the same theme, the newspaper published the following:

While the publication of some exaggerated news and analyzes on the return of the United States from its threatening position to Iran has led to the decoration of the face of Satan by some foreign media, anti-revolution media, and sadly domestic media, Obama's recent remarks show the real nature of the United States and the urgent need to distrust Washington. It should be noted that the Supreme Leader, in response to the recent letter from our President on nuclear talks, emphasized that some members of P5+1 are not trustworthy at all. (IRNA July 20, 2015, p. 1)

Here, the *IRNA* was copying a Resalat Newspaper article in support of Khamenei's message that the United States is not trustworthy and is in fact the "decorated face of Satan," meaning that America has misled some foreign media outlets and anti-revolution media, including some internal ones inside Iran. It is crucial to mention that Resalat Newspaper's editor-in-chief is appointed directly by Khamenei and it is noteworthy that the *IRNA* was repeating its message.

In another article a couple days later, the same theme was repeated in a quote by Khamenei, who stressed that the United States has a history of "bad faith" and that the nuclear deal needs to be looked at closely because the United States cannot be trusted (IRNA July 22, 2015, p. 2).

As a final example, five days later, the *IRNA* stated unequivocally that the United States is not trustworthy, because it believes that it is the best and no other country is its equal:

The West is not a homogeneous concept and consists of several layers and at the head of it is the United States. It is natural that engagement with this country is very difficult because of its previous and current approaches to various countries, especially Iran. For this reason, Iran should be vigilant and careful that the United States does not believe in equality with any country. Recently, the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei explicitly explained the positions of the Islamic Republic of Iran in this regard. (IRNA July 27, 2015, p. 4)

In this passage the *IRNA* was reminding its readers again that Khamenei was pessimistic toward the United States and Iran's strong anti-American policy would remain intact – deal or no deal.

America is an arrogant

Pessimism toward the United States among Iran's top clerics is a known fact inside Iran. After the 1979 revolution, words such as "enemy" and "arrogant" entered the daily dialogue of Iran's top politicians to describe the US. The leader of 1979 revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini, praised the occupation of United States embassy, calling the US "arrogant" and the "great Satan." The idea of America's arrogance is still prevalent today in Iran and appeared as one of the major themes in the IRNA during this time period. In an article titled "Statements of Supreme Leader During the Meeting of Officials and Ambassadors of Islamic Countries" the theme that America is arrogant was front and centre when Khamanei was quoted as saying:

The policies of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the region are completely against the policies of arrogance and at the top of it is the United States, and Iran does not trust the United States at all, because American politicians are extremely untrustworthy and unfair. (IRNA July 18, 2015, p. 1).

In another article later in the month the theme of United States arrogance was repeated again when Mohammad Esmaeli, a Member of the Parliament, was quoted as saying that the United States wanted to attack Iran, but was forced into negotiations: "The arrogant superpowers fought for a military option to create gaps and fears among the Iranian people, but they knew that they did not dare to do that and this was a pure bluffing" (IRNA July 30, 2015, p. 1). Further on, Esmaeli continued to attack the United States, focusing on the idea of arrogance, while simultaneously trying to paint Iran as the strong player in the negotiations that would not put up with abuse. "Enemies saw no choice but to negotiate with the Islamic regime... the Iranian nation stood up against, "bullying" and the "arrogant" power of America over the last 38 years" (IRNA July 30, 2015, p.1). It is important to note that Esmaeli belonged to a political group in

Parliament known as "Supporters of Khamenei," and the *IRNA* covered his speech comprehensively.

America is a terrorist nation

Another major theme that emerged was that Iran considers America a terrorist nation. In an article dedicated to covering the remarks of the Supreme Leader during a meeting of officials and ambassadors from Islamic countries, Khamenei is quoted as saying:

Americans call Lebanon's resistance as terrorist and considers Iran to be a terrorist supporter of Hezbollah in Lebanon. While the real terrorists are Americans who have created ISIS and support the evil Zionists, and they must be prosecuted for supporting terrorism. (IRNA July 18, 2015, p. 2)

In sum, this article solely focused on Khamenei's attacks on the United States and its ally Israel. The deal had been signed three days earlier and the timing of this article is crucial because Khamenei wanted to show Islamic countries that the United States should not be trusted and that just because there was a deal in place did not mean that they were backing down.

