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## Framing Iran: The Islamic Revolution and the Green Movement as Told Through Time Magazine

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FRAMING IRAN:  
THE ISLAMIC REVOLUTION AND THE GREEN MOVEMENT AS TOLD  
THROUGH *TIME* MAGAZINE

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Journalism and Mass Communications

San José State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science

by

Nadia Maiwandi

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FRAMING IRAN:  
THE ISLAMIC REVOLUTION AND THE GREEN MOVEMENT AS TOLD  
THROUGH *TIME* MAGAZINE

by

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## ABSTRACT

### FRAMING IRAN: THE ISLAMIC REVOLUTION AND THE GREEN MOVEMENT AS TOLD THROUGH *TIME* MAGAZINE

by Nadia Maiwandi

This framing analysis was conducted to study how *Time* portrayed Iran and Iranians during the Islamic Revolution of 1978-79 and the Green Movement uprising of 2009. In this study, particular attention was given to how the magazine framed the leaders of Iran and their opposition during these times, as well as to any correlation between *Time's* portrayal and the United States government's positions on these events. The analysis shows that magazine adhered to the United States' strong defense of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi ("the Shah"), providing frames that depicted him as the only capable leader in Iran. *Time* framed the Islamic Revolution as violent, anti-modern, and lacking legitimate grievance, which also correlated with the U.S. government's position. Conversely, the latter period's data showed that *Time* used negative frames to discuss the Islamic Republic of Iran, depicting the administration as paranoid and out of touch with reality. The uprising of the Green Movement, which threatened the Islamic Republic's stability, received positive frames from *Time*. The frames on the Green Movement supported the White House's position on Iran, as in the earlier period. This study's findings demonstrate the U.S. media's conformity to official government frames on international events, specifically those depicting Iran.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

This study was conducted to analyze how *Time* magazine framed two significant populist uprisings in Iran, the revolution of 1978-79, a rebellion that overthrew the monarch Mohammad Reza Pahlavi (“the Shah”), and the Green Movement of 2009, when demonstrators challenged the reelection of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and the despotism of the Islamic Republic (Ahadi, 2010; Bakhtavar, 2009; Hashemi & Postel, 2010). The study is a qualitative and quantitative analysis that examined these two political movements in Iran, noting which frames and stereotypical themes were used in *Time* stories; how the news magazine portrayed the Shah’s government, the Islamic Republic, and the groups that opposed them; and whether these positions in *Time* followed those of the United States government.

In the last three decades, denunciatory and accusing rhetoric between the U.S. and Iran has been so pervasive, according to Abrahamian (2013), that the two countries “have been dubbed ‘bitter’ and even ‘eternal’ enemies” (p. 1). It is a relationship in which “the former tends depict the latter as a cross between the Third Reich and Stalinist Russia — an ‘evil’ force scheming to export revolution throughout the Middle East ... and harboring ‘nuclear ambitions’ with long-range missiles capable of delivering weapons of mass destruction as far afield as Israel, Europe, and even North America” (p. 1). This sentiment was noted when President Barack Obama visited Israel in March 2013 and repeatedly discussed the threat of Iran, saying, “all options are on the table” — a phrase that is “widely interpreted to imply that the option of attacking Iran militarily is on the

table” (Levine, 2013, para. 3). In return, Iran regularly depicted the U.S. as a “warmongering colonial-imperial power — in its own language, a ‘world-devouring arrogant Satan’ — determined to dominate the whole region and bring about ‘regime change’” (Abrahamian, 2013, p. 1). In a speech given in Mashhad, Iran, on March 21, 2013, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei stated that the U.S. “seeks to create hurdles through sanctions and threats and downplay Iran's achievements through propaganda” (“Leader Calls on U.S.,” 2013, para. 10). Khamenei said, “The center of conspiracy and the basis of hostility with the Iranian nation is the US administration” (“Leader Calls on U.S.,” 2013, para. 11), noting Obama’s strong position against Iran’s rulers.

However, under the reign of the Shah, Iran was a U.S. ally like none other in the region. Bill (1988) noted, “The manner in which American leaders entangled themselves with the Pahlavi elite approached a degree seldom seen elsewhere” (p. 447). By the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, Iran had become the largest non-NATO recipient of military aid from the U.S. (Saikal, 2009), and the two countries collaborated on numerous projects in the areas of industry, business, and academia (Bill, 1988; Dorman & Farhang, 1987). January (2008) noted that during the revolution, footage of Iranian protesters burning the American flag along with effigies of the Shah were regularly broadcast in the U.S., and the American public struggled to make sense of what led this allied nation to become so deeply hostile toward the U.S. and their “storybook king” (Bill, 1988, p. 374). After the Shah’s fall, revolutionaries quickly ushered in a new government, the Islamic Republic, which has been under U.S. sanctions since it was established in 1979 (Clawson, 2010). Thirty years later, American officials and media expressed surprise when Ahmadinejad’s

reelection brought a “tidal wave” of outrage from citizens who poured into the streets holding placards reading, “Where is my vote?” (Ahadi, 2010). Throughout the Islamic Revolution, the U.S. government amply backed the Shah’s draconian measures against protesters (Bill, 1988; Dorman & Farhang, 1987; Saikal, 2009); conversely, the U.S. expressed empathy for Iranian protesters under the Islamic Republic (Bakhtavar, 2009) and even aided opposition groups in their cause (“With a Hint,” 2009; *Iran Freedom Support Act*, 2006).

Framing, the primary focus of this study, occurs when the press chooses “what to present and what not to present in media coverage” (Dimitrova, 2006, p. 79). In addition to the process of selection and exclusion of information “news framing can occur ... through emphasis and elaboration” (Dimitrova, 2006, p. 79). The purpose of this framing study was to examine whether *Time* magazine followed the U.S. government’s position on Iran in these two periods, or took on the independent role of the “fourth branch of government,” aiding in checks and balances of government described in the U.S. Constitution (Johnson-Cartee, 2005). Although media are not officially part of the checks and balances process, McQuail (2005) described this “fourth branch” as a “conventional term for journalists [who see] their role as reporters and watchdogs on government” (p. 555).

Studies examining U.S. media coverage of Iran tended to focus on the nuclear issue; few if any studies juxtaposed Iran’s two uprisings, and none of the work reviewed discussed the differences in media coverage of the two events. This researcher aimed to carry out both of these tasks in the study. *Time* magazine was chosen because of its in-

depth coverage of international affairs, its national circulation, and its prestige and influence.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

Since the rise of the Persian Empire (circa 550 BCE), Iran has fascinated and bewildered the West. Its prime geography in the Persian Gulf region has made it central to a host of struggles for resources and territorial positioning. Wright (2010) noted, “Iran’s frontiers and coastline have for millennia been central to political, military and commercial developments” (p. 1). Alexander the Great’s conquest of the “world” amounted to conquering Persia, which was so vast in geography and power that it was considered to be the majority of civilization on earth (Ansary, 2009). After the Persian Empire’s collapse, Iran was led by a succession of invaders and dynasties that regularly used Iran’s resources for their gain while sacrificing the stability and economic foundations of the country (Abrahamian, 2008; Keddie, 2003; Saikal, 2009). In particular, the Qajar dynasty (1796-1925) was eager to exploit the country’s resources for European development. Reeves (1989) noted that the Qajar shahs (“shah” is Farsi for king) were “enormously impressed with Western progress and soon became uncritical admirers of European culture — a fascination that proved disastrous for Iran. The Qajar kings were prepared to sign treaties almost without reflection, placing their country firmly beneath the yoke of foreign economic power” (p. 78). The sale of Iranian independence by the royals’ hands sparked nationalist movements starting in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, when demonstrators forced their king to take back the tobacco industry from the British after an overwhelmingly unpopular deal in 1892, and again in 1906, when a

standoff between the palace and tens of thousands of people in Tehran resulted in the ratification of Iran's first constitution (Abrahamian, 2008; Keddie, 2003; Kinzer, 2003).

In 1908, a British subject, William Knox D'Arcy, discovered oil in the southwest of Iran. As per agreement, Iran was paid only 16% of the profits on its oil, a figure that many Iranians began to resent as the decades passed (Gasiorowski & Byrne, 2004; Kinzer, 2003; Saikal, 2009). By mid-century, Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh headed a widespread grassroots movement to nationalize Iranian oil. The United States took on a prominent role in Iran in the 1950s when it aligned with the U.K. in removing Mossadegh by force (Abrahamian, 2013, 2008; Dorman & Farhang, 1987; Gasiorowski & Byrne, 2004; Kinzer, 2003; Roosevelt, 1979; Saikal, 2009). The coup was a "watershed" moment in which the U.S., after being a proponent of Iran's sovereignty for decades, transitioned into the role of Iran's new dominant foreign power, and in which the Shah, who had been a somewhat detached and ineffective king before the ouster of Mossadegh, transitioned into the role of an autocratic and intolerant ruler (Abrahamian, 2008; Dorman & Farhang, 1987; Gasiorowski & Byrne, 2004; Saikal, 2009). Scholars of Iranian history have argued that the 1978-79 revolution, the establishment of the Islamic Republic, and the hostage crisis of 1979 are byproducts of the 1953 coup (Abrahamian, 2013; Gasiorowski & Byrne, 2004; Kinzer, 2003). Resentments in both countries have created the current state of affairs that are exhibited in Iran's scapegoating of the West for its internal crises (Bakhtavar, 2009), as well as the U.S.'s repeated sanctions of Iran and threats of military action (Levine, 2013, para. 3). In this environment, how media frame Iran has become all the more important to U.S.-Iran relations and global stability. As

argued by Chernus (2010), commonly used media frames have negatively affected the American public's view on Iran and its reported threat to American national safety.

