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hostility and mistrust between the two countries' (BBC News, 2013a). Second, on November 24, 2013, Iran reached an interim agreement with the 'P5+1' countries (Russia, China, Britain, France, Germany and the United States) on its nuclear program which UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon hailed as 'what could turn out to be the beginnings of a historic agreement' (Wilner, 2013). Finally, the recent rise of the radical Sunni group ISIS has given Iran and the United States a common enemy and raised the possibility of strategic cooperation between the two countries (Black, 2014).

Given these recent events, it is clear that there have been significant changes in the social and political realities underpinning U.S. – Iran relations. This dissertation aims to examine whether or not these social and political changes – specifically the election of Hassan Rouhani – have been reflected in American print media coverage of Iran. Previous studies have noted that the American media has tended to rely on crude oppositions and stereotypes

it?' (Hall, 1997: 25).¹ One potential answer offered by Hall is that difference is essential to the construction of meaning and identity. Drawing on Saussure's structuralist linguistics, Hall outlines the relationship between difference and identity with the following example: 'We know what it is to be "British," not only because of certain national characteristics, but also because we can mark its "difference" from its "others" –Britishness is not-French, not

Nature (ibid., 257). Stereotyping has an affinity with both the binary oppositions described by Orgad, and the 'boundary work' outlined by Silverstone. As Hall explains, stereotyping 'sets up a symbolic frontier between the "normal" and the "deviant," the "normal" and the "pathological," the "acceptable" and the "unacceptable," what "belongs" and what does not or is "Other," between "insiders" and "outsiders," Us and Them' (ibid., 258).

In his seminal work *Orientalism*, Edward Said demonstrated how these discursive

emphasis added). Representations like these are intimately imbricated in the Western imperial project. Presenting the Orient as primitive and irrational furnishes a justification for Western intervention and the 'civilizing' mission of colonisation. This illustrates the important link between representation and foreign policy. This association is of paramount importance to the present study and it will be explored in greater detail in the next section.

The above remarks by no means constitute a comprehensive summary of Said's groundbreaking work. Rather, I have tried to highlight the features of *Orientalism* that are most relevant to this dissertation. To that end, there are three aspects of Said's analysis that are particularly useful

In the case of the post-

rather than exercising independent judgement in reporting the social, economic, and political life of Iran under the shah' (Dorman and Farhang, 1987: 2). If the American news media tended to 'follow the cues of foreign-policy makers' on Iran, then a shift in the objectives of foreign policy-makers would presumably bring about a corollary shift in media coverage. Indeed, as Esposito pointed out, the shah's Iran was generally perceived in the West as an ally and a 'modern state' (1995: 101). It was only after the Revolution that Iran became a threat – an image bolstered by the application of Orientalist stereotypes such as primitiveness and fanaticism.

This dramatic discursive shift that followed regime change in Iran exposes a potential source of tension in Said's formulation. On the one hand, Orientalist discourse becomes powerfully entrenched due to inter-textuality and its imbrication with

alternate readings. Orgad offers a succinct summary of this point: 'As a process, representation is both conservative, working to inscribe and reconstitute existing power relations, and transformative –subversive and challenging the familiar,

from some of Orientalist stereotypes that had characterized previous media coverage. As they explain:

The much-celebrated social thaw under the presidency of Mohammad Khatami (1997–2005) unfroze journalistic accounts of Iran as a nation that was fast forgetting

- (i) How is Iran represented in elite American newspapers?
- (ii) In what ways has the representation of Iran in elite American newspapers changed following the election of Hassan Rouhani as Iranian President?

This study will use critical discourse analysis to compare how elite American newspapers covered Iran before the election to how they covered Iran after the election. This research aims to expose potential sources of challenge to dominant discourses, as well as to shed light on the relationship between discursive and social change.

are not objective or natural – they are constructed. As Said explains, ‘as much as the West itself, the Orient is an idea that has a history and a tradition of thought, imagery, and vocabulary that have given it reality and presence in and for the West’ (Said, 1979: 5). The claim that a ‘tradition of thought, imagery, and vocabulary’ can ‘give reality’ to the Orient is based on the idea that discourse is constitutive (as opposed to reflective) of social reality. Put another way, representations construct the social world we perceive. Fairclough (1992) delineates three aspects of the constructive effects of discourse, which discourse analysis enables us to unpack:

- (1) Discourse contributes to the construction of social identities and subject positions;
- (2)

Another important issue that discourse analysis enables us to address concerns the question of power. The ability of discourse to construct social identities and contribute to systems of knowledge and belief is not a neutral process; rather, it is a process thoroughly suffused with power relations. Drawing on Foucault, Chouliaraki explains that 'discourse sets up a constitutive relationship between meaning and power in social practice' (2008: 674-675). In other words, defining knowledge and social identities is itself an act of power. Van Dijk (1993: 254) neatly summarises this relationship between discourse and power:

Besides the elementary recourse to force to directly control action... "modern" and often more effective power is mostly cognitive, and enacted by persuasion, dissimulation or manipulation, among other strategic ways to change the mind of others in one's own interests. It is at this crucial point where discourse and critical discourse analysis come in: managing the minds of others is essentially a function of text and talk. Note, though, that such mind management is not always bluntly manipulative. On the contrary, dominance may be enacted and reproduced by subtle, routine, everyday forms of text and talk that appear "natural" and quite "acceptable."

One of the most important factors enabling certain discourses to appear 'natural' is intertextuality, i.e. the accumulation of meanings across different texts (Hall, 1997: 232). In the introduction to her book *Epic Encounters*, McAlister explains how intertextuality influences American representations of the Middle East: 'Cultural productions help make meaning by their historical association with other types of meaning-making activity, from the actions of state policymakers to the marketing of Bible prophecy...By focusing on the intertextuality... and the common logic of diverse

assumptions which are implicit in the conventions according to which people interact linguistically' (quoted in Philo, 2007: 184).

Despite the benefits of discourse analysis discussed above, this methodology does carry certain risks and drawbacks. One potential problem with discourse analysis concerns the issue of operationalization. Certain types of questions may naturally lend themselves to discourse analytic methods, yet as Fairclough notes, 'there is no set procedure for doing discourse analysis' (1992: 225). This means that while discourse analysis may be a useful method to engage with my research question, the specific process for operationalising this project is not immediately obvious. Moreover, as Gill points out, '

every ninth article was selected for analysis in order to render the sample manageable

Rouhani's campaign made explicit his desire to adopt a more conciliatory attitude

Comparative analysis of the two samples revealed that while there was significant discursive continuity between the two, an important shift in the discourse could also be detected. This section is divided into three parts. The first will discuss the discursive continuities between the samples. The second part discusses the shift in the discourse that was observed. The third section discusses the absences in the discourse of both samples.

According to Fairclough (1992: 62), discourse should be analysed in a '3-dimensional framework as text, discursive practice, and social practice.' This analysis will

is applied solely to Iranians. In one case, it is applied to both Iranians and Americans: 'Current and former U.S. officials acknowledged that pressure from hard-liners on both sides could undercut efforts to reach a compromise' (Warrick, 2012).

Untrustworthiness

Another recurrent theme throughout both samples concerns the notion that Iranians are untrustworthy. This generally occurred in the coverage of nuclear negotiations, and proceeded by first constructing a binary between Iran and the West, and then casting aspersions on Iranian motives. There are several examples of this from both samples. In the first, one article notes that 'Western governments are ...urging Iran to admit it had a secret nuclear weapons program in the past and to stop producing a

Iranian government. The depiction of Iranians as untrustworthy is quite explicitly linked to a threat narrative, since the subject about which Iran's leaders are 'suspected' of misleading the West concerns the production of nuclear weapons. All of this serves to underscore the Orientalist binary between Iran and the West.

Isolation

A theme closely related to the notion of Iran as untrustworthy is the

In each of these cases, a reference to Islam ('cleric') is preceded by a neutralising qualifier. The phrase 'moderate cleric' (or any variation thereof) does not appear in the first sample, and, in the second sample, Rouhani's clerical status is never mentioned without being accompanied by a qualifying adjective ('moderate,' in most cases). The persistent tendency to accompany a reference to Islam with the term 'moderate' implies a deviation from the normal state of affairs. In other words, it implies that there is something aberrational and noteworthy about a moderate Muslim. The line of reasoning that underpins this reading has some precedent.

Iranian untrustworthiness: a

association between Islam and obstinacy by highlighting the supreme leader's statements opposing compromise while simultaneously deemphasizing his religious

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