Two days later, the theme that America is a terrorist nation appeared when Khoshro, Iran's representative to the United Nations, was quoted as saying:

It is strange that the American Ambassador accused my government of having pushed the Middle East into instability and supporting terrorism. The country (US) that invaded the two countries in my area and created the cause of the emergence and growth of terrorism

is not in a position to accuse my country. America's unbridled efforts in the past years are the roots of all the challenges we are facing today. (IRNA July 20, 2015, p. 3)

The above quote unequivocally stated that the United States government was responsible for the creation of terrorist organizations such as ISIS and the Taliban. That same day, the *IRNA* published a shorter version of the previous article that summarized Khosro's speech at the United Nations and highlighted sections of the speech where he attacked the United States and accused it of being the catalyst for the growth of terrorism and regional instability (IRNA July 20, 2015b). Publishing a shorter version of the same article is an indication that the *IRNA* felt compelled to remind its readership in no uncertain terms that the United States is a terrorist nation and Iran's hostility against the United States would not be changed despite of the nuclear deal agreement.

Iran will remain hostile toward the United States

Throughout this time period it became very apparent that Iran would continue to remain hostile toward the United States. This is clearly stated in an article titled: "Reflection of the Supreme Leader's Statement in the Pakistani Media: Iran's Positions on the United States Will Not Change" (IRNA July 18, 2015). The article reflects on how even though there is a deal, Iran will never negotiate with the United States on other regional issues due to persistent hostility toward the US. Khamenei is quoted as saying: "Iran and the United States have severe disagreements over issues in the region, so there is no chance of negotiating a variety of issues" (p.1). A day later, in an article titled "The Main Points of the Supreme Leader's Statement About the Nuclear Talks on the Day of Eid-al-Fitr" (IRNA July 19, 2015), another of Khamenei's speeches was reported on where he repeats several times that Iran would not talk with the United

States on other regional issues. Thus, the nuclear deal negotiation should not be interpreted as Iran's desire to talk with the United States about anything else.

A few days later the same theme appeared again when Ahmad Khatami, a senior Iranian cleric, was quoted as saying:

After the announcement of the nuclear talks, the US government retaliated and defended the security of Israel, which was shameful for P5+1. However, the Supreme Leader with his rigorous speeches explicitly stated that Iran's enmity with the United States remains unchallenged. (IRNA July 22, 2015, p. 1)

Khatami added that the Iranian people were followers of the Imam, who said that Israel should be "eliminated" so the slogans, "death to America and, death to Israel" would always be on their tongues (p. 1). Ahmad Khatami is a well-known radical clergy in Iran and is appointed by Khamanei to lead the Friday's morning prayer in Tehran. Khatami is known to have radical views against the United States and Israel and his citation in this article is a clear proof of the type of sources that the *IRNA* relies on to show Khamanei's animosity toward the US.

In an article a few days earlier Khamanei is also referenced, when he is quoted as saying that hostility toward the United States will be ongoing.

The hostility of the Iranian nation to the United States has not ended and whether the negotiation process is being approved by the Islamic Parliament or not, the U.S. crimes in Yemen, Bahrain and its assistance to the terrorists in the Middle East will never be erased from the memory of the Iranian nation. Thus, death to America will be on the tongue of this people. (p. 1).

In a short article a couple days later, (IRNA July 18, 2015) the same theme is repeated. This article emphasized that the nuclear agreement would not stop Iran from supporting Syrian and Iraqi governments and the oppressed people of Yemen, Bahrain, and the Palestinians. In the article, it is noted that Khamenei referred to mantras “death to America and “death to Israel” (p.1) as crucial signifiers that Iran’s political orientation towards America and Israel would never change.

Iran is Strong

A prominent theme in the IRNA throughout this time period was that Iran is strong. For example, an article published on July 20th focused on how Iran would not ‘bend’ to the enemy. Iran’s political deputy at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Abbas Araghchi said, “For our national security, our own defence and missile system are non-negotiable and we are not willing to neither talk nor compromise them. So, if you want to agree on where weapons and missile sanctions will continue, we will not agree.” (IRNA July 20, 2015, p. 5) This meant that Iran would adhere to Khamenei’s red lines and would not compromise its defence missions, despite what the deal said. This had been a controversial issue in the negotiations with Iran. On one side, Western powers demanded inspection of military sites. On the other, Iran refused to accept that as part of the nuclear deal negotiations. Moreover, Araghchi declared, reflecting on the deal, that “The red line of the Supreme Leader is fully respected, there will be no harm in the missile and weapons program and no change will be made in regional policy” (p. 11). Conclusively, the indication in the article was that Iran’s government would keep its strong position in dealing with the United States moving forward.