In this framing study, *Time* magazine articles were examined to determine whether the frames used followed the U.S. government's position on Iran during the popular uprisings of 1978-79 and 2009. This paper also examined how U.S. mainstream media framed international issues commonly associated with Iran, namely the East vs. West framework and Islam.

### **Framing**

Entman (2008b) defined framing as “selecting and highlighting some aspects of a situation to promote a particular interpretation” (p. 90). Gitlin (1980) noted, “Frames are principles of selection, emphasis and presentation” created to profile “what matters” (p. 6). Dorman and Farhang (1987) stated that frames “are simply constructions of social reality” that employ methodologies of selection, such as who is quoted in the article, what details are emphasized, and so on (p. 8). According to Dorman and Farhang (1987), it is often not the facts themselves that matter, “but rather the interpretation that facts receive” (p. 44), or what context is given to a series of events. “Context and emphasis in journalism are everything, for they transform literal truths into reassuring and legitimate acts in one instance, or threatening and illegitimate behavior in another” (p. 44). Entman (2008b) established a cascading model where foreign policy frames cascade from the White House to the press and then to the public. Entman (2008b) noted, “Presidents often enjoy substantial success in controlling frames of foreign policy in U.S. media” (p. 89).

Entman (2004) also noted that media framing is effective; polls often show “public responsiveness to the dominant frames in the news” (p. 126). Residents of democratic countries can actually be more susceptible to government slant than those in countries where press is clearly controlled because the former group is likely to believe that their media is free from governmental sway. Dorman (1986) noted, “Among our country’s more dangerous self-delusions is the notion that because its press is vigorous, privately-owned, officially nonideological, and free of overt government control, Americans get a clear, unhindered view of the world” (p. 419). In fact, newsreaders often feel that *if* there is a media bias, “the bias serves as a check against the power of the state rather than an instrument of it” (p. 419). In discussions and analyses on media, there is often limited dialogue on the performance of the press in checking the power of government. Dorman (1986) noted that media “defers all too often” to perspectives established by governmental agencies (p. 419). Dimitrova, Kaid, Williams, & Trammell (2005) noted, “In general, it is likely that national news media are in tune with the national government regarding their policy stance on international events. This tends to be true for both independent and government-owned media outlets” (p. 24). Moeller (2009) stated that the salience media give domestic and international issues recurrently conforms to the precedence politicians have set in prioritizing the issues. According to Dimitrova et al. (2005), this dynamic quickly becomes anchored during times of heightened national security; “never is the umbilical cord between media and government more tightly connected than in times of crisis” (p. 24).

Western media exhort an ideal of field impartiality, according to Johnson-Cartee (2005), which “posits that educated and experienced journalists are able to assume a professional objectivity that negates any personal subjectivity — the subjective beliefs, values, and schemas inherent to each cognizant individual” — by adhering to a scientific method designed to keep bias out (p. 112). According to Johnson-Cartee (2005), journalists often believe that they report only facts and do not shape media stories. “The journalistic reporting formula of ‘who, what, when, where, why, and how’ provides further evidence of their emphasis on facts. ... Such views are classic examples of consummate self-deception, yet they remain widespread throughout the profession” (p. 76). Dorman (1986) noted that it is precisely *because* journalists believe they do not have these biases that bias persists. Yet, all data are subject to interpretation; “the notion of humans — even a highly educated human — being objective is ludicrous, for a person’s very knowledge of the world is subjectively constructed, learned, and modified through a process [of personal and unique experiences]. ... Thus, subjectivity is the nature of humans, and no amount of professional training and experience will change that” (Johnson-Cartee, 2005, p. 113). Framing is therefore “inescapable,” according to Entman (2004): “Although the schemas and interpretations within individuals’ minds arise from prior beliefs and interpersonal communication as well as from the media’s words and images, there is no escape from framing” (p. 124).

### **Media Bias in International News**

The lack of independent media analysis described above is of particularly serious consequence in “Third World” coverage since most Americans have relatively little

contact with that part of the world and get their information about the region and its people through media (Dorman, 1986; Entman, 2004; Said, 1994, 1997). While various studies on media have shown that mainstream journalism does not hold a pattern of bias against Republican and Democratic policies or actors, studies have shown that media do consistently show bias in their coverage of minorities and U.S. foreign policy (Entman, 2007). Entman (2008b) noted, “Slant characterizes individual news reports and editorials in which the *framing favors one side over the other in a current or potential dispute*” (p. 165, emphasis in original). Dorman (1986) noted that checks and balances within journalism aim to keep personal biases out, however, there are not safeguards to keep out ideology, which is “shared or collective bias. . . . These biases become more difficult to detect, and hence more insidious, the more broadly they are shared” (p. 427). The ideologies found in news articles are not part of a conspiracy; they are simply the ideological views of society coupled with the limitations of mass media. Dorman (1986) noted, “The ideological orientation persists despite the genuine commitment a reporter may have to fairness, balance, professionalism, and nonbiased reporting” (p. 429). Said (1994) noted that because journalists lack awareness of their shortcomings, a chain reaction is produced: Journalists write about a place they have little information about, often resorting to clichés to fill in their gaps in knowledge, and that writing influences future coverage while reinforcing previous clichés.

By definition journalism picks and chooses what to report on, what to leave in, what to take out, what slant to give it, and often uses officials as sources of “truth.” Dorman (1986) noted that Washington officials are commonly allowed to remain

anonymous as official sources, and these sources not only make policy but also provide interpretations of how to understand these policies and the countries being affected.

Dorman (1985) noted that since World War II, “the free marketplace of ideas, if it ever existed, has given way to an arena of limited popular discourse, whose parameters are set in the ‘national interests’ as defined by official Washington. ... Political elites have been permitted to indulge their global fantasies without serious challenge” (p. 118). Though journalists may see their role as the watchdogs of government, their hands are often tied by the conventions of their field: “By limiting journalists to mere description, enjoining them from their own *knowledgeable* interpretation, and restricting them to interpretations sanctioned by established authority, the press has maintained a process that cultural anthropology and sociology rejected decades ago as leading to gross distortion. To observe and, particularly, to describe without full understanding is most likely to misrepresent” (Dorman, 1986, p. 423, emphasis in original).

The concept of the fourth branch of government is an idea in which the press serves as a check and balance in American policy. The very existence of “free” media — that is to say, media that are not regulated by government — begets the idea that media is a watchdog to its government since it is free to examine and criticize policy (Bagdikian, 2004). According to mass communication scholars (Bagdikian, 2004; Said, 1994, 1997), the media’s most crucial role is to provide analysis on foreign policy:

U.S. citizens generally are at a disadvantage in understanding foreign policy. ... Some [misunderstanding] arises from the extraordinary fact that the United States, the world’s only superpower, has fewer correspondents permanently stationed in foreign capitals than any other major Western nation. The result for U.S. media is a remarkably small pool of expertise on foreign culture and politics within their own

organizations. ... Because of this, many other governments understand the impressions the United States makes on the leaders and populations of other countries far more readily than do U.S. news services and, consequently, the American general public (Bagdikian, 2004, p. 94).

However, Dorman and Farhang (1987) noted that the press tends to criticize foreign policy *only* when there is an evident rift in opinion between policymakers, or between policymakers and the public; in other words, mainstream press does not initiate criticism but may pick up on the analysis of others. Dorman (1986) noted that the financial limitations in the field of journalism coupled with pressing deadlines and competition from other news sources often create the perfect circumstance for reporters to fall back on safe practices and reliable headlines. Furthermore, Dorman (1986) stated, when reporters do not follow status quo, they may be encouraged to do so by their editors. The author stated that while these are general patterns, there are certainly exceptions, or “flashes of independence,” in mainstream reporting (p. 430).

Some scholars observed that the bias in foreign policy coverage also has roots in ethnocentrism. Dorman (1979) noted that ethnocentrism “fosters the belief that one culture has achieved more than another, and, therefore, is superior” (p. 63). It was this type of ideology, noted Said (1997) that created the environment where the press regularly reported Americans burning Iranian flags as a type of patriotism during the 1979 hostage crisis. According to Dorman (1979), “It is the idea of the capacity of the Iranian people that has been most severely damaged by the press. The American public has been encouraged to doubt whether the Iranian people are authentically interested in freedom or whether they are capable of achieving political stability in the absence of a dictator and/or foreign influence” (p. 63). In the coverage of Iran’s religious leaders,

especially Ayatollah Khomeini, the media often used descriptive terms such as “black-robed,” “bearded,” “turbaned,” “sitting cross-legged” “as if these details had great bearing on what the man thinks or on what his goals may be ” (p. 61). In a study examining media coverage of the Iranian revolution, Dorman (1979) stated that the press depicted the revolutionaries as “backward” people who did not want the Shah’s progressive and modern programs. Dorman and Farhang (1987) noted that instead of these lessons “being unfortunate but essentially harmless, [these messages] helped make it possible for official Washington to persist in policies that were contrary not only to the legitimate national interests of the United States in the region, but to the policy makers’ own stated objectives as well” (p. 13). According to Rojecki (2008), the ideology of American exceptionalism regularly hinders accurate reporting in times of war, referencing the “War on Terror” coverage that followed 9/11. According to the author, the Abu Ghraib scandal, which erupted when photographs of U.S. military personnel torturing imprisoned Iraqis were leaked, was “incompatible with an image of the United States as a somewhat naïve but nevertheless well-intentioned moral exemplar to the world” (p. 68).

