

# A Content Analysis Of Elite U.S. Newspapers' Coverage Of Iran, 1979 And 2005

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A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF ELITE U.S. NEWSPAPERS' COVERAGE  
OF IRAN, 1979 AND 2005

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Arts  
in the Nicholson School of Communication  
in the College of Sciences  
at the University of Central Florida  
Orlando, Florida

Spring Term  
2010

Major Professor: Kimiko Akita

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## ABSTRACT

This study is a quantitative content analysis of the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* coverage of Iran during the period surrounding the Ayatollah Khomeini's ascension to power in 1979 as well as the period surrounding Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's election in 2005. The results showed that coverage of Iran in the elite American print media as it related to *terror* was higher in the period after Khomeini came to power and also in the period after Ahmadinejad's election than it was in the period immediately preceding their respective ascensions. The results also showed that there was more coverage of Iran as it related to *terror* in the year surrounding Ahmadinejad's election than there was during the year surrounding Ayatollah Khomeini's rise to power in Iran.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

I am deeply indebted to my thesis committee, Dr. Kimiko Akita (chair), Dr. Ann Neville Miller, and Dr. M.C. Santana. Without the support of these three amazing women I would not have made it to this point.

I also want to thank my friends, both in and out of the program. Tracy Richardson was my first friend in graduate school and has been next to me every step of the way. Megan Cole, while conquering a thesis of her own, was always able to answer my pesky APA citation questions, and for that I am very grateful. Danielle Howard, Adil Ridouane, Hannah Blanton, and Zahira Sierra-Soto have helped me to relax occasionally and forced me to think about things other than my thesis, if for only a few minutes per day.

Most importantly, I would have never gotten this far without the love and support of my parents. Words cannot even begin to express how much they have guided me along the way and prepared me up to this point. The lessons they have taught me apply both within academia and beyond.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The U.S. news media have been interested in Iran since it became an ally in the Middle East more than a half-century ago. Coverage of Iran increased in the late 1970s preceding, during, and after the Islamic revolution and the ensuing hostage crisis at the American embassy in Tehran. Concurrently, Iran was also involved in a war with Iraq. Media interest in Iran resurged after the U.S.-led invasion of Iran's neighbor, Iraq in 2003. In 2005, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad had a landslide victory. His continuation of nuclear enrichment kept the media's attention on Iran. In the wake of Ahmadinejad's disputed reelection in 2009 to a second term, American foreign policy toward Iran has continually been brought to the forefront of U.S. media attention.

Following current events in Iran is essential to understanding global events. Iran's geographic location makes it significant. Separated from Europe, Africa, the Indian subcontinent, and Central Asia by only one country in each case, Iran is one of the few areas of the world that can be considered a crossroads. This location, which once gave strength to the Persian Empire, gives importance to Iran in its modern form. Iran is also one of the world's twenty largest nations and is the fifteenth most populous. Although it is smaller than the United States in geographic size and population and by almost all other accounts, Iran is still quite large (Taheri, 2009).

From a more practical perspective, Iran's location between Iraq and Afghanistan, both countries in which the United States has recently taken military action, adds to its importance. From a tactical standpoint, having Iran as an ally or enemy could respectively help or harm the United States and its allies' operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Furthermore, according to estimates, Iran has 12 percent of the world's crude oil reserves and the second-largest reserve of

natural gas. It is also highly accessible to the Persian Gulf, where its neighboring Arab states hold another 48 percent of crude oil reserves (Taheri, 2009, p. 15).

Iran's strategic resources as well as fragile government have caused shifts in the relationship between the United States and Iran for decades as well as the coverage the media give to Iran. The United States and Iran were close allies while the Shah was in power from 1941-1979. However, a breakdown in communication between Washington and Tehran in 1979, followed by the hostage crisis, strained the relationship. Since Iran became an Islamic Republic that year, it has had some leaders who were more liberal than others. Ahmadinejad has been at odds with the U.S. and the United Nations since his first weeks of presidency.

Regime changes and other political events are likely to be covered by the media. A shift in media coverage of Iran is also likely to reflect American public opinion about Iran. Understanding this shift in coverage will reveal that U.S. media coverage of Iran, in particular the American elite newspapers, has changed between 1979 and 2005 regarding terrorism and Iran.

This thesis examines how Iran was represented in elite U.S. newspapers in the periods of time surrounding the Islamic Revolution and Ayatollah Khomeini's rise to power in 1979 and Ahmadinejad's election in 2005. Both of these events were important for U.S.-Iranian relations. Under the U.S.-backed shah, Iran enjoyed a period of relative prosperity and renewed liberalism (Amjad, 1989). The Khomeini backed government brought restrictions to the people of Iran in both religious and social matters (Daniel, 2001). Ahmadinejad's election in 2005 was disputably the first democratic election in Iran since Mohammad Khatami's attempt in the late 1990s to return the free press to Iran (Abdo, 2003). Both of these events changed the modern history of Iran. Comparing these two periods will reveal a shift in media coverage of Iran over the two

periods. A shift in media coverage is likely to reflect a shift in U.S. public opinion about Iran and terrorism.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### Background

Although Iran has not always been perceived by the U.S. as a threat, the U.S. government has consistently acted to minimize and prevent potential gaffes in its relations with Tehran, the Iranian capital. Radio and television broadcasts of U.S. generated programming to Iran began as early as 1942 (Izadi, 2009). Under the last Iranian monarch, Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, the United States and Iran enjoyed a relatively quiet and good relationship. The United States had even assisted in the removal of Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadeq, an enemy of the Shah's, in 1953 through the CIA (Gasiorowski & Byrne, 2004). Following a brief period of dissatisfaction by the American government with the Shah's inefficiency, the Kennedy administration set up a task force to assess Iran's problems. The task force agreed that political and socioeconomic repression were the cause of internal unrest. Agreements between Washington and Tehran led America to assist the Shah's government by providing funds to Iran under conditions that the Shah followed a model of capitalism leading to liberalization and modernization of the country (Amjad, 1989, p. 74-75).

During the 1960s, the Shah maintained a low political profile while pitting his enemies against each other during elections (Amjad, 1989, p. 98). Throughout this period he attempted to make minor reforms to Iranian precapitalist society. However, it was not until 1973 that he was able to fully put in place the American supported program of socioeconomic and political reform. In 1973, this program, which the Shah called the "White Revolution" was made up of six points. These were land reform, sale of state-owned factories to finance the land reform, voting rights for women, profit-sharing for industrial workers, the creation of a literary corps,

and the nationalization of forests. The aim of the Shah's White Revolution was to transform Iran from a precapitalist society into a fully capitalist society (Amjad, 1989, p. 78-79; Daniel, 2001).