The same day, the theme that Iran is strong appeared in another article where the Minister of Defense, Hossein Dehghan was quoted as saying: "Americans should know that they are no longer the master of the world, and no one recognizes them in this position" (IRNA July 20, 2015, p.1). This indirectly meant that the United States could not force Iran to bend to its demands that would have violated Khamenei's red lines. Thus, the focus on the article is on Iran's strength.

Again, that same day in an article titled: "Iran, in the Worst Case, Will Not Leave its Allies Alone" (IRNA July 20, 2015) the focus was on a famous Palestinian political analyst, Abodlbari Atwan, who repeated Khamenei's words and reminded readers that Iran will continue to support its allies, despite the nuclear agreement that was reached between Iran and the P5+1. The theme that Iran is strong was painted in the following way when Atwan is quoted as saying that the United States was forced to negotiate with Iran, implying that it was not the other way around:

[D]ue to ongoing problems in the region and ongoing problems in Iraq, Yemen, Libya, and Egypt American forced to postpone another war with Iran – and that the United States did not have any choice, but to negotiate with Iran. (p.2).

Khamanei is fully in Charge

Another prominent theme in the *IRNA* during this time was that Khamanei was in charge. For example, in an article titled: "A Win-Win agreement was Reached in the Nuclear Negotiations Under the Guidance of the Supreme Leader" (IRNA July 20, 2015), the theme that Khamanei is in charge was painted in the following way: "[D]espite the conspiracies of the

sworn enemies of the Islamic Revolution, achieving a win-win agreement in the nuclear talks was possible due the Supreme Leader's guidance" (p. 1). This article reported that radical Conservatives in parliament had praised Ali Khamenei for his guidance, defining paths and red lines, and his support of the negotiating team which was the reason a win-win scenario was reached. This article gave sole credit for the success of the negotiation to Ali Khamenei.

Another example appeared in another article that same day where the Governor of West Azarbaijan gave Khamenei credit for the nuclear deal saying: "the recent nuclear deal could be considered as a national covenant that Iran should keep in consonance with the orders of the Supreme Leader" (IRNA July 20, 2015, p.1). Another article that day focused on a reformist speech made by Mostafa Kawakbian and the idea that Khamenei was in charge was painted in the following way when Kawakbian is quoted as saying: "At the beginning of the negotiations, the Supreme Leader of the revolution expressed among the commanders of the Revolutionary Guards the idea that there is a heroic temperament in Islam" (IRNA July 20, 2015, p. 1). It is important to mention that during Mahmood Ahmadinejad's presidency in Iran, Khamenei was against any sorts of negotiation with the United States. However, when sanctions crippled Iran's economy Khamenei allowed negotiations, but in order to justify this move to his supporters, Khamenei labelled it as "heroic" flexibility in Islam and attached religious decrees to it. Thus, it was only because of this heroic flexibility that a nuclear deal was reached with the P5+1 countries.

Another article that same day focused on the Director General of Culture and Islamic Guidance of Qom, Abdolreza Izadpanah, who briefly talked about the nuclear deal. The theme that Khamenei is in charge appeared when Izadpanah was quoted as saying "The government's

team, with the guidance of the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution was able to make this important and historic event” (IRNA July 20, 2015, p. 1). The article did not report anything else specifically about the nuclear deal and directly implied that Iran’s government was able to reach a nuclear deal with the P5+1 only due to the guidance of Ali Khamenei.

Similarly, a week later an article reported on a speech made by Hasan Kameli, the representative of the Supreme Leader in the Ashura Army. Kameli is quoted as saying:

Today, after 37 years, the change in the approach of the enemies of the Islamic Revolution of Iran from the threat and sanctions to negotiation and agreement, which is a sign of their strategic withdrawal, owes to wise measures adopted by the Supreme Leader of the Revolution. (IRNA July 27, 2015, p. 1.)

In the same article, the *IRNA* reported that various parties close to Khamenei appreciated his stubbornness in his fight with the Zionists and his intelligence during the negotiations with the P5+1 countries. It is worth mentioning that commanders of small military militias like Ashura Army and Ansar Hezbollah organizations in Iran are chosen by Khamenei directly, and they report to Khamenei’s office only. Thus, the *IRNA*’s article that cited Kameli is an example of *IRNA*’s closeness to Khamenei and his loyal team.