Democracy and fair policy are dependent on a free media, produced without external constraints and undue influence. Dorman (1986) noted, “It is precisely when a liberal democracy’s state information-gathering apparatus is so highly politicized that journalism can make an important contribution, by providing the public, and especially Congress, with a candid and independent picture of developments abroad. Indeed, the

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

### **Government and Opposition in Iran: Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

To understand the revolution of the 1970s and the Green Movement of 2009, it is important to be made aware of Iran’s century-long battle for democracy. The following narrative will provide an eclipsed version of what has been studied by this researcher to better comprehend the two periods examined and their respective uprisings.

#### **Reza Pahlavi**

The Pahlavi dynasty, which produced the man the world would come to know simply as “the Shah” (the King), came to power in 1925, after Reza Khan, the Shah’s father, overtook Tehran in a coup and seized power from the Qajar dynasty. The previous dynasty was infamous for its willful surrender of nearly every natural resource and industry the country possessed. For quick cash, the Qajars sold Iran’s forests, oil, railway industry, telegraph industry, mining, banking systems, even its caviar industry — to the British and the Russians (Keddie, 2003; Kinzer, 2003). In 1891, the shah Nasir al-Din (1848-1896) was pressured by public demand to take back a tobacco concession he had made to the British. The Tobacco Revolt marks the start of modern Iran, according to leading scholars of the country. Keddie (2003) noted, “The movement was the first mass protest in modern Iran, combining ulama [Muslim clerics], modernists, merchants, and ordinary townspeople in a coordinated move against government policy” (p. 62). Similarly, in 1906, Muzaffar al-Din, Nasir’s son, reluctantly agreed to institute a democratically elected parliament and sign into law a Constitution after facing growing

threats from merchants and clergy who had been demonstrating for nearly a year (Kinzer, 2003; Keddie, 2003). The Iranian Constitution was drawn primarily from Belgian constitutional law, considered the most progressive in its time, and a national election was held for the 200-seat Majlis, which met for the first time in October 1906. Wright (2010) noted that the Tobacco Revolt and the Constitutional Revolution were more than populist uprisings — they were struggles against foreign influence and hegemony. The agreement to enact democratic measures not only mitigated the king's powers, but it was also meant to rebuff foreign exploitation in Iran. The events yielded remarkable and largely unprecedented results — Iran was only the second state in Asia to have a constitution and a parliament, after the Ottoman Empire (Wright, 2010). However, the struggle against authoritarianism and foreign repression did not necessarily trickle down to other types of repression in Iran, namely for women. Though women's rights were slowly gaining prominence in Iran and women became active members of nationalist movements, significant steps toward equality of the sexes were not part of the larger struggle (Reeves, 1989).

Despite its constitution and parliament, Iran's path to democracy was still tremendously obscured. The shahs continued to exercise zealous despotism, and foreign exploitation financially devastated the country (Saikal, 2009; Keddie, 2003). In 1907, Russia and Britain officially agreed to divide Iran into three zones — the north was ruled by Russia, the south by Britain, and the center zone was nominally controlled by the shah (Saikal, 2009). In creating their respective zones, Britain and Russia “not only forced Tehran to lose most of its initiative in the conduct of Iran's domestic and foreign policies,

but also sought to pressure, buy off, and weaken successive Iranian leaders so as to make them obedient to and dependent on the two powers for their survival” (p. 15). Saikal (1980) noted that when Russia and Britain agreed to split Iran into three zones, “Tehran was not a party to this agreement, nor was its consent sought” (p. 15).

Reza Khan’s occupation of Tehran two decades later was first met with ambivalence from the British, although the empire soon backed Khan and his pro-Western ideas. A commander in the Russian-trained Iranian Cossack Brigade, Khan took the name Reza Shah Pahlavi when he crowned himself king in 1925. Pahlavi sought to modernize Iran by building highways and industrial complexes, financing his projects mostly on oil revenue. The shah, who was nearly illiterate, worked to improve health care and education, and laid groundwork for Iran’s higher educational system with the opening of the University of Tehran. Pahlavi’s pro-Western policies went as far as banning women’s veils and men’s turbans; women were ordered to appear in public wearing European clothing and hats, “a decree that horrified many women and injured their sense of morality” (Reeves, 1989, p. 85). Women who did not comply had their veils torn off in public and were arrested. Many decided to stay home rather than risk this embarrassment. Similarly, men were ordered to wear billed caps that prevented their foreheads from touching the ground during Islamic prayer (Reeves, 1989).

Reza Shah preferred the United States to the other major powers of the day because it was “geographically distant and largely a noncolonial power, presumably less ready than others to intervene in Iranian affairs” (Saikal, 2009, p. 23). However, Washington did not hold much interest in Iran at this time and was largely uninvolved.

The superpowers, Britain and the Soviet Union, maintained influence, including setting up political parties that backed their own interests — the Soviets helped set up a communist group that later became Tudeh (Masses), and the British formed Erade-ye Melli (National Will) (Saikal, 2009). The decades-long conflict between the two superpowers ceased temporarily during World War II, when Britain and the Soviet Union aligned in their fight against Hitler. Reza Shah, who was an admirer of fascist ideology, refused the Allies' orders to expel German technocrats working in Iran. In addition, the Allies desired a land route to the Soviet Union during the war and looked to Iran to provide this function, according to Abrahamian (2008). With these two issues in consideration, “the Allies found it expedient to remove Reza Shah but to preserve his state” (p. 97). Consequently, British and Soviet troops invaded Iran in August 1941, and Reza Shah went into exile just three weeks later. On September 15, 1941, Britain installed Reza Shah's 21-year-old son, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, as shah. However, without Reza Pahlavi's stringent leadership, Tehran soon lost much of its control over the country, and Iran “sank into growing social disorder, political disarray, and economic hardship” (Saikal, 2009, p. 26).

### **Mohammad Mossadegh and Nationalization**

In 1951, Mohammad Mossadegh became Iran's first democratically elected prime minister, a post that until then had been appointed by the king. The Mohammad Reza Pahlavi's image was dwarfed by Mossadegh's enormous popularity, a great deal of which was due to his campaign to nationalize Iran's oil (Abrahamian, 2013; Kinzer, 2003). The nationalization campaign had developed over some decades in protest to the 1901

agreement that Qajar shah Muzaffar al-Din had signed with the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (APOC), granting Iran 16% of profits. At a time when the British Empire was beginning to decline, Iranian oil was soon its biggest asset (Abrahamian, 2013; Saikal, 1980). In 1933, the agreement was renegotiated to include minimum payments to Iran in the amount of £750,000, with an agreement to extend the contract for APOC, renamed as the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC), for another 60 years — and, as before, Iran was not allowed to audit AIOC's books nor was it allowed any executive representation. During World War II, the Allies' occupation drained the country of more than just its oil: "Ordinary Iranians ... saw their standard of living fall precipitously. Much food was diverted from civilian to military use. ... Prices rose as speculators thrived" and many were left hungry (p. 64). As demands for nationalization grew, the British paid Iranian politicians, newspaper editors and columnists, and radio directors to publicly recommend British control of Iran's oil (Kinzer, 2003).

In 1950, the Majlis appointed deputy Mossadegh, a Ph.D. in law, to head a committee to negotiate an equitable deal with AIOC. Mossadegh and his committee, who were well aware of the 50/50 agreement the American company Aramco had with Saudi Arabia, proposed the same equal distribution of profits. The British strongly rejected the proposal, and the committee eventually came back with plans of full nationalization. According to Kinzer (2003), "The British, by their refusal to compromise, had managed to unite a broad cross-section of the politically active population against them. They even pushed religious groups committed to Islamic law into a coalition with Mossadegh and other secular liberals" (p. 75). The opposition held

mass rallies where Mossadegh's group, the pro-democratic National Front, and conservative mullahs shared platforms, giving speeches on the duty of citizens to fight oppressive forces. The campaign had so effectively tied civic duty and patriotism to oil nationalization in the mind of the Iranian public that even the Shah supported expelling the British-owned AIOC during this time. On March 15, 1951, the Majlis voted unanimously for nationalization. Kinzer (2003) noted, "Mossadegh was now a hero of epic proportions, unable to step onto the streets without being mobbed by admirers. Tribal leaders in the hinterlands celebrated his triumph, Ayatollah Kashani lionized him as a liberator on the scale of Cyrus and Darius, and even the communists of Tudeh embraced him. Over the next few weeks the Majlis voted overwhelmingly for every bill he presented" (p. 80).