During the same period, the Shah also professed his ambition to lead Iran to become the fifth world "super power" (Amjad, 1989, p. 98). Oil revenues steadily increased annually; however, an oil price rise by OPEC, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, in late 1973 substantially added to Iran's funds. With these additional funds, Iran secured arms from the United States under Richard Nixon (Wright, 1989, p. 8-9; Amjad, 1989).

Despite having implemented many reforms and having the support of the United States government, the Shah soon found himself in trouble, first with the mullahs, or Islamic clergy, and then with the people of Iran. Quick industrialization and urbanization led to a shortage of skilled and educated laborers (Rosen, 1985). Combined with a lack of infrastructural support for importing and exporting goods, the Iranian economy became paralyzed in the mid-1970s (Amjad, 1989, p. 92).

The Shah's economic failure as well as his failure to reform the political system led to protests. To make matters worse, many people were becoming upset with the Shah's close relationship with American presidents and culture. On November 13, 1977 the Shah left Iran for his twelfth visit to the United States in 36 years (Amjad, 1989, p. 119). While he was there, a group of Iranian students protested against him. Clashes between the protestors and embassy-recruited counterdemonstrators led the police to use tear gas to disperse the crowds. The following month, the Carter family spent New Year's Eve with the Shah in Iran (Amjad, 1989, p. 119). It was on that night that President Carter declared, "Iran under the leadership of the Shah is an island of stability," (Wright, 1989, p. 9)

A week after Carter made such a bold statement about Iranian stability, demonstrations ensued in the Iranian city of Qom following a newspaper article personally attacking the Ayatollah Khomeini. Police opened fire on the demonstrators and an unspecified number of people between 300 (Shah's government estimate) and 3000 (Khomeinist government estimate) were killed (Amjad, 1989; Martin, 2000).

Protests occurred in Iran on September fourth of somewhere between 200,000 and 500,000 people who wanted the Ayatollah Khomeini, who had been exiled to Iraq and then France to return to Iran (Wright, 1989, p. 11). This demonstration led to further demonstrations and strikes in 1978 culminating in what has been called "Black Friday" (Wright, 1989). After a series of protests between the fourth and the seventh, martial law was declared in Tehran and eleven other major cities in Iran. Immediate protests ensued from this declaration on September 8, 1978. In Jaleh, east of Tehran, the military surrounded a group of approximately 5000 young people and opened fire. Estimates on "Black Friday" casualties range from 97 to thousands (p. 11).

In December of 1978 the Shah, fearing imminent disintegration, turned to Dr. Shapour Bakhtiar, a member of his secular opposition to help him form a government in Tehran. The Shah decided to leave Iran in January 1979 to allow Dr. Bakhtiar to construct a new government without him present. On January 13, 1979, Ayatollah Khomeini announced that he would form a provisional government to replace the "illegal government" of the Shah. While the Ayatollah Khomeini would not be a part of this "Revolutionary Islamic Council," an interim government, he would provide guidance (Wright, 1989, p. 20). Several politicians attempted to mediate disputes between the Ayatollah Khomeini and Dr. Bakhtiar, but both parties were reluctant to

budge. During this period anti-government as well as pro-government marches continued, until demonstrations were banned on January 25<sup>th</sup> (Wright, 1989, p. 21).

On February 1, 1979 Ayatollah Khomeini returned to Iran from exile. He was greeted at the airport by an estimated 3,000,000 people. Due to the failure of Khomeini and Bakhtiar to reach an agreement, armed conflict broke out sporadically throughout early February between the armed forces and Khomeini's supporters. On February 11, the armed forces returned to their barracks and Dr. Bakhtiar stepped down (Wright, 1989; Amjad, 1989).

A referendum was held March 30-31, 1979. This referendum asked Iranians if they were for the replacement of the monarchy with an Islamic Republic. These were the only two options presented. This non-secret ballot resulted in an almost unanimous decision in favor of the Islamic Republic, agreed upon April 1, 1979 (Wright, 1989; Daniel, 2001).

Following Khomeini's coup d'état, the Shah and his family fled to the United States after brief stints in Egypt and Morocco (Wright, 1989, p. 20). The Shah maintained that he left for medical treatment of cancer and the United States government backed up this claim (Daniel, 2001) However, student groups began to lobby for the Shah to be returned to Iran to be put to trial. The United States refused to turn him over to Iran. On November 4, 1979 a group of students stormed the U.S. embassy in Tehran and took 52 American diplomats and staff hostage. They were held prisoner for 444 days while American media counted as each day passed (Kinzer, 2008).

Realizing that Iran was now vulnerable without America as an ally, Iraqi president Saddam Hussein invaded Iran in September 1980 (Kinzer, 2008; Rosen, 1985) following an eruption of cross-border fighting in July 1980 (Wright, 1989). Iran and Iraq had long disputed claims over territory at their borders. These borders had been vaguely decided in 1639 and again

in 1847, however, in practice they depended more upon the feelings of tribal leaders in the region (Wright, 1989). Angry about Iran's taking of American hostages from 1979-1981, the United States sided with Iraq (Daniel, 2001; Kinzer, 2008). Fighting continued between Iraq and Iran until both parties adopted a UN Security Council Resolution calling for a ceasefire in 1988 (Wright, 1989).

In June 1989, Ayatollah Khomeini died. Then President, Ayatollah Khamene'i took over control as supreme leader of Iran. In August 1989, Ali Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani was sworn in as the new President of Iran. In November 1989, over half a billion dollars of Iranian assets were unfrozen by the United States government. Seven months later, in June 1990, a major earthquake killed over 40,000 people in Iran, adding to the death toll following the war with Iraq (BBC, 2010; Daniel, 2001).

In 1996, under allegations that Iran was funding terrorist activity, most notably Hezbollah's operations in Lebanon, the United States began sanctions against Iran. These sanctions included restrictions on oil and trade. Iran denied the claims that the state was sponsoring terrorist activity of any kind (BBC, 2010; Daniel, 2001).

Mohammad Khatami was elected President of Iran in 1997, and reelected in 2001. He ran against the conservatives and won with 70% of the vote in 1997 (BBC, 2010; Daniel, 2001) and 78% of the vote in 2001 (Slavin, 2007). One of Khatami's goals during his presidency was to restore the free press (or a reasonable facsimile of the free press) to Iran (Abdo, 2003). A group of Tehrani intellectuals, who were mostly supporters of Khatami started "Jameah," the first free newspaper since the Islamic Revolution in 1998. The newspaper's sales topped break-even point in just a few weeks. However, in April, a quote from the head of the Revolutionary



Guards was published criticizing Khatami for allowing the newspaper to spread information and un-Islamic ideas and the paper was banned (Abdo, 2003).