An article the next day focused on remarks made by Khamenei’s representative Seyed Kazem Nour Moofidi in the Golestan province in Northern Iran. The theme that Khamenei is in charge was brought up again when Moofidi is quoted as saying:

The nuclear deal agreement was reached because Khamenei supported Iran’s negotiating team. Iran’s negotiators were careful not to pass redlines expressed by the Supreme

Leader of the Revolution and participated in the negotiations while still standing up for their positions. (IRNA July 28, 2015, p.1)

Since the Islamic government in Iran was established after the 1979 revolution, the word “enemies” has always referred to the United States and its Western allies. Again, this article showed readers that Khamenei has the final word on everything.

Minor Themes

US is Aggressive, Criminal and Cruel

Several minor themes appeared in this period of coverage. For example, in an article published on July 18th titled: “The Defence Capabilities and Security of the Country Will Be Preserved/Our Policy Will Not Change in the Face of the United States” (IRNA July 18, 2015) themes that the US is aggressive and criminal appeared in Khamenei’s speech. Khamenei is quoted as saying: “The nuclear issue caused acceleration on the United States aggression towards Iran in order to hide domestic problems” (p. 2). In the same speech, those themes appeared again when Khamenei said: “if there was a war, the aggressive and criminal United States would be the one accepting defeat” (p. 3). Thus, the article clearly demonstrated Khamenei’s views toward the United States as a criminal aggressor. His first quote also implied that the US was lashing out as a distraction or cover up of its own internal problems.

The theme of cruelty also appeared whenever sanctions were referred to. For example, in one article the Deputy Governor of Political and Social Affairs of Tehran, Chavoshi, stated: “the nuclear agreement with P5+1 countries maintained Iran’s nuclear rights and broke cruel sanctions” (IRNA July 20, 2015) p.1). This *IRNA* article was typical of how the sanctions were

portrayed. The United States was consistently pointed to as cruel in how it imposed these restrictions. Thus, the *IRNA* showed to its readers that the nuclear deal broke cruel sanctions imposed by the United States against the people of Iran.

A Frame of “Enemy” in IRNA after the nuclear deal signed

As referenced throughout this thesis, Iran and the United States have had hostile relations since Iran's 1979s revolution occurred. In its news coverage during this period, the *IRNA* continually framed the United States as the greatest “enemy” of Iran, and used terms such as, “death to America” and the derogatory epithet of “Great Satan” in its reporting. More specifically, the *IRNA* primarily covered Khamenei and his supporters' view about the United States remaining the eternal enemy of Iran. The *IRNA* reported that Khamenei never allowed the Iranian government to gradually open talks with America on different regional issues and constantly referred to America's ally, Israel, as a “hideous entity” in the Middle East – one that would undoubtedly be annihilated one day. The language used in this time period was heavily pessimistic and the depictions of the nuclear deal were framed negatively. The sources used in the *IRNA*'s reportage of the nuclear deal focused solely on Khamenei and his followers' opinions, and thus reminded Iranians that hostility toward the United States – the “arrogant” power – would continue, and that the nuclear deal had not changed that hostility.

Chapter Four: Conclusion

The goal of this thesis was to look at how Iran's nuclear deal with P5+1 countries was framed in the *New York Times* and the *IRNA* news agency in the weeks before and after the signing of the deal in 2015. The *New York Times* was chosen due to its reputation and long history in American journalism. The *IRNA* was selected because it is a well-known news agency inside Iran and one of the main sources of news for the Iranian people. This thesis concentrated on the two weeks before and after the nuclear deal was signed in July 2015.

That frame that "Iran is an untrustworthy enemy that is hostile toward the United States" produced by the *New York Times* was the result of 40 years hostility between two countries. More specifically, The *New York Times'* coverage showed that Republicans on Senate and the Congress were against the nuclear deal. Democrats were also shown as reluctant to accept the nuclear deal and a few Democrats expressed negative views about it. Still, Obama convinced them that the nuclear deal was well calculated, and security measures were in place if Iran were to violate the deal. The *New York Times* articles focused on Obama and his expectations that Democrats should support him in his dealings with Iran. Simply put, The *New York Times* articles during this time period framed Iran as the United States' "enemy," while reminding readers that the nuclear deal should be treated as a singular event that would protect the interests of the United States and its allies in the long term. In doing so, the *New York Times* articles pointed out, indirectly, to Democrats that remaining loyal to Obama did not necessarily mean they had to put aside notions of hostility toward Iran. The *New York Times* articles demonstrated that Democrats were hesitant to sign the deal with Iran, but in the end they supported Obama. None of the articles touched on the issue of whether the nuclear deal had opened further negotiation possibilities with Iran on other issues.