The Shah signed a law that revoked the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company's concessions and created the National Iranian Oil Company in its place. Sympathetic to Iran's cause at this time, the U.S. warned Britain that it "must compromise with Iran or face disaster," and urged reconsideration of the 50/50 arrangement (Kinzer, 2003, p. 90-91). Gasiorowski (2004) noted that Mossadegh had initial support from the U.S. because the prime minister was wary of Soviet and communist influence in Iran. On June 9, 1951, Henry Grady, the American ambassador to Iran, gave an interview to *The Wall Street Journal* and said, "It would be wise for Britain to adopt a conciliatory attitude. ... Mossadegh's National Front party is the closest thing to a moderate and stable political element in the national parliament" (quoted from Kinzer, 2003, p. 93). Britain vacated its oil fields in Abadan, Iran, in October 1952. In the years that AIOC had operated in the

country, no Iranians had been trained as high-skilled technicians; as a result, oil production came to a near halt and the economy suffered greatly after the British departure.

To worsen matters, the U.S. was no longer allied with Iran in its position and rejected an appeal for a previously promised loan (Dorman & Farhang, 1987; Saikal, 1980). A U.S. Department of State briefing paper for President Harry Truman was a major influence on the press, according to Dorman and Farhang (1987). The paper read as follows:

(1) Our primary objective is the maintenance of Iran as an independent country aligned with the free world. A secondary objective is to assure access of the Western world to Iran's petroleum, and as a corollary to deny access to the Soviet bloc.

(2) In pursuance of our primary objective, it is the policy of the U.S. to extend to Iran, primarily through the Shah as the only present source of continuity of leadership, political support and military, economic, and technical assistance whenever this will help serve to: (a) increase stability and internal security, and strengthen the ability and desire of the Iranian people to resist communist subversion, (b) strengthen the leadership of the Shah and through him the central government, and (c) demonstrate the intention of the U.S. to help preserve Iranian independence (*Steering Group on Preparations for the Talks Between the President and Prime Minister Churchill, Iran*, released January 5, 1952; quoted from Dorman & Farhang, 1987).

Dorman and Farhang (1987) wrote that the press came to accept this stance "apparently without any appreciation of the contradictions it contained," and, noted the authors, as the U.S. government shifted its position on Iran so, too, did the media change their tone toward Iran (p. 36). According to Dorman and Farhang (1987), in a two-year period the American media's portrait of Mossadegh "would change from that of a quaint nationalist to that of a near lunatic to one, finally, of Communist dupe. ... Major news-frame shifts

on foreign policy issues in the American prestige press seem rarely to occur so clearly or quickly that they are immediately discernible at the time they are taking place” (pp. 34-35).

The assault on Mossadegh from policymakers and the press ranged from political attacks to personal. According to Kinzer (2003), Mossadegh was routinely mocked in the West for his over-the-top delivery and unmatched commitment to justice in Iran:

He was as dramatic a politician as his country has ever known. At times he became so passionate while delivering speeches that tears streamed down his cheeks. Sometimes he fainted dead away, as much from emotion as any physical condition. When he became a world figure, his enemies in foreign capitals used this aspect of his personality to ridicule and belittle him. But in Iran, where centuries of Shiite religious practice had exposed everyone to depths of public emotion unknown in the West, it was not only accepted but celebrated. It seemed to prove how completely he embraced and shared his country’s suffering (p. 54).

Mossadegh was plagued by puzzling medical conditions most of his adult life. “No one could precisely identify [his illnesses]. They were certainly real and periodically flared up to cause ulcers, hemorrhaging, stomach secretions, and other symptoms” (Kinzer, 2003, p. 54). Bill (1988) noted, “Much of the literature has mistakenly focused on [Musaddiq’s] physical characteristics — his age, his dress, his health, his walk, his manner of speech, his etiquette, his hearing. Writer Gerard de Villiers described Musaddiq as ‘a pint-sized trouble-maker’ who had ‘the agility of a goat’ and who ‘pranced before a group of journalists’” (pp. 54-55). Dorman and Farhang (1987) concluded that the press coverage lacked any “serious look” at the “specific grievances of Iran toward British oil interests” (p. 35). In 1952, *Time* magazine named Mossadegh “Man of the Year.” The 3,700-word cover story began as a mock fable:

Once upon a time, in a mountainous land between Baghdad and the Sea of Caviar, there lived a nobleman. This nobleman, after a lifetime of carping at the way the kingdom was run, became Chief Minister of the realm. In a few months he had the whole world hanging on his words and deeds, his jokes, his tears, his tantrums. Behind his grotesque antics lay great issues of peace or war, progress or decline, which would affect many lands far beyond his mountains (Man of the Year, 1952).

The article went on to describe Mossadegh's "peculiar" administrative methods — including, according to *Time*, drawing his governors' assignments from paper slips dropped into a bowl or consulting his 2-year-old granddaughter on national affairs. Similar to the "Man of the Year" story, *Newsweek* published the article "Mellow Mossy" on January 12, 1953, which read, "Premier Mohammed Mossadegh did not faint once. He shed no tears. He acted as a normal human being" (quoted from Dorman & Farhang, 1987, p. 37). *Time*'s "Man of the Year" feature concluded, "In its leadership of the non-Communist world, the U.S. has some dire responsibilities to shoulder. One of them is to meet the fundamental moral challenge posed by the strange old wizard who lives in a mountainous land and who is, sad to relate, the Man of 1951." Dorman and Farhang (1987) noted that these themes would resurface in the coverage of Iran during the Islamic Revolution. In both periods, "Iran was portrayed as a country incapable of self-rule and in need of a Westernized guardian" (p. 38). The coverage also depicted the situation as one in which Iran was "particularly easy prey to the lurking Communist menace, and the United States, reluctantly or not, must fill the 'power vacuum' created in the Middle East by the end of the colonial era" (p. 38).

After nationalization, rumors about a possible British coup reached Mossadegh, who subsequently cut diplomatic ties with the U.K. in October 1952. Truman had been

somewhat empathetic to Iran's struggles for sovereignty, but when Dwight Eisenhower was elected president just weeks after the British were expelled from Iran, Britain seized the opportunity. In November 1952, agents from the British Secret Intelligence Service (SIS), Britain's Foreign Office, and the CIA met in Washington to talk about a joint mission to overthrow Mossadegh (Abrahamian, 2013). Although the coup was planned in the West, Gasiorowski (2004) noted that the operation could not have been executed as planned without key Iranian players, a few of which were former confidants of Mossadegh. The Shah's fear of the potential backlash he might suffer if Mossadegh were to be removed combined with his distrust of the British caused him to be resistant initially (Azimi, 2004; Kinzer, 2003; Gasiorowski, 2004). However, after enormous pressure and "barely disguised threats" from the CIA and the SIS, the Shah relented (Azimi, 2004, p. 27).

By August 1953, "Tehran was afire. Mobs working for the CIA staged anti-Mossadegh protests, marching through the streets carrying portraits of the Shah and chanting royalist slogans" (Kinzer, 2003, p. 6). Taking a cue from U.S. press attacks on Mossadegh, the Iranian press drummed up accusations of Mossadegh's alleged links to communism. Kinzer (2003) noted, "Although Mossadegh did not know it, most of these tirades were either inspired by the CIA or written by CIA propagandists in Washington. One of the propagandists, Richard Cottam, estimated that four-fifths of the newspapers in Tehran were under CIA influence" (p. 6). Kermit Roosevelt, grandson of President Theodore Roosevelt, was the lead CIA officer in "Operation Ajax." On August 19, 1953, a mob led by anti-Mossadegh military officers reached the prime minister's compound

“armed with rifles, machine guns, and Sherman tanks mounted with 75-millimeter cannons” (Kinzer, 2003, p. 182). Mossadegh was arrested and brought up on charges of treason. He spent three years in solitary confinement in military prison, and the rest of his life on house arrest until his death in 1967.

The U.S. press responded positively to the change of events in Iran. *A New York Times* editorial noted, “It is natural ... to feel especially happy over developments in Iran, where Dr. Mossadegh is out” (“Aid for Iran,” 1953). The editorial noted that Mossadegh’s “only care was to drive the British out. That he wrecked the economy of the country in the process was apparently of little concern to this fanatical, power-hungry man. He also had brought Iran to the brink of subservience to communism and the Russians.” By reinstalling the Shah, the article continued, “matters have turned out even better than could have been hoped.” A 1954 *Christian Science Monitor* article noted that by reinstating the Shah, “the oil of Iran was snatched from Soviet hands, and Iran itself was snatched from bankruptcy and chaos, in the nick of time” (“Iran Oil Pacts,” quoted from Dorman & Farhang, 1987, p. 64). According to the Dorman and Farhang (1987) study, the U.S. media did not speculate about any possible American involvement — the coup was portrayed as an internal uprising due to general dissatisfaction with Mossadegh’s rule. Iranians who claimed that the uprising was the work of the CIA were “dismissed as paranoid and naïve” (p. 49-50). Years later, the CIA acknowledged that it was the architect of the overthrow. Dorman and Farhang (1987) noted that the press mentioned the confirmation in passing; it was “usually relegated to a casual background

clause to the effect that the shah had been ‘restored to his throne in 1953 by a CIA-engineered coup’” (Dorman & Farhang, 1987, p. 50).