In response, the same group of publishers started a new paper, “Tous.” In response to critical clerics, “Tous” was also eventually shut down, however newspapers were sprouting up all over Iran and readership of a newspaper in Tehran was over 80% in 1999 (Abdo, 2003, p. 882). The 2000 Masjis, the Iranian parliament, election was overwhelmingly swayed by the press. After such a blow to Khatami’s government, he closed over 50 progressive newspapers, but allowed some others to stay open (Abdo, 2003, p. 884).

In January 2002, American President George W. Bush, following the September 11, 2001 attacks, labeled Iran as part of the “axis-of-evil” along with Iraq and North Korea. Later in September 2002, Russian technicians began work on Iran’s first nuclear reactor. By September 2003, the United Nations asked Iran to prove it was not trying to create nuclear weapons. Under pressure from the U.N., Iran ceased nuclear enrichments in November 2003 (BBC, 2010).

The 2005 election was the first election after Khatami’s presidency, as he had served the maximum two terms. The significance behind the election is that it was the first election in Iran where there was at least partially a free press in Iran (Abdo, 2003). Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who had previously been mayor of Tehran, ran against former President Rafsanjani. Ahmadinejad’s mission was to restore the Islamic Republic. Through appealing to the masses as an ordinary citizen without the luxurious comforts and expensive accessories that his opponents had, he won over voters who wanted change to come for Iran’s poor (Naji, 2008).

After two counts of the ballots (a first round of elections similar to the American primaries, and a runoff election) and two early calls of the election by hard-line Newspaper, “Kayhan,” in Ahmadinejad’s favor, Ahmadinejad came to power in Iran on August 3, 2005. To

many in Iran, Ahmadinejad's election was a symbol of a renewed sense of the Islamic Republic. He spoke negatively about Khatami's reforms very shortly after being elected (Naji, 2008).

Iran's liberals and moderates as well as the international community were worried about what Ahmadinejad's election would mean. Just a month into his presidency, Ahmadinejad left to visit New York to speak at the United Nations about the crisis over Iran's nuclear program (Naji, 2008). During this period, Iran also resumed conversion of uranium at the Isfahan facility (BBC, 2010). The United Nations as well as the IAEA, an overseeing body of the U.N. ordered that the Iranian government cease the nuclear program. Iran remained unmoved so the United Nations Security Council levied sanctions against Iran and threatened further action if uranium enrichment activities did not cease (Naji, 2008).

It has been speculated that Iran did not take these warnings from the United Nations seriously. The United States, the biggest proponent of ending Iran's nuclear program, was already involved in two wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Perhaps Ahmadinejad did not believe consequences would follow if the nuclear program wasn't stopped. And indeed, while sanctions have been imposed, the consequences to Iran of continuing the nuclear program have not been grave (Naji, 2008). Ahmadinejad was since re-elected and as of early 2010, the United States has not taken military action against Iran.

Over the past few decades, Iran's government has changed its positions as well as its political system. Iran has gone from a constitutional monarchy to what some would call a dictatorship (Amjad, 1989, p. 98) under the Shah. The Islamic revolution brought about theocracy, which has slowly shifted in the direction of a democratic republic. Throughout these political changes, media coverage of Iran in the U.S. has changed. Several scholars have addressed these changes

in U.S. media coverage of Iran during different periods of time in relation to political and social changes in Iran.

### Media studies of U.S.-Iran Relations

Iran has historically drawn the interest of the U.S. media, but in some time periods there has been more coverage than at other periods. Of the media studies specifically about Iran, the majority have investigated the U.S. media's response to the hostage crisis in Iran, which lasted from late 1979 to early 1981 (Roushanzamir, 2004). A study by Roushanzamir (2004) attempted to fill some of the gaps between 1981 and the present by looking at the portrayal of Iranian women in U.S. print media from 1995-1998. Other, less Iranian specific, studies have looked at Iran as part of a group of Middle Eastern countries or Islamic countries in the media. These studies have found that stories about terror in the Middle East and other Islamic countries pervade Western media (Arsenault & Castells, 2006; Ibrahim, 2010; Ismail, 2009; Klein, 2009; Liebes & Kampf, 2009a; Liebes & Kampf 2009b; Mral, 2006; Peng, 2008; Reese & Lewis, 2009; Ross & Bantimaroudis, 2006; Seo, Johnson, & Stein, 2009; Wessler & Adolphsen, 2008; Winch, 2005).

Shoar-Ghaffari (1985) found that the *New York Times* treated coverage of Iran negatively compared with *Times of London* in the period from 1968-1978. When this period was divided between pre and post oil crisis (1973-1974), there were negative changes in both papers' coverage after the oil crisis, however the negative change within the *Times of London* was not statistically significant. Over both periods, the *New York Times* treated more Iranian topics negatively than did the *Times of London*. This study also found that the amount of trade

conducted during the time period was a good indicator of the amount of coverage that Iran received in both countries' media (p. 146).

Wanta and Golan (2001) found that "core nations," those in power, particularly the western powers, tend to report mostly about other core nations and to discuss "periphery nations" only as they related to core nations' interests. "By possessing nuclear arms, being involved in drug trafficking, and/or having high military expenditures," a periphery nation could become more visible in the stream of international news (Wanta & Golan, 2001, p. 23). Wanta, Golan and Lee (2004) found that U.S. media focused most of their negative coverage on those "core nations," including Iran, that were most considered a threat to U.S. interests or to world peace.

Malici and Buckner (2008) also argue that the U.S. media has framed Iran (along with Syria) as the source of any contentions between the United States and Iran (p. 798).

Ahmadinejad is portrayed as hostile. They also argue that little attention is paid to the historical roots of problems between the United States and Iran, but rather the media "substitutes labels and slogans for reflection and analysis," (p. 798).

Altheide (1985) found that the content of television news reports during the 1979-1981 hostage crisis began to shift as new video of the hostages was not available. In January 1980, the Iranian government expelled American journalists, leading to a large decline in the number of reports coming from Tehran. In the period after this, television news began relying more heavily on reports of the families of hostages and geographic location shifted (p. 350). This study also found that certain topics related to the hostage crisis (hostages, families, Shah of Iran, Iranian government, Iran- internal problems, Iran-external problems, U.S.A. government actions and statements, international, and Iranian students) received more attention in the television news

than other topics. Prevalence over time could change dramatically; however, over the entire length of the hostage crisis, information about the U.S.A. government actions and statements was the prevailing leader (p. 348).

In *Terrorism and the Media*, Nacos (1994) looked at *CBS Evening News* and *New York Times* coverage of the hostage crisis. The study found that during different periods in the hostage crisis, news about the crisis originated in different places. These included Washington, DC, which was primarily information from government officials, Tehran, and other domestic locations, where stories about families of the hostages tended to originate. There were also differences between print and television countries in news origination. The *New York Times* stories were more likely to have originated in various places, as Nacos explains because print media can cut across several news beats.