Unsurprisingly, the *IRNA* framed the United States as an “enemy.” As it has been shown in this thesis, the *IRNA* followed Khamanei’s anti-American views and relied on powerful sources closed to the Supreme Leader using quotes such as “death to America” and “death to Israel” to remind readers that the nuclear deal with P5+1 would not alter any hostility toward the United States. The *IRNA* remained faithful to Khamanei and depicted an anti-American frame because it was more beneficial both politically and economically. As has been pointed out, its operational budget comes directly from the government. The issue of coercive forces restricting the political autonomy of the news organization, including policy, state censorship, legislation, and regulation also applies to the *IRNA*. The policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran is formed on the notion that the United States is “our enemy” and media must regularly demonstrate anti-American depictions. It is unrealistic to expect that the *IRNA*, as an agent of a repressive system, would implement fairness and non-partisanship reporting and avoid making judgements and overt partiality when presenting news to readers. In such a restricted political system, the *IRNA* reporters continued to approach the nuclear deal in a biased manner, presenting the story in non-rational manner, which did not let the audience make up their minds about whether the United States should be seen as an “enemy” or not.

Structuration theory is a useful way to situate the journalism that happens in the *IRNA*. Structuration theory addresses how people are constrained by social structures, but can also work to change or reinforce those social structures. As was shown in this thesis, the *IRNA* journalists coordinated and created ongoing anti-American projects, goals, and contexts while reporting news of the nuclear deal to its readers. This formed the process whereby agents (the journalists) and the non-democratic structure mutually evolved into what I would characterize as anti-American propaganda. The *IRNA* journalists only published news that supported Khamanei’s

negative views toward the United States. By doing so, the prominent frame of the United States as “enemy” was shown to readers without allowing for any “positive” or “hopeful” voices that might be concerned with re-constructing relations with the United States. The *IRNA*'s approach to painting the United States as an “enemy” by focusing on the views of politicians close to Khamanei, sacrificed any notions of “objective” and “neutral” reporting altogether. The *IRNA*'s framing of the United States as the “enemy” was the product of a political structure that supports biased reporting toward the US, which is safe, easy and economically beneficial for the *IRNA* organization and its journalists.

Conversely, the United States' democratic structure, and consequently the freedom afforded journalists, allowed the *New York Times* journalists to cover news of the nuclear deal from different angles. The news was more objective and balanced in that it covered different viewpoints and included people both for and against the deal. That said, the major themes and the frames produced both before and after the deal was signed painted Iran in a negative light. However, in the period before the deal was signed, there were a couple minor themes that did the opposite – showing Iran as more moderate, or at least willing to compromise, and the United States as the aggressor.

The third filter of the propaganda model developed by Herman and Chomsky (1988), talks about American journalists' overreliance on government officials and emphasizes that journalists should use all available sources when reporting the news to the public. The purpose of using the third filter in this thesis as a way to contextualize the findings was to examine how often official sources, in both America and Iran, are used in reporting the nuclear deal to the public.

In this study the *New York Times* largely relied on official sources for details of the deal. Most quotes and news reports came from Republicans, Democrats, White House officials, and experts from U.S. government. They also drew on scientific and economic experts to explain the details of the nuclear deal to the public. According to McChesney (2004), whom journalists rely on as sources and experts can be problematic: “[E]xperts are drawn almost entirely from the establishment. Studies on the use of news sources and experts invariably point to the strong mainstream bias built into the news” (p. 70-71). McChesney’s point is that political and corporate influences on American journalists exist to a certain extent – albeit, much less overtly than what journalists face in Iran.