After Operation Ajax’s mission was completed, the U.S. assumed Britain’s position as the major foreign power in Iran. Dorman and Farhang (1987) noted, “The course of Iranian history following the overthrow of Mosaddeq was marked by two central trends. The first was the transformation of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi from an uncertain figurehead into a dictatorial monarch. The second was the gradually increasing involvement of the United States in Iranian affairs, a relationship that over time would come close to constituting an American raj” (p. 63). When the British were in Iran, the U.S. had no financial stake in the Iranian oil industry; after the coup, America gained control of 40% of its oil (Dorman & Farhang, 1987; Saikal, 2009). Mossadegh’s dream of nationalization was not realized, although a new oil consortium gave Iran 50% of the profits. The Shah, who had earlier backed nationalization, now stressed “ownership” rather than “control” of Iranian oil, according to Saikal (2009). The oil consortium officially acknowledged Iran’s ownership, however in actuality the international conglomerate had complete power of the oil industry “from production to pricing to marketing” (p. 50).

Scholars (Dorman & Farhang, 1987; Kinzer, 2003) noted that the significance of the Iranian coup has been hugely understated in the American press. Azimi (2004) wrote, “The coup of August 1953 occupies an immensely significant place in the modern Iranian historical and political consciousness. The coup is widely seen as a rupture, a watershed, a turning point when imperialist domination, overcoming a defiant challenge,

reestablished itself, not only by restoring an enfeebled monarch but also by ensuring that the monarchy would assume an authoritarian and antidemocratic posture” (p. 27). The event has been such a substantial obstruction in U.S.-Iran relations that both President Barack Obama and former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright have addressed it publicly. In a speech to the American-Iranian Council on May 17, 2000, Albright conceded to the U.S.’s “significant role in orchestrating the overthrow of Iran's popular Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadegh.” She further acknowledged that the coup was “clearly a setback for Iran's political development. And it is easy to see now why many Iranians continue to resent this intervention by America in their internal affairs” (Albright, 2000). In his June 4, 2009, keynote address in Cairo, President Obama also admitted the U.S.’s role in the coup and noted the democratic process by which Mossadegh came to power: “In the middle of the Cold War, the United States played a role in the overthrow of a democratically elected Iranian government” (see [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov)). The admission was the first time a sitting U.S. president had publicly admitted the U.S.’s involvement (Agence France-Press, 2009). Kinzer (2010) noted that the memory of Mossadegh prevails in Iran and becomes particularly prominent during active struggles against oppressive forces: “When Iranians assert their desire to shape their own fate, [Mossadegh’s] image appears” (p. 27). According to Dabashi (2010), “For generations of Iranians, the coup of 1953 is not a mere historical event; it is the defining moment of their lives. For it is the most haunting national trauma of their modern history — foreign intervention followed by domestic tyranny. Iranians cannot speak of 28 Mordad [the date on the Iranian calendar when Mossadegh was deposed]

without a certain raw nerve suddenly being touched” (p. 92). Byrne (2004a) noted that the removal of Mossadegh “brought to an end a vibrant chapter in the history of Iran’s nationalist and democratic movements” (p. xiv). Bill (1988) wrote, “Twenty-five years later, Iranian revolutionaries swore that they would never make ‘the Musaddiq mistake’” (p. 56).

### **Frames for Iran: The Islamic Revolution and the Green Movement**

The following section introduces *Time*’s coverage of the two periods that were analyzed for this study. The first period is revolution of the late 1970s, later referred to as the Islamic Revolution. The second period is the Green Movement, an uprising that began in June 2009 in protest of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad’s reelection.

#### **The Shah’s Years and the Islamic Revolution**

After being reinstated in 1953, the Shah took excessive measures to suppress every form of opposition, including banning all political organizations and activities. Following the coup, more than 2,000 Tudeh and National Front leaders and members were arrested, a move that crushed public opposition to the Shah (Gasirowski, 2004). Additionally, approximately 600 army officers were arrested on charges of supporting Tudeh, and dozens were tortured and executed (Saikal, 2009). The Shah ordered any literature perceived as radical to be suppressed — even reports critical of the U.S. were banned in Iranian media, according to Saikal (2009). By the end of the 1950s, Pahlavi had consolidated power drastically, but had failed to make any significant economic reforms. “In spite of the country’s oil riches, a majority of its people were still among the poorest in the world; they lacked basic civil liberties, and lived virtually under a reign of

terror” (p. 71). According to Saikal (2009), the Shah allowed the Majlis to function, but only to legitimize his authority. Byrne (2004a) noted, “Because of its role in the coup, many Iranians came to identify Washington as the shah’s all-powerful patron, and it was assumed that Washington implicitly supported his repressive regime’s excesses. This virtually guaranteed that burgeoning hostility toward the shah would also be directed against the United States when the revolutionary Islamic regime came to power in 1979” (p. xv). During this time, an unparalleled relationship between Iran and the U.S. began. From 1953-63, Iran received more than a half billion in military grants from the U.S., making it the largest non-NATO recipient of U.S. military aid (Saikal, 2009). In 1957, the CIA worked with Tehran to establish Iran’s national intelligence agency, Sazman-e Ettela’at Va Amniyat-e Keshvar (SAVAK). During the same period, there were more than 10,000 American personnel in Iran, and further U.S.-Iran partnerships in military, industry, business, and academia were forged (Saikal, 2009).

In the early 1960s, the Shah began promoting social-reform programs that he called the White Revolution, which consisted primarily of provisions toward women’s equality and land reform measures. The Shah gave women the right to vote in 1963, and women were also granted equal rights in family courts and encouraged to enter the workforce. The first phase of land reform was marked by the redistribution of property from 16,000 villages to more than 700,000 families. While redistribution benefitted some greatly, according to it was by and large a failure that displaced thousands of farmers who, in many cases, had larger and more profitable plots of land when they had been tenants (Dorman, 1986; Saikal, 2009). Dorman and Omeed (1979) noted, “Only

about 10 percent of the peasant population had benefitted from land reform, leaving ten million peasants with no land or less than ten acres of poor land, in a country where fifteen acres are necessary for family subsistence." (p. 28). As a result, agricultural production dropped drastically — before land redistribution, Iran produced enough food to feed its population; after land reform, it had to import a staggering 80% of its food supply (Dorman, 1986; Saikal, 2009).

By the 1970s, the literacy rate was approximately 25% (up from a paltry 15% from the 1950s). Corruption, which had always been rampant, became exacerbated by the large sums of money injected into the economy from oil money. In addition, Tehran's population doubled in only seven years, rising to 5 million in 1977, many of them farmers in search of work. As the country changed rapidly, the Shah's repressive policies were ratcheted up (Saikal, 2009). Bill (1988) noted, "The new policy resulted in a reign of terror. ... People disappeared from their homes without explanation, the prisons rapidly filled, and political trials and executions increased sharply" (p. 186). By the mid-1970s, Iran had five major prisons with heavy concentrations of political prisoners (Bill, 1988).

**The Carter Administration and the Shah.** During his presidential campaign, Jimmy Carter ran on a platform that trumpeted human rights and was particularly critical of the Shah's repressive tactics (Kurzman, 1996; Bill, 1988). When Carter took office, however, the president "barely touched on the subject of human rights" in his meetings with the Shah (Kurzman, 1996, p. 5). According to Bill (1988), the Carter administration decided to continue American policies toward Iran to keep gas prices low and to have a

friendly military force in the region. In fact, Carter had even made special accommodations for the Shah in weaponry sales: “The Carter administration, so publicly committed to slowing arms sales, also approved the \$1.8 billion sale of an additional 160 General Dynamics F-16 fighters to Iran” (Bill, p. 230, 1988). Dorman and Farhang (1987) noted that by 1977 Iran had become the U.S.’s largest arms customer. While some media raised attention to his increasing arms stockpiling, far more attention was paid to Iran’s role in the increase of oil prices (Dorman & Farhang, 1987).

By 1976, protests against the Shah had become commonplace in Iran, and even in the U.S. However, little press coverage was given to the demonstrations or the violence that pursued in Iran where police regularly shot and killed protesters (Abrahamian, 2008; Bill, 1988; Dorman & Farhang, 1987; Kurzman, 1996). One particular protest in the U.S. did make headlines. In November 1977, *Time* magazine covered the Pahlavis’ visit to the Carter White House and their attendance at a ceremony on the South Lawn. The ceremony was met with an estimated 1,000 Iranian protesters outside the White House gates who held signs reading, “SHAH: FASCIST MURDER”; “SHAH IS A U.S. PUPPET” and “CIA OUT OF IRAN” (“The Nation: Greetings for the Shah,” 1977). Facing them were counter-protesters, who — the magazine noted — were flown in from Iran by the Shah and treated to generous accommodations for their support. A scuffle ensued between the two groups, and police tear gassed the crowd (“The Nation: Greetings for the Shah,” 1977). One month later, Carter visited Iran and toasted the Shah of Iran on New Year’s Eve: “Iran, because of the great leadership of the Shah, is an island of stability in one of the more troubled areas of the world. This is a tribute to you,

Your Majesty, and to your leadership and to the respect and admiration and love which your people give to you” (quoted from Kurzman, 1996, p. 5).