Palmerton (1988) investigated the rhetorical implications of the news coverage of the hostage situation in Tehran and terrorism on a larger scope. When looking at how the leaders of the United States and Iran were framed in the media, Palmerton found that CBS' descriptions of President Carter and his administration showed them to "lack initiative; they are portrayed as predominantly reactive" (p. 112). Conversely, Palmerton also found that CBS' descriptions of Ayatollah Khomeini enhanced the image of Carter as being reactive. "Khomeini is described as the motivator behind others' actions in Iran" (p. 113). The study showed that even during the hostage crisis, Khomeini was continually framed as the "mastermind" behind Iranian turmoil.

Roushanzamir's (2004) study of images of Iranian women in U.S. print media attempted to fill the gaps between the hostage crisis of the early 1980s and contemporary Iran in the American media. Roushanzamir found that more often than not, in American print media, the Iranian woman was portrayed as "covered, faceless, and black" (p. 24). While there was

variation from story to story, overwhelmingly, the image of the Iranian woman in U.S. print media falls on the traditionally subordinate side of a dichotomy between traditional and modern.

## CHAPTER THREE: THEORIES

The two main theoretical frameworks that this study uses are agenda-setting and framing theory. Agenda-setting has two levels. First level agenda-setting deals with the media's ability to influence what people think about. Second level agenda-setting explores how the media present issues in a way that can influence how people feel about those issues. Framing theory explains how the media organize principles, which may lead consumers of media to draw certain inferences about a given story. These theories are interconnected and help to explain why particular stories get more news coverage than others and how those stories are covered using organizing principles to simplify what are often large amounts of information.

### Agenda-setting

Agenda-setting research as it applies to the media began in 1968 with McCombs and Shaw's (1972) study of campaign issues in the 1968 presidential election. McCombs and Shaw hypothesized that, "While the mass media may have little influence on the direction or intensity of attitudes, the mass media set the agenda for each political campaign, influencing the salience of attitudes toward the political issues" (p. 177). They surveyed 100 residents of Chapel Hill, NC to find out which issues residents believed were most important in the 1968 election. Concurrently, McCombs and Shaw also conducted a content analysis of media serving the Chapel Hill area.

McCombs and Shaw (1972) found that there was a strong relationship between the media's emphasis on certain campaign issues and the perceived salience of those issues among voters. They also noted that while certain issues were more prevalent in one form of media than another, "voters tend to share the media's composite definition of what is important" (p. 184).

They argued that interpreting their results as an agenda-setting function of the media seems more plausible than other possible explanations. Because most people, save those who are working on campaigns, have no other access to daily changes in the political arena, McCombs and Shaw argued, the ordinary voter relies primarily on news media for information about elections. Due to this reliance, the media is able to successfully engage in agenda-setting.

Studies have corroborated McCombs and Shaw's findings at different levels. Schoenbach and Semetko (1992) found that regular news consumption and interest in events were indicators of issue salience, a construct by which agenda-setting is often measured (p. 846). McLeod, Becker, and Byrnes (1974) found that there are four orientations of the audience that contribute to the agenda-setting function of the media. Using these four orientations, based on partisanship, along with Wanta and Wu's (1992) finding that interpersonal discussion is a predictor of a person's individual agenda, Scheufele (2000) developed an analytic model of agenda-setting, priming, and framing as inter-related concepts.

Scholars have also found support for media filtering real world events (Iyengar, 1979; Weaver & Elliot, 1985; McCombs, 1997). Although different studies have found varying levels of overlap between real world events and media coverage, the consensus is that there appears to be some active filtering, but the media's agenda is at least loosely related to real world events (Iyengar, 1979; Weaver & Elliot, 1985). The relationship between the events the public observe and what the media cover can influence a community's image of itself (McCombs, 1997).

"Television news shapes the American public's political priorities," (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987, p. 33). Agenda-setting effects are neither momentary nor permanent (Stone & McCombs, 1981; Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; Roberts & McCombs, 1994). The amount of time that it takes for a story to be covered by the media can vary substantially (Stone & McCombs, 1981; Wanta &



Yu-wei, 1994) although with the expansion of internet use, the time lag may be shrinking (Roberts, Wanta, & Dzwo, 2002) The public's memory for older news appears to be limited and when the media focuses on an issue, the priorities of the general public are altered until the media moves on to a new topic (Gormley, 1975; Iyengar & Kinder, 1987).

A criticism of agenda-setting theory is that researchers do not take into account the audience members who are not solely relying on the mass media for information. In order to test this hypothesis, Salwen (1987) studied individuals who were not dependent upon the media for their news as compared with those who were. While he found a strong correlation between the two groups, there were some subtle differences. Salwen argues that agenda-setting is not merely a mass media phenomenon, as interpersonal experience (whether influenced or not by mass media) and direct experience also affect an issue's salience (Salwen, 1987, p. 29).

Critics argue that if the real-world occurrence of events matches with media coverage, then it should follow in suit that audiences attach a higher importance to such issues and public-opinion should also influence media. Behr and Iyengar (1985) found that "news coverage of national issues may be quite indifferent to prevailing conditions," (p. 40). However, public opinion seems to have no effect on media coverage. They also suggested that the public has a short-term memory so to speak with a very limited memory for past conditions, hence a heavy reliance on present news coverage (p. 53).

In recent years, scholars have added to the agenda-setting framework. One addition to the framework is the concept of second level agenda-setting. Second level agenda-setting is a relatively new construct in communication and public opinion research. Second level agenda-setting's addition to the agenda-setting literature has led to what has just been discussed to be referred to in some cases as first level agenda-setting.

Second level agenda-setting is seen as a merger between agenda-setting research and framing theory research. The distinction between framing and second level agenda-setting while slight is an important one. While framing theory deals with the idea that how an issue is presented by the media is how it will become salient in the public's minds, second level agenda-setting, which is derived from work by McCombs and Shaw (1972) describes the media's tendency to attribute traits to issues resulting in the public making those same attributions (Rill & Davis 2008).

Second level agenda-setting theory explains that through media coverage of an event, the public will develop an opinion about the event based on the type of coverage the news gives to those specific attributes. By covering attributes in either a positive, negative, or neutral tone, the media help the public not only decide on the importance of the issues being covered but also how to feel about the issues (p. 611).

### Framing

The concept behind framing theory is that how an issue is presented in the media can influence how it is understood by audiences. Framing theory is rooted in psychology and sociology. Framing theory is both a macro level theory and a micro level theory (Scheufele & Tewksbury 2007).

When applying framing theory to a particular phenomenon, the unit of analysis is the frame. According to Reese and Lewis (2009), "frames are organizing principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world" (p. 777). Framing, as explored by Sheaffer and Gabay (2009) is defined as "selecting and

highlighting some facets of events or issues, and making connections among them so as to promote a particular interpretation, evaluation, and/or solution (Sheafer & Gabay, 2009, p. 449).