In the United States’ political structure, journalists were not obligated to report what official sources had stated to them about the nuclear deal. Instead, American journalists enjoy the autonomy to investigate and report their findings to the public even if they differ from the version of events told to them by official sources. Unlike the *IRNA*, The *New York Times*’ budget does not come directly from the U.S. government and journalists are not afraid to criticize politicians in their reporting because the United States Constitution protects freedom of press. This issue is directly linked to the issue of “autonomy,” for US journalists who are not bound to publish news about certain political groups in order to keep their operational budgets. However, Herman and Chomsky’s argument is that journalists in America do not tend to ignore or question powerful sources and in fact, tend to rely upon them as being valid. Judith Miller, a reporter for the *New York Times*, is an example of a journalist who relied on intelligence sources without questioning them when she wrote articles on Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction program. As a result, inaccurate stories were reported both before and after America’s 2003 invasion of Iraq. In her defence, Miller stated that,

[M]y job isn't to assess the government's information and be an independent intelligence analyst myself. My job is to tell readers of *The New York Times* what the government thought about Iraq's arsenal. (*The Huffington Post*, 2011, p.4)

The above statement reflects Herman and Chomsky's point about how American journalists tend not to question official sources. The findings of this thesis seem to bolster the idea that the mass media continues to be part of a symbiotic relationship with powerful sources of information in which officials have and give the facts. However, unlike the *IRNA*, the *New York Times* was open to presenting opposing views and presented both the views of Republicans and Democrats on the deal.

The media model for many Islamic countries is based on Islamic Shari'ah and Fiqh Islamic jurisprudence. Simply put, the model applies Islamic codes and instructions. In Iran, Articles 24 and 25 of the Constitution guarantee the right of expression in news publication and the press, unless it is contrary to Islamic law and the public good. Thus, powerful people in Iran can shape and control the media based on their own interpretation of Islamic Law. Moreover, in 2006, Iran imposed severe restrictions on the disclosure of so-called 'classified information' and the use of communication technology such as satellite dishes and the Internet (Al-Obaidi, 2007). In Iran's system, special press laws and other discriminatory legislation have also made editors vulnerable to arrest and persecution (Mehdizadeh, 2016). These discriminatory press laws have allowed powerful people in Iran to not only limit journalists in their work but to also severely restrain their freedom of expression and opinion. Politicians and the elite class in Iran's authoritarian system have thus made freedom of expression a casualty of the process, causing journalists and editors to face severe prison sentences if they decide to tell the truth to the world.

In short, Iran is known as a country that practices media censorship. Like many authoritarian governments, it keeps a very tight rein on information. Simply put, the whole truth is not available to the public or journalists. The reason is simple: censorship is about concealing facts that might hurt people in power and uncover harsh realities about them. The authoritarian government of Iran imposes strict guidelines for media regulation and, as a result, the media in Iran must follow the interests of the government. This includes advancing the cultural and political objectives of the government, and most importantly, the Supreme Leader. Moreover, all types of broadcasting in Iran requires licensing, through which the state controls them vigorously. Only those loyal to the government can obtain the necessary permits and funding for a media operation. Given this, it is not surprising that Iranian journalists had no other choice but to ignore alternative sources and rely on government officials for reporting the news to Iranian people.

Post-Era of the Nuclear deal

On May 8, 2018, President Donald Trump announced that the United States was withdrawing from the Iranian nuclear deal and was reinstating sanctions again. Iran's government stated that it would remain in the deal, which tightly restricted its nuclear ambitions in return for ending sanctions that had crippled its economy severely. In the *New York Times*' coverage of the news Trump is quoted as saying: "This was a horrible one-sided deal that should have never, ever been made. It didn't bring calm, it didn't bring peace, and it never will" (Landler, 2008, p.1). The article covered the views of Trump's supporters, including his national security adviser, John Bolton who rejected the suggestion that the United States is not trustworthy. Bolton said, "Any nation reserves the right to correct a past mistake," (p.1). Bolton cited President Bush's decision

to withdraw from the Antiballistic Missile Treaty in 2001. Since the United States' withdrawal announcement, the European countries have vowed to remain in the deal. However, Iran's economy has been affected severely, commodity prices have increased massively, and Iran's currency has plunged to a record low. News from Iran indicates that people are suffering badly, and are seriously hurting. The decision to withdraw from the deal has affected many Iranians inside and outside the country.

Since the future of the deal is unclear at the time this thesis is being written, further research on this topic will be needed in the future to see whether the *New York Times*' coverage of Iran under Trump changes, or remains the same. Although further research into the *IRNA*'s coverage of the United States and this deal would also prove interesting, it is likely that the *IRNA* will continue to support Khamanei's view that the United States is an "enemy" and Iran will not negotiate with this "arrogant" power again.

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