In Iran, the Shah’s decades of excessive policies had alienated nearly every demographic, bringing together the far right and far left, as well as groups in between. The 1960s and 1970s saw waxing and waning cycles of demonstrations until their zenith was reached in 1978-79. As protests became more frequent, the Shah began to take the mounting criticism seriously and, fearing deposal, initiated policies to “liberalize” his administration in the late 1970s. Rather than quelling the backlash, the newfound latitude emboldened demonstrations and furthered dissent. Bill (1988) noted, “The liberation process struck a responsive chord in Iran. As the regime slowly lifted its lid on society, pent-up political pressures escaped immediately and explosively” (p. 225).

*American Pahlavis and the U.S. media.* During his near 40-year reign, the Shah “carefully and consciously developed personal and professional ties with the American political and financial elite” (Bill, 1988, p. 319). The relationships “expanded and tightened over the years” and included strong ties with top leaders in government, industry, finance, academia, and mass media (p. 319). Bill (1988) coined the term “American Pahlavis” to describe Americans who were inside the Pahlavi circle. Among many others, the Shah was closely linked with Henry Kissinger and the Rockefellers, particularly Nelson Rockefeller, who frequently promoted the Shah and urged the Carter administration to support the monarch. Top universities such as Stanford, MIT, Harvard, Princeton, Kent State, Georgetown, Howard, and Columbia were able to set up special research and educational programs due to Iranian funding. According to Bill (1988),

“The ivy on the hall of much of American academia was greened by the shah’s government” (p. 374). The close relationships blurred into the American press as well. A 135-page list titled “United States — Mass Media” detailed the extravagant gifts 620 U.S. journalists had received from the Iranian government, gifts ranging from caviar to Persian carpets to diamond watches and Cartier silver (Bill, 1988).

Perhaps illustrating this relationship is a 1974 *Time* magazine article that began by quoting an “old Persian proverb”: “The Shah is the Shadow of God.” The article continued:

Ever since the oil crisis that rocked the world last year, the autocratic ruler of Iran has, to many people, indeed seemed to be basking in the light of the Almighty. Iran sits atop an estimated 60 billion bbl. of crude oil, or roughly one-tenth of the world’s proven reserves. The disposition of “this noble product” (as Iranians like to call it), and the money to be made from it, is in the firm hands of one man, His Imperial Majesty Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, Aryamehr (Light of the Aryans), Shahanshah (King of Kings). Once dismissed by Western diplomats as an insecure, ineffective playboy-King, this emperor of oil commands new respect these days, as much for his ambitions as for his wealth. By means of what he has called a “white revolution,” the Shah is determined to transform Iran, a country that still includes nomads whose life-style has not changed in a thousand years, into a Middle Eastern superpower (“Iran: Oil,” quotations and parentheticals in original).

A 1960 *Time* article also used the Farsi phrase, king of kings, in describing the Pahlavi: “At 41, Mohammed Reza Pahlevi, Shahanshah (King of Kings) of Iran, is undisputed boss of his nation. ... A trim, broad-shouldered man, the Shah walks with the easy grace of the trained athlete and soldier, shows awareness of his power with every toss of his silvery royal head. ... His profile might have been lifted straight from one of the bas-reliefs in the ancient Persian capital of Persepolis that Alexander conquered” (“Reformer in Shako,” parenthetical in original). The more than 4,000-word cover story detailed the

Shah's policies and the national conflict that brewed in Iran, intermittent with his personal life — describing, for instance, the beauty and elegance of his wives (he married three times, divorced twice), and the Shah's refined tastes and material excesses. Scholars noted that this type of reporting often obscured the arising domestic issues in Iran. According to Dorman and Omeed (1979), newsreaders in the U.S. “might have been in a better position to evaluate the conflicting claims coming out of Iran if they had known something of the shah's history” (p. 31). The authors stated that repeated use of the “vocabulary of royalty (allusions to the Peacock Throne, the Pahlavi Dynasty, the crown prince, and so on) has given readers the clear impression that the shah's kingly credentials are impeccable, no matter what else can be said about the man” (p. 31, parenthetical in original).

The U.S. media largely ignored Iranian grievances, such as the alarming number of human rights abuses perpetrated by the Shah's government (Abrahamian, 2008; Said, 1997), even when Amnesty International named Iran as the worst offender of human rights. For example, Dorman (1986) noted, *The New York Times* published three articles about human rights abuses in Iran in 1975; in comparison, it published 150 articles on human rights violations in the Soviet Union that year. According to Dorman and Farhang (1987), some international coverage, such as London's *Sunday Times*, and select alternative news outlets in the U.S., such as *The Nation*, reported the abuses with more accuracy, but this coverage was not picked up by the U.S. mainstream press. There were also occasional media reports that “raised questions” about the Shah outlawing all political parties but his own, but “these concerns were usually offset by emphasis on the

Shah's commitment to social progress and unflattering references to his opponents, who were typically identified as terrorists, Communists, or fanatics" (p. 142). "Even after the one-party system was initiated, the mainstream American press continued to use every possible alternative to the word 'dictatorship' or 'police state' in describing various aspects of the shah's absolute power" (p. 142). U.S. journalists at times described a "loyal" and "faithful" Iranian press, neglecting to cite the fact that papers critical of the Shah were shut down and their reporters and editors jailed or executed (pp. 142-143). According to Bill (1988), academia was hardly different in its assessments of the Shah: "Despite occasional hard-hitting studies by such scholars as Ervand Abrahamian, Eric Hooglund, and Hamid Algar, most scholarship on contemporary Iran was surprisingly uncritical. Academics were often linked in the Pahlavi connection, and although many may have expressed reservations about the regime privately, they were highly circumspect in their publications" (p. 372).

The American Pahlavis were not only influential in reinforcing pro-Iranian policy during the Shah's time, but also became a strong voice after the revolution deposed him; "they immediately took a strong stand against the new government in Iran, which helped poison the well of hope for a new Iranian-American relationship. A decade after the fall of the shah, many of these individuals were still consultants, lecturers, and commentators on Iranian politics and economics, Iranian-American relations, the Iran-Iraq war, and other important foreign policy questions" (Bill, 1988, pp. 377-378).

## **The Islamic Revolution**

**A popular uprising.** The unifying quality of the 1979 revolution made it “one of the most popular in history” (Dorman & Farhang, 1987, p. 4). Reeves (1989) noted that it was “one of the few true revolutions in world history” (p. xii), a “powerful self-expression of a nation that wanted to be liberated from all foreign influences” (p. xiii). Wright (2010) stated, “Iran’s 1979 revolution was clearly one of the ... most innovative revolutions of the Modern Age” (p. 1). According to Saikal (2009), “The Iranian revolution of 1978-79 marked a watershed in the evolution of the country’s politics in modern history. It was probably the most genuine mass revolution of the century, starting as a people’s uprising against the Western-backed autocratic rule of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi and ending in an Islamic transformation of Iran under leadership of the Shah’s principal religious and political opponent, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini” (p. xix).

Though later referred to as the “Islamic Revolution,” the uprising did not begin as an Islamic movement. The ulama provided the structure of the movement, but its presence was mostly political and widely misunderstood by the West (Dorman & Farhang, 1987; et al). In the first six months of 1978, the uprisings were comprised largely of students and those from the middle class, but as the demonstrations grew and the weaknesses of the government became apparent, the urban poor began to join; and by September of that year, the lower classes “constituted the dominant force of the movement” (Dorman & Farhang, 1987, p. 4). From this point forward, the clergy were able to direct the movement due to their influence over the lower class, and the middle

class joined, dedicated in their aim to build political movements with the poor (Dorman & Farhang, 1987). Bill (1988) noted, “The thirty-month spurt of political activity had given [Khomeini] the image of a fearless, uncompromising champion of the oppressed, and he became a Shi’i folk hero, a temporal imam who was both absent but present, persecuted but powerful” (p. 239). Khomeini, who had been living in exile in France and Iraq following a 1963 arrest, was not able to lead the revolutionaries directly, however his political rhetoric and organizing directives became the ideology and structure of the revolution via audiocassettes smuggled into the country. In addition to the ulama, there were a number of leftist and secular groups that had a notable presence in the revolution; “they ranged from *Mujahideen-e Khalq* (the People’s Strugglers), a militant group that preached a mixture a Marxism and Islamism, to the *Feda’iyan-e Khalq* (the People’s Devotees), another militant group fixated on Maoism in doctrine and orientation, to the pro-Soviet communist *Tudeh* (Masses) and the center-leftist *Jebh-ye Melli* (National Front), not to mention many nonpartisan political and professional opponents of the Shah” (Saikal, 2009, p. xxii-xxiii, emphasis in original). And while these various groups deferred to Khomeini and the ulama’s leadership in the later stages, “these forces neither embraced the takeover of power by Khomeini and his supporters nor shared his vision of Iran as an Islamic state” (p. xxiii).