The psychological basis of framing theory originated in a study conducted by Kahneman and Tversky (Scheufele & Tewksbury 2007). While their study had a heavy emphasis on economic risk decision-making, Kahneman and Tversky (1984) found that by presenting two equivalent options differently, people would make different decisions on their outcomes. They found that in decisions that required a gamble or risk to be made, that people were more likely to choose the option that was framed positively or was a “sure thing.” The sociological basis of framing theory was derived from Goffman’s (1974) idea that people are in a constant struggle to interpret their life experiences and make meaning of them in their context within the world (Scheufele & Tewksbury 2007).

Iyengar (1991) argued that language variations other than specific wording provide contextual cues which may impact the way people think about an issue. Iyengar (1991) traced the origins of framing to psychological work done by Kahneman and; however Iyengar was one of the first to apply the concept of framing to mass communication and political research.

According to Iyengar, media reports can be classified as episodic or thematic. Episodic accounts detail a specific event or case. Thematic reports give a more over-arching idea about a topic area. While Iyengar argued that stories rarely fit one end of this dichotomy, it is possible to categorize news stories as more of one than the other. Because of time constraints, most news is episodic, focusing on an isolated event rather than the possible political or social conditions that may have led up to the event. Exposure to primarily episodic programming could impact the public’s perceptions of societal problems.

Looking at the areas of terrorism, crime, poverty, unemployment, and racial inequality, Iyengar found that in general, the more episodic programming viewers were exposed to, the less often they tended to attribute these misfortunes as being caused by society. Iyengar (1991) hypothesized that “Americans’ failure to see interconnections between issues may be a side effect of episodic news coverage” (p. 136). Furthermore, Iyengar found that the simplification of complex problems into episodic fragments in the media “leads viewers to issue-specific attributions of responsibility” (p. 137). This issue-specific attribution shields society and government from responsibility and places near-complete responsibility for issues on the individual.

Entman (1989) offered a similar explanation of why framing takes place. While Iyengar (1991) focused on episodic story-telling as media’s solution for time constraints, Entman focused on where news originates. He argues that because production of media is a business, journalists’ primary goal is to maximize profit by cutting costs. In order to do so, media tend to rely on information provided by government officials and other authority figures involved. These officials many not always be as unbiased as the journalists reporting the news strive to be. Entman also argued that although economic pressures may not always be a direct force, brevity, simplicity, predictability, and timeliness do directly guide the creation of news. These factors are affected by the desire to make a profit. Sheafer and Gabay (2009) also stated that more often than not, journalists tend to accept the frames that are provided by their own governments (p. 449).

Entman, like Iyengar, also argued that media tend to produce simple stories. He labeled this as the simplification bias and argues that simple stories are convenient, inexpensive, and safe. These stories maximize profits for news agencies. In order to keep stories as simple as

possible, the media employ schemas, symbols that may engage little understood emotional needs (Entman, 1989, p. 84). These schemas in turn make it easier for the public to understand the news in relation to their own experience and prior knowledge.

When framing theory is applied to media, it is referring to the way journalists and other communicators present information to the public. This presentation is usually done in a way to make information fit within an individual's already existing cognitive schema or body of knowledge in a way that will make sense to the consumer. Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007) suggested that this is not necessarily done by journalists maliciously to deceive their audiences, but rather it "is a necessary tool to reduce the complexity of an issue, given the constraints of their respective media related to news holes and airtime" (p. 12).

Scheufele (1999), drawing upon Entman's (1993) work, distinguished between the frames that the media present and the frames the audience has in their minds about the issues the media present. Based upon this distinction between media frames and audience frames, Scheufele presented a model of framing as a media effect that takes into account both the media and the audience. In this model, Scheufele suggested an interdependent loop of frame building, which is first presented by the media and then reinforced by the feedback received by individual audience members (p. 115).

### Interaction of Agenda-setting and Framing

Both first level agenda-setting and framing theories look at the macroscopic level at which a message is constructed (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007, p. 12). Although first level agenda-setting research and theory is concerned with the amount of time discussing a particular topic and the salience it is given within the individual's cognitive processes, framing theory is

concerned with the context in which the information is actually presented and later interpreted. In other words, agenda-setting theory is concerned with whether we think about an issue, and framing theory is concerned with how we think about an issue. Scholars have also argued that framing theory is very similar to a second level agenda-setting, in which the media are not only concerned with how much individuals think about a topic, but what they think about when they think about that particular topic (Edy & Meirik 2007).

### Studies on Framing and Agenda-setting of International News

According to Paletz and Entman (1981), the media “fail to provide a diversity of descriptions of foreign countries, their leaders, and policies” (p. 215). Paletz and Entman explain this “failure” by shortages in time, knowledge, labor, and interest that reporters face. Due to these shortages, “ambiguous events are likely to be reported to conform to familiar expectations and stereotypes” (p. 216). Paletz and Entman also argue that this familiarization of information, framing, is inevitable (p. 216).

A study by Brewer, Graf, and Willnat (2003) found that by applying different frames to international events, people’s perceptions of those events could be altered. In their study, participants were primed using articles about terrorism, drug use, and control articles. Participants then read either negative articles linking Libya and Iran to terrorism or positive articles about the war on drugs in Mexico and Colombia. The researchers found that people responded to the articles in a way that was congruent with their expectations of how the media frames these issues.

Brewer (2006) found that when another country was framed as a competitor to the U.S. national interest, people viewed that country less favorably. The converse was also demonstrated, that when a nation was framed as a contributor to national interest, people viewed

that nation more favorably (p. 98). Feldstein and Acosta-Alzuru (2003) found similar results in a study which looked at Jews in Argentina being framed as Israelis following the 19 bombing of the AMIA, Israelite Argentinean Mutual Aid Association. When this particular frame was used in the Argentinean media, the bombing was seen as an extension of the conflict in the Middle East, rather than an internal problem (p. 163). The Argentinean media framed the victims, in this case Jewish civilians, as foreigners living in Argentina. Feldstein and Acosta-Alzuru found that as a result of this framing, people were more likely to consider this bombing a Jewish problem rather than an Argentinean problem (p. 160).

In chapter four of the book *The "Great Satan" vs. the "Mad Mullahs,"* Beeman (2005) explored the rhetorical implications of using the word *terrorism* to describe Iranian governmental actions, particularly beginning in the 1980s. Beeman argues that this trend began during the hostage crisis and picked up momentum through the 1980s, culminating with what Beeman cites as a pivotal moment in the use of the word *terrorism* describing what Iran does. Beeman cites Geoffrey Nunberg's description of how the word *terrorism* has become a rhetorical tool in U.S. elite media:

By the 1980's, terrorism was being applied to all manner of political violence. There was a flap over the word in 1989 when the *New York Times* editor A. M. Rosenthal attacked Christopher Hitchens for refusing to describe the fatwa against Salman Rushdie as terrorism. Hitchens had a good point. The fatwa may have been repugnant, but it was far from an act of indiscriminate violence - more like state-sponsored contract killing. But by then the word had acquired a kind of talismanic force - as if refusing to describe something as terrorism was the next thing to apologizing for it. By the 1990's, people

were crying terrorism whenever they discerned an attempt at intimidation or disruption.  
(p. 40)

A study by Reese and Lewis (2009) explored the frame of terrorism in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 attacks. They argue that governments use “pre-existing cultural resources, codes, and genres of interpretation to mobilize support and legitimize military action” when preparing for war (p. 780). These pre-existing cultural resources allow for a loop between governmental policy, media coverage, and public opinion so that over time, all are in sync with one another. Reese and Lewis also argue that President Bush’s administration was able to reinforce the frame of terrorism and threat as it applied to Iraq through juxtaposition of 9/11 and terrorism with Iraq in speeches and news stories (p. 782).

Reese and Lewis (2009) also found that the engagement of frames was found on three different levels. These types of engagement were transmission, reification, and naturalized. Transmission is the act of making reference to a specific national policy. Reification refers to dropping the context in which an aspect has been constructed, particularly once it has become “common place.” Naturalization refers to an uncontested view of the world, when something has become accepted as fact by the general public (Reese & Lewis, 2009, p. 784). Their study showed that journalists too internalized the frames presented by the Bush administration for the “war on terror.”

A study by Lehmann (2005) found differences in the way Iraq was presented in the U.S. media compared to the German media before the war began in 2003. While U.S. media as early as January 2003 reported that war was inevitable, German television news media was reporting on the UN’s ongoing inspections of Iraq. According to Lehmann, the German media was framing its antiwar stance along with other antiwar nations as the U.S. prepared for war (p. 85).



A study by Craft and Wanta (2004) found that certain issues were more prevalently linked to coverage of Afghanistan and terrorism just following the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks. In their study, Craft and Wanta found that eight issues were frequently juxtapositioned in newspaper and local television reports about the war. These eight issues were the length of the war, future terrorist attacks, and the effect on the economy, Israel-Palestine conflict, biological threats, air travel safety, war protests, and Afghan civilian deaths. Using a telephone survey, Craft and Wanta asked people which issues they were most concerned about with regards to Afghanistan and the war on terror. They found that the top issues covered by the media in relation to Afghanistan were also the top issues with which people were concerned.

Steuter and Wills (2009) argue that images of the enemy in Canadian media have been used to frame the “War on Terror.” They posit that the dominant frame of the Muslim has been that of an animal, more particularly, a pest. Steuter and Wills support this claim by referencing the photographs that surfaced at Abu Ghraib in 2007. The photos of the prisoners were published in the media with headlines such as “Terror suspect kept on short leash” (p. 20), implying that these prisoners were merely dogs.

Ibrahim (2010) found that there was a vast difference between how American Muslims as opposed to Muslims living in the Middle East were portrayed in television news. “American Muslims were framed as an integral part of American life while non-American Muslims were depicted as violent and threatening. There were competing frames within the coverage, where the Islam practiced in the U.S. was legitimate, while Islam outside the U.S. was illegitimate” (Ibrahim, 2010, p. 121).

Media studies about the U.S. and Iran and studies about the U.S. and the Islamic world have found that Iranians and Muslims are frequently portrayed as terrorists, even when no

violent activity has occurred. These studies have found evidence that frames have been used to portray a hostile enemy in the Middle East in U.S. and other Western media. The portrayal of a violent enemy in the Middle East as well as keeping that violent enemy as a main focal point in news stories can be explained using agenda-setting and framing theories.

Scholars such as Beeman (2005), Ibrahim (2010), and Craft and Wanta (2004) have indicated that terrorism coverage in the Middle East changes over time. Definitions of terrorism vary between sources and activities that may not have always constituted *terrorism* by mainstream definitions now fall into such a category. Combined with a turbulent history, studying American elite newspaper coverage of Iran in relation to terrorism will provide insight into what has been a key issue in Iran's recent history. These changes in use of words relating to terror may change the way issues are framed and may be confusing to the general public.

#### Linking of Iran to terrorism in American media

In light of the relatively friendly relationship between Tehran and Washington during the Shah's reign, the present study expected to find little linking Iran to terrorism or hostility in the period before the Islamic Revolution in 1979. However, because of the hostile nature of Khomeini's takeover, it would be expected that there would be a higher incidence of stories that link Iran to terrorism in the period after the new government took control in early 1979.

In regards to Ahmadinejad, the United States government appeared initially to be pleased by a seemingly working democratic election in Iran in 2005, influenced by Khatami's efforts at restoring a free press to Iran, as well as a growing distaste for Khatami and a sense of "relief" that a new leader would take over in Iran. Therefore, it could be predicted that stories leading up

to the election would have more frequent mentions of terrorism in relation to Iran than stories in the period just after Ahmadinejad's election.

In comparing the two longer periods of 1979 and 2005 (which will be referred to as 1 and 2 respectively), It would be expected that given the historical context, both in Iran and on the world stage regarding terrorism, that there is more written about terrorism and Iran in 2005 than in 1979.

The first hypothesis states that the coverage of Iran as it relates to terrorism will show a higher incidence in the period after Khomeini took power than before, or  $H_1: \text{terror coverage}_{1a} < \text{terror coverage}_{1b}$

The second hypothesis states that the coverage of Iran as it relates to terrorism will show a higher incidence in the period preceding Ahmadinejad's rise to power than after, or  $H_2: \text{terror coverage}_{2a} > \text{terror coverage}_{2b}$

The third hypothesis states that the coverage of Iran as it relates to terrorism will show a higher incidence in the period surrounding Ahmadinejad's rise to power than the period surrounding Khomeini's rise to power, or  $H_3: \text{terror coverage}_1 < \text{terror coverage}_2$

## CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

This study is a quantitative content analysis of elite American print media coverage of Iran. Content analysis is frequently used in media studies to make sense of discourse. Defined by Kerlinger (1986), content analysis is “systematic, objective, and quantitative” (p. 477).

Using the LexisNexis and ProQuest databases, articles were collected from *The New York Times* and *Washington Post*; the two American newspapers with overall highest circulation during both periods of study (Audit Bureau of Circulations, 2010). All articles about Iran for two year-long periods: the six months before and after the Islamic Revolution (April 1, 1979) and the six months before and after Ahmadinejad’s election (August 3, 2005) were collected. By extending the period of coverage examined well before and after episodic events that would attract media interest and result in news coverage, the study allowed for a clear comparison from the void of news preceding the event through the eventual diminishing of coverage as interest waned afterward. Only articles about Iran that appeared in the first section of their respective papers were used since that is where all foreign-policy news appeared in each paper. Editorials were included in analysis so long as they appeared in the first section of the newspaper. One front section “article” was excluded from analysis as it was an answer key to a previous day’s puzzle.