Dorman and Farhang (1987) noted that U.S. press coverage of the revolution concentrated on the religious groups who opposed the Shah, and negated the broad alliances in the anti-Shah movement, such as the critical roles played by the National Front and university students — as well as the political, not religious, nature of the

uprisings. “Those opposing the shah were almost completely cut off from the sympathy or understanding of the outside world” (pp. 96-97). Scholars (Dorman & Farhang, 1987; Saikal, 2009) noted that coverage of previous uprisings followed the same pattern in the press. During the Islamic Revolution, which spanned from January 1978 to February 1979, as many as 12,000 people were killed and another 50,000 injured (Abrahamian, 2008). In January 1978, a clash began in response to an anti-Khomeini editorial that ran in a state newspaper. Seminary students in the town of Qom demonstrated against the newspaper, and they met with heavy presence from the police who killed approximately 70 protesters (Abrahamian, 2008). The Shah alleged that the students were protesting the Pahlavi dynasty’s liberation of women, noting that the demonstration took place on the anniversary when his father, Reza Shah, had banned the veil. However, Abrahamian (2008) stated that these claims did not match the students’ demands: “Petitions drawn up by seminaries did not mention any such anniversary. Instead, they demanded apologies for the editorial; release of political prisoners; the return of Khomeini; ... freedom of expression, especially for the press; independence for the judiciary; the breaking of ties with imperial powers; support for agricultural and the immediate dissolution of the Resurgence Party [the Shah’s political party]” (p. 158). These demands remained the opposition’s requisitions throughout 1978 (Abrahamian, 2008).

The violence escalated. Later that year on August 19, the anniversary of the 1953 coup, “a large cinema in the working-class district of Abadan went up in flames, incinerating more than 400 women and children. The public blamed the local police chief, who had previously ordered cold-blooded killings” (Abrahamian, 2008, p. 159).

The Shah alleged that the cinema fire was the work of religious groups that were opposed to Western preoccupations such as feature films, although his claims fell mostly on deaf ears within the country (Abrahamian, 2008; Dorman & Farhang, 1987). After the mass burial outside of town, 10,000 mourners “marched into Abadan shouting ‘Burn the shah, End the Pahlavis’” (Abrahamian, 2008, p. 159). A *Washington Post* story reported that “the marchers had one clear message: ‘The shah must go,’” and that a *Financial Times* reporter expressed surprise that “so many, even those with vested interests in the regime, suspected that SAVAK had set the fire” (quoted from Abrahamian, 2008, p. 159). Whatever the Iranians believed, Dorman (1979) noted that his study of U.S. media coverage concluded that the press accepted “without question” that the Abadan fire was the work of Muslim extremists.

The turmoil progressed, and on September 8 the Shah ordered martial law in 12 cities, which intensified actions from the opposition. In return, police and military forces became even more violent (Saikal, 2009). On that same day, noted Abrahamian (2008), “Commandoes surrounded a crowd in Jaleh Square in downtown Tehran, ordering them to disband, and, when they refused to do so, shot indiscriminately. ... European journalists reported that Jaleh Square resembled ‘a firing squad’” (Abrahamian, 2008, p. 159). The massacre, which became known as Black Friday, took an estimated 4,000 lives and shook the nation. In the weeks and months to follow, the Shah would not be able to regain control. Tens of thousands went on strike — striking oil workers alone totaled 37,000 — added to them were high school and university students, and workers in bazaars, factories, banks, railways, ports, and government offices. According to

Abrahamian (2008), “The whole country, including the Plan of Budget and Organization, the crème de la crème of the central government, had gone on strike” (p. 161). The unity was unparalleled: Blood donors poured into hospitals to aid those wounded in demonstrations, rich Iranians paid the salaries of striking workers, oil workers produced just enough oil for domestic use, shopkeepers stocked only enough food for their customers — it was “a sense of unity and a spirit of cooperation in all sectors of society that was as palpable as it was unprecedented” (Dorman & Farhang, 1987, p. 158). This profound alliance brought daily life to a halt and was the force that eventually drove out the Shah (Dorman & Farhang, 1987). On December 11, more than 2 million protesters rallied in Tehran, demonstrating the overwhelming support for the anti-Shah opposition. In the Shah’s last political move, he persuaded Shahpur Bakhtiar, a leader in the National Front and longtime opponent of the Shah, to accept the role of prime minister; Bakhtiar agreed on the condition that the Shah transfer most of his power and leave the country temporarily. The Shah acquiesced and left for Egypt on January 16, 1979. He would never return. Though Bakhtiar had some initial support, he was tainted with the Shah’s nomination and was no match for Khomeini’s homecoming in February 1, 1979, after 16 years in exile. Khomeini’s establishment of the Islamic Republic ended the 2,500-year tradition of the Iranian monarchy.

According to Saikal (2009), “One striking feature of the Shah’s rule was the similarity between the circumstances of his rise and his fall from power. His assumption of effective power in August 1953 was marked by bloodshed, popular discontent, and the belief that he was an American puppet. So was his downfall in January 1979” (p. 202).

Bill (1988) noted, “When the shah left Iran on January 16, 1979 ... millions of Iranians took to the streets in an ecstasy of personal and political celebration that demonstrated the depths of their disaffection. The poison that emanated from this disaffection spewed forth in many forms for years afterwards” (p. 261).

**U.S. reaction.** Throughout the revolution, U.S. support of the Shah and his tactics was strong. Bill (1988) noted, “In the eyes of the Iranian masses opposed to the shah, one of Carter’s most serious political miscalculations was the timing of his telephone call to the shah after Black Friday. The shah’s troops had fired into unarmed crowds at Jalah Square, killing and wounding hundreds of men, women, and children, on September 8, and President Carter took time out from his important Camp David meetings to call the shah early Sunday morning, September 10. Carter told the monarch that he had his personal support and friendship” (pp. 257-258). The president’s support “convinced the Iranian people that Cater approved of the Jalah massacre and that the United States was now determined to oppose the revolution at all costs” (p. 258). According to Bill (1988), Carter’s National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski had “consistently argued that only a hard-line, no-nonsense policy from the shah could save the day” (p. 249). Ambassador to Iran William Sullivan tried to negotiate a softer approach, and recommended that the Carter administration establish direct contact with Khomeini. Yet, Sullivan “found his increasingly desperate messages ignored in Washington. Not only had Zbigniew Brzezinski and his staff taken charge of Iran policy, but Secretary of State Vance himself refused to believe that the shah was in serious

trouble” (p. 248). As a result, Carter vetoed any direct American contact with the ayatollah.

As bloodshed continued, the Shah began to reconsider the effectiveness of hardline tactics, but was not supported by the U.S. According to Bill (1988):

A seldom-mentioned irony is that the shah himself indicated that further military measures would be counterproductive and would result in such bloodshed that his dynasty would be hated and his family’s very existence would be in mortal danger. ... The shah was also incredulous when he heard that Brzezinski had vetoed Sullivan’s proposal that the United States make direct contact with Khomeini in Paris. After watching his troops kill over ten thousand of his own people in the streets of Iran’s cities, the shah was determined that violent tactics were doomed to fail. Because of this position, the monarch found himself criticized by Brzezinski as being weak, vacillating, and indecisive (p. 251).

In November 1978, President Carter called on diplomat George Ball to carry out an independent study of the situation in Iran and to recommend policy. In his report, “Ball sharply criticized [U.S. policy in Iran] and stated that the United States bore much of the responsibility for the shah’s megalomania. He argued that the shah was finished as an absolute monarch. Ball pointed out that military repression was doomed to fail” (Bill, p. 252, 1988). Carter, who had consulted with Brzezinski on the report, told Ball that he would not be accepting the recommendations (Bill, 1988). Carter’s next move was to commission Air Force General Robert “Dutch” Huyser to fly to Iran in order “to hold the Iranian military together and to send a sharp signal that the United States stood behind the current regime” (Bill, 1988, p. 254); Huyser arrived January 4, 1979. The general’s “presence in Iran undercut Ambassador Sullivan’s authority. ... Huyser’s mission was a dramatic indication of Washington’s two-track, collision-course, contradictory policy toward Iran” (Bill, 1988, p. 254).

Despite the bleak picture, Carter's public statements regarding the Shah were continually rosy. On October 28, 1978, Carter said, "We have historic friendships with Iran. I think they are a great stabilizing force in their part of the world." On November 30, Carter stated, "We trust the shah to maintain stability in Iran, to continue with the democratization process, and also to continue with the progressive change in the Iranian social and economic structure. ... We have confidence in the shah." On December 12, Carter said, "I fully expect the shah to maintain power in Iran, and for the present problems in Iran to be resolved. ... I think the predictions of doom and disaster that come from some sources have certainly not been realized at all. The shah has our support and he also has our confidence." On January 17, 1979, the day after the Shah fled Iran, "Carter continued to demonstrate his confusion and misunderstanding in response to a question from United Press International's Helen Thomas, who asked him how he could have been so wrong when a month ago he stated that the shah would maintain power" (Bill, 1988, p. 259). The president responded, "I think that the rapid change of affairs in Iran has not been predicted by anyone so far as I know." According to Bill (1988), "If the president had looked to a number of professionals in his own State Department, he would have found many, including at the end his own ambassador, who had been desperately trying to signal him from behind the barriers imposed by the National Security Council" (p. 259).