Using a keyword and topic search in the databases, the articles were then searched within the subset of articles about Iran for those dealing with *terror*, *terrorism*, or *terrorist(s)*. These articles were separated and used for analysis. In order to determine how coverage of Iran has changed over time in relation to terrorism, each story was analyzed using word processing

software to open each article, to find occurrences of words linking Iran to terrorism such as *terror*, *terrorists*, *terrorism*, *terrorize* or any other word with *terror* as a root.

Two coding units were derived from these searches. The first was the news story itself: the incidence of stories about Iran that were also about terror. The second unit of analysis was the words: the number of times cognates of the word *terror* appeared in the articles.

To test  $H_1$  and  $H_2$ , a two-way chi-square test was used to determine whether the differences between the incidence of articles about Iran that were about terrorism and the ones that were not about terrorism were significant between periods 1a and 1b (before and after Khomeini took power in 1979) and again for periods 2a and 2b (before and after Ahmadinejad took power in 2005). An independent samples t-test was then used to determine if the differences between the incidences of times cognates of the word *terror* appeared in each article about Iran were different between periods 1a and 1b and again for periods 2a and 2b.

To test  $H_3$ , periods 1a and 1b were combined into period 1 and periods 2a and 2b into period 2. Using these combined year long periods, another two-way chi-square test and another independent t-test were run just as they were for the first 2 hypotheses. The first was to determine if the differences in incidence of articles about and not about terrorism were significantly the different. The second was to determine if the difference in cognate count between the two periods was significant.

## CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS

In period 1a, the six months prior to Ayatollah Khomeini coming to power in Iran, there were 936 front section articles in the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* about Iran, ( $N_{\text{NYT}} = 519$ ,  $N_{\text{WP}} = 417$ ). During period 1b, the six months after the Ayatollah Khomeini came to power, there were 261 articles, ( $N_{\text{NYT}} = 60$ ,  $N_{\text{WP}} = 231$ ). The total number of articles for the 1978-1979 period 1 was 1198.

For period 2a, the six months prior to Ahmadinejad taking office as President of Iran, there were 450 articles, ( $N_{\text{NYT}} = 280$ ,  $N_{\text{WP}} = 170$ ). During period 2b, after Ahmadinejad took office, there were 505 articles, ( $N_{\text{NYT}} = 313$ ,  $N_{\text{WP}} = 192$ ). The total number of articles for the 2005-2006 period 2 was 955.

Table 1 shows the incidence of articles about Iran over each time period. It also shows the incidence of articles about Iran that were also about terror/terrorism. Finally, the last column shows within the articles about Iran and terror/terrorism how many times cognates of the word *terror* (terrorism, terrorist, terrorize) appeared.

During period 1a, 3.10% of the articles about Iran were also about terror. For period 1b that number grew to 10.31%. For the second group, during period 2a, 28.67% of the articles about Iran were also about terrorism. In period 2b, this number rose slightly to 32.48%. The mean for all articles was 19.86%.

The chi-square between period 1a and period 1b showed a significant difference ( $p < .001$ ) between the incidence of articles about terrorism and Iran from period 1a to period 1b. The

mean incidence of cognates per article in period 1a was 0.0470. For period 1b the mean was 0.1993. This difference was also significant at  $p < .001$ .

**Table 1: Incidence of Articles and Words about Iran and Terror Sorted by Time Period**

Time Period	Incidence of Iran Articles	Incidence of Iran & Terror Articles	Incidence of Terror Cognates
1a) October 1, 1978 - March 31, 1979	936	29	44
1b) April 2, 1979 - October 1, 1979	231	30	58
2a) February 3, 2005 - August 2, 2005	450	129	279
2b) August 4, 2005 - February 3, 2006	505	164	245

The chi-square between period 2a and period 2b did not show a significant difference ( $p = .203$ ) between the incidence of articles about terrorism and Iran from period 2a to period 2b. The mean incidence of cognates per article in period 2a was 0.620. For period 2b the mean was 0.491. This difference was statistically significant at  $p < .05$ , where  $p = .024$ . The difference was in the same direction as the hypothesis (less terror cognates in more articles about Iran).

The chi-square test to test  $H_3$  showed a significant difference between period 1 and period 2 ( $p < .001$ ). During period 1, 4.8% of the articles about Iran were also about terrorism. During

period 2, 30.7% of the articles about Iran were also about terrorism. The t-test between the means of cognates per article was also statistically significant ( $p < .001$ ). The mean for period 1 was .0831 as compared with period 2's mean of .5518.

$H_1$  and  $H_3$  were both supported at both the story level and the cognate level. Although  $H_2$  was supported at the cognate level,  $H_2$  was not supported at the story level. While cognates of the word *terror* appeared more often in period 4, the difference in the incidence of articles about terrorism in Iran was not statistically different.



## CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

There were pronounced differences in U.S. elite newspaper coverage of Iran during the four periods of this study. From period 1a (before the Ayatollah Khomeini took power) to period 1b (after the Ayatollah Khomeini took power) there was a sharp rise in the proportion of stories about Iran that involved terrorism as well as how often cognates of the word terror appeared in those stories. However, during period 1a, there were more stories in the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* than any other period about Iran.

From period 2a (before Ahmadinejad took power) to period 2b (after Ahmadinejad took power) there were also differences in coverage. More stories about terrorism were featured during period 2b; however the difference was not statistically significant. In period 2b, however there was also less use of terror cognates than there had been in period 2a.

Perhaps the most profound difference in the data is the difference between 1979 and 2005 use of the word “terror.” At the article level, less than 60 articles about Iran and terrorism were published in the front section of the two papers in the 1978-1979 period. However, in the 2005-2006 period, there were 293 such articles. Notably, there were more articles about Iran published in the former period. Use of cognates of the word terror also dramatically increased. There were fewer than 100 mentions of the words in the 1970s and over 500 mentions in the 2000s.

During the 1970s, it is possible that other words were used to describe what we have become accustomed to referring to as *terrorism*. As stated earlier, some scholars cite the origins of the modern media obsession with using *terrorism* as a catchall label as happening in 1980s at some point between the hostage crisis and the fatwa issued against Salman Rushdie.

Similar words to *terrorist* that have been trendy during different periods of media history include guerilla, insurgent, and enemy combatant. All have been used in varying contexts, but have been used to construct a frame very similar to that of the “terrorist.” However, a closer look at the content of the stories from the 1970s reveals that many stories focused more on the American hostages than it did upon the student groups who were holding them hostage.