**Media coverage.** According to Dorman and Omeed (1979), the U.S. press took its cue from American policymakers by first ignoring "the Iranian opposition, then denigrated it" (p. 28). When coverage was given the context was frequently missing, as

in the case of the 1978 strikes where press coverage noted the strikes offhandedly but did not signify their importance nor the extensive unity in the revolution (Dorman & Farhang, 1987). Moreover, Dorman (1979) noted that context was missing in analysis of the Shah, who was described at times as “‘autocratic,’ ‘stern willed,’ iron fisted’ and ‘determined.’ Absent were adjectives such as ‘tyrannical,’ ‘brutal,’ or ‘despotic,’ and in our year-long study of the mainstream media we could not find a single use of the term ‘dictator.’ On balance, therefore, the Shah was presented as a reasonable man who, at times, had used unreasonable methods. By contrast, opposition forces were portrayed as totally unreasonable” (p. 59). Some press accounts depicted the Shah’s expulsion and Khomeini’s takeover as the “worst possible” scenario, citing a xenophobic, anti-West government that planned to align itself with communism (Dorman & Farhang, 1987, p. 6). Said (1997) noted that with all the coverage on the events in Iran, “it is surprising how relatively few articles treated Iran’s *modern* history, or referred to the singularly important political resistance of the Persian clerics both to foreign intervention and to the monarchy since the late nineteenth century, or even considered how it was that Khomeini was able to bring down the shah and an undefeated army with radio cassettes and largely unarmed masses as his major instruments” (p. 88, emphasis in original).

According to scholars, the uprising’s multiclass nature, made up of the working class, middle class, communists, intelligentsia, and clerics, was contradicted by U.S. media reports from that time (Kinzer, 2008; Greason, 2005; Rasler, 1996). Dorman (1979) noted that the press “readily accepted the Shah’s contention” that Islam and Marxism were the problems — “the Shah’s phrase, ‘Islamic-marxists,’ was used

throughout much of the coverage of the first nine months of the uprising, rarely with a qualifying comment to the effect that the claim probably was nonsense” (p. 60).

According to the Shah’s version of events, the religious groups were protesting against land reforms and women’s rights, and this depiction, picked up by the American press, created a “general sense of unease among liberal constituencies in the United States toward the Iranian revolution” (Dorman & Farhang, 1987, p. 99). When the revolution became more prominent, the U.S. press ignored Iranian dissidents; however, dissidents from non-allied countries, such as the Soviet Union, were regularly quoted in mainstream news articles (Dorman & Farhang, 1987). As the demonstrations and the coverage they received increased, the articles focused on the violence taking place in Iran but gave the impression that both sides were engaging, even though “the blood spilling was almost entirely one-sided” (p. 155). Although demonstrators sometimes engaged in property damage, especially actions targeting banks and public buildings, they “faced tanks and machine guns with little more than moral outrage” (p. 156).

According to Bill (1988), U.S. policymakers throughout the years were overly confident in their understanding of Iran. “Before the revolution, this sturdy confidence was reinforced for twenty-five years by the reporting that came out of the American embassy in Tehran, by the close personal ties that dominated the relationship between the Iranian political elite and American decision makers, and by the American mass media, whose often shallow and orthodox reporting lent a kind of public legitimacy to this deceptive mind-set” (p. 3). A November 29, 1978, *Christian Science Monitor* article compared the Iranian uprising with “the recent horror of Jonestown, Guyana,” linking

Khomeini in the minds of its readers with mass murderer Jim Jones (quoted from Dorman, 1979, p. 59). The media attempted to establish further links between the revolution's leaders and America's enemies — a December 1, 1978, *Newsweek* article reported that French intelligence sources identified a Khomeini insider, Sadegh Ghotzbadeh, as a Syrian communist who was linked to the communist parties in France and Italy. The article also claimed that Ghotzbadeh worked with the Libyan secret service. According to Dorman (1979), “Despite a number of protests to the magazine’s editor that Ghotzbadeh is neither a Syrian (he is Iranian) nor a communist (he is a ‘Muslim’), *Newsweek* refused to retract its ‘scoop’” (p. 60, parentheses in original). Additionally, Said (1997) noted that some media reports suggested Palestinian Liberation Organization was behind U.S. embassy takeover in Tehran. Saikal (2009) wrote, “Khomeini’s Iran came to be perceived as a serious threat to interests of the United States and those of many of its regional Arab and non-Arab allies. The United States accordingly labeled Khomeini’s regime disparagingly as ‘fundamentalist,’ severed relations with Iran, imposed economic and militarist sanctions against it, and promoted a perception that radical political Islamism was dangerous for America and the world order” (p. xxiv). Dorman and Farhang (1987) noted that as soon as media discovered the leadership of Khomeini, they attributed the cause of the entire movement to him. The media “gave the clear impression that Khomeini had made the revolution, instead of the other way around” (Dorman & Farhang, 1987, p. 160). Dorman (1979) noted, “In the early stages of revolution Americans were urgently and persistently informed that Iran’s unrest was wholly the result of religious fanaticism and leftist trouble-making. ... We

could find no mainstream news medium that viewed events in Iran from even a slightly different perspective” (p. 58). A November 12, 1978, *Washington Post* article described the Shah as a “man who had provided land, much of it his own, to his people, unshackled women and was portrayed by many, including himself, as the great modernizer of a backward land” (quoted from Dorman, 1979, p. 58).

### **The Islamic Republic of Iran**

The Islamic Revolution was “an enormously popular revolution” that “fell into the familiar historical pattern of devouring its own children and continuing tyranny in a new and intensified form” (Dorman & Farhang, 1987, p. 233). Bayat (2010) noted, “During the revolution, people [in Iran] seemed to equate the term ‘Islamic republic’ with the vague idea of a just, pious and accountable or democratic alternative to the dictatorship of the Shah” (p. 46). According to Wright (2010), “Islam ... provided a framework for an alternative to the monarchy. The new Islamic Republic was the first grand experiment in blending Islam and democracy. ... By ousting the last in a string of dynasties dating back more than 2,000 years, the Iranian revolution sought to demonstrate that Islam was an effective idiom of political expression, opposition and governance” (pp. 1-2).

Once Khomeini took control, however, a growing number of Iranians found his form of government and brand of Islam troubling, even those within his own ranks. The first elected president of the Islamic republic, Abolhassan Bani Sadr, was forced into exile after 14 months in office, and Foreign Minister Sadeq Qotbzadeh was executed in 1985 on charges of plotting against the Islamic Republic. Saikal (2009) noted, “The first

[of Khomeini's objectives] was to eliminate or weed out those who were considered to be the Shah's main functionaries, ideologues, and supporters. In the process, Iran plunged into a period of violent turmoil, and a substantial number of 'oppressors' and 'traitors' were jailed and executed" (p. xxiii). Said (1997) noted that few U.S. reports detailed the political splintering and conflict within the Islamic Republic of Iran.

According to Wright (2010), Iran "stunned the world by introducing Islam as a form of modern governance, in turn altering the balance of power across the Middle East" (p. 1). This alarm at times translated into Manichaean frames on Iran (Entman, 2003; Rojecki, 2005; Tarock, 2006) — a viewpoint that propagates the idea of perpetual struggle between good and evil. On November 4, 1979, the relationship between the U.S. and Iran was drastically altered when a group of students raided the American Embassy in Tehran and held 52 people hostage for 444 days. As a result, all diplomatic ties with Iran were severed, and they have remained so until today. Said (1997) noted that although millions of dollars a day were spent on covering the hostage situation, only a scant amount of information was produced in the "tidal wave" of coverage. According to Mobasher (2006), during the crisis, the U.S. media reported on Iran and Iranians in an increasingly one-dimensional light, showing them to be "militant, dangerous, and anti-American," (p. 106). Said (1997) noted, "Within a week after the embassy occupation took place on November 4, pictures of a scowling Ayatollah Khomeini were as frequent and unchanging in what they were supposed to be telling the viewer as the endless pictures of vast Iranian mobs. The burning (and selling) of Iranian flags by irate Americans became a regular pastime; the press faithfully reported this kind of patriotism"

(p. 87, parenthetical in original). An *Atlanta Constitution* article dated November 13, 1979, noted that “the New Barbarians are loose in Iran” (quoted from Said, 1997). *Time* magazine ran the story “An Ideology of Martyrdom” on November 26, 1979, featuring a sinister-looking portrait of Khomeini on the cover, and the same week *Newsweek* published its “Iran’s Martyr Complex” story. At the end of that year, *The New York Times* featured a two-page symposium spread on “The Explosion in the Moslem World,” in which scholars were asked repeatedly why Islam is at war with the West (Said, 1997). According to Said, *The New York Times* regularly relied on its reputation as the U.S.’s leading newspaper to get away with its “patchwork reporting and helter-skelter manner” in covering Islam (p. 92). Studying the backlash, Mobasher (2006) noted, “Americans’ reaction to the hostage crisis was outrage, anger, and frustration channeled into an economic and a political ‘miniwar’ against Iran and Iranians in the United States” (p. 105). Anti-Iranian protests were held “in almost every major university across the country,” and several universities even barred Iranians from class, or, as in the case of Mississippi, doubled tuition for students of Iranian descent (Mobasher, 2006, p. 105).

In the years since the hostage crisis, the U.S. government and media have had a preoccupation with Iran, according to Said (1997); Iran has become “America’s major foreign devil. It is considered to be a terrorist state because it backs groups like Hizbollah in South Lebanon ... and is seen as an exporter of fundamentalism, and is especially feared for its unbowed opposition to United States hegemony in the Middle East, the Gulf in particular” (p. 7). Since the installation of the Islamic Republic in 1979, it has been the policy of every U.S. administration to bring about regime change in Iran

(Tarock, 2006). In recent years, Manichaeian framing was made evident in the