The word *terrorism* has become a frame in its own right. While in the 1970s the word terrorism may have been reserved for outright thoughtless killing, in a post-September 11<sup>th</sup> world, the word has been used to describe a range of things from ideological differences to outright merciless killing.

Using words such as *terror* to describe a situation or event gives the reader cues on how to think about that event. In news stories placing terror cognates around words may influence the way people feel about an event. For example, several national governments have been accused in the media recently of giving money to terrorists. By linking a particular government with those terrorists there may be an influence on how someone perceives that government, regardless of if these *terrorists* have actually committed any violent acts.

Another reason for lower use of *terror* in 1979 could be the context surrounding the period. During the first part of the time period, as hypothesized, very little coverage of Iran had to do with terrorism, this is because Iran was not a threat to the United States at that time and was in the process of liberalizing under the Shah. Shortly after Khomeini’s takeover, a group of students took over the American embassy and took 52 hostages. At that time use of the word terror increased, however, it was much lower than it would become in 2005.

It is possible that because the hostage crisis was initiated by a student group, they were continually referred to in that way. It is also possible that coverage focused on the Khomeini regime's opposition to the Shah and terms such as "oppressive government" were used to indicate who was to blame. In the past, terrorism has been defined as something that happens under the radar and is not typically an overt tool of governments. Additionally, several studies on the hostage crisis indicate that as time passed, more news stories tended to focus on the families and lives of the Americans who were being held hostage rather than on the hostage-takers themselves.

September 11, 2001 has also drastically changed the way we as a public as well as the media look at incidents. The Bush administration vehemently denied that there was evidence something like September 11<sup>th</sup> would happen. And although the reports that have come out say otherwise, perhaps that is partially true. The old adage "hind sight is 20/20" could be correct in this case.

Because of our shared national (and to an extent global) experience on September 11<sup>th</sup>, it is possible that we as a nation, as well as our media see the potential in people and events to lead to a terror. While prior to September 11<sup>th</sup>, Iran building nuclear reactors may not have meant much, in a post September 11<sup>th</sup> world, all of the "what ifs" come into play. As a nation we have at least partially learned to take caution ahead of time, even if it means we err on the side of labeling something *terror* when it truly is not.

While September 11<sup>th</sup> was not the focal point of this study, the impact of the implications of that day become more apparent when looking at two periods of time, before and after the terrorist attacks. The agenda-setting function of the media, in this case elite newspapers, is

supported by this study. The increase in stories about Iran and terrorism in 2005 indicates that this is something that the American public should be thinking about.

Framing theory is concerned with the idea that frames which have been presented by the media are highlighting certain facets of an event in a way to promote a particular interpretation of that event (Entman, 1989). In this case, using the terror frame could be detrimental to not only the American public's interpretation of Iran, but also to U.S.-Iranian relations which are already strained. By linking Iran to terror so frequently, the American elite press is helping to exacerbate a skewed image of the Middle East which scholars have demonstrated already exists.

Although scholars have argued that simple stories work best because they are easy to convey and cost-effective (Entman, 1989), journalists and news organizations ought to be making more of an effort to strike a balance between efficient and clear reporting. The purpose of frames is to make information easier to understand. There are two problems with this idea. First, it assumes that the public does not know much about current events without the media providing information (Iyengar, 1991). While everyone cannot be expected to know everything about every event, a news seeking population can understand many things. Second, it assumes that the frames actually make information easier to understand. If different types of descriptions of terrorism are being propagated throughout news sources, disambiguation will occur and the public will no longer understand the difference between varying degrees of what is and what is not terrorism.

Although this study did not assess the different events that were associated with the use of the word "terrorism" and its cognates, the fact that such a dramatic increase in incidence emerged between the two time periods may indicate that the term is being used to describe a

broad spectrum of events. Using cognates of the word *terror* to describe a broad spectrum of events or ideas could lead to confusion by the news seeking populace on how grave a danger that given event or idea actually poses to the public. While frames are intended to make information easier to understand, it is possible that in this case they are making information more difficult to understand.

### Limitations

As with all research, there are several limitations to this study. The first is that as mentioned previously in the discussion, I only looked for occurrences of cognates of the word “terror.” Other words may have been used in not only 1979, but 2005 as well to denote a similar construct or frame. Second, terror is the only frame that this study looked at. Rather than comparing the terror frame to another frame, I chose to compare the terror frame across time. Third, this study only looked at incidence of occurrences of these frames. I did not evaluate the position of *terror* cognates to other words or names.

### Future Research

Future research should focus more specifically on Iran since September 11<sup>th</sup>. Two main types of research about Iran in the media have been done. The first is analysis of coverage of the hostage crisis. The second is post-September 11<sup>th</sup> coverage with Iran lumped together with other nations into a George W. Bush style “axis-of-evil.”

More research should also be done on Iran after September 11<sup>th</sup> because the government in Iran has been quite volatile with further sanctions having been imposed by the United Nations. Following Ahmadinejad’s contested re-election in 2009 there have been many protests in Tehran

and across the world. Also, the use of social media increased substantially since the last election in 2005 and could provide a completely different way of analyzing coverage as compared to traditional media.

Future research should also look at the way the media have framed Iranian leaders. A study by Ibrahim (2008) found that in the media, for countries with which America has good relations, negative events were blamed on the populous while positive events were associated with the nation's leaders. The inverse was true for countries with which America has strained relations. A longitudinal study of the leaders of Iran and attribution of events could help support Ibrahim's findings.

Future research could also look more in depth at the agenda-setting function of the media as it relates to Iranian affairs. Because this only looked at the sources and not peoples' opinions of them, it would be difficult to make many assumptions about the agenda-setting function of the elite newspapers in this case. However, future research could compare these cognates with how important the public judged terrorism to be in relation to other national issues.

## **APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY OF TERMS**

Ayatollah – A high ranking religious leader.

Fatwa – An edict or opinion on a religious matter expressed by an Islamic scholar.

Masjis – Iranian parliament.

Mullah – Iranian clergy, regardless of rank.

Shah – Hereditary monarch of Iran.

Tehran – The modern capital of Iran.



## **APPENDIX B: MODERN LEADERS OF IRAN**

Table 2: Modern Leaders of Iran

<b>Pahlavi Dynasty</b>
Reza Shah Pahlavi (1925-1941)
Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi (1941-1979)
<b>Interim Government</b>
Ayatollah Khomeini/Mehdi Bazargan (1979-1980)
<b>Presidents of the Islamic Republic</b>
Abolhassan Banisadr (1980-1981)
Mohammad Ali Rajai (1981-1981)
Ali Khamene'i (1981-1989)
Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani (1989-1997)
Mohammad Khatami (1997-2005)
Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (2005-present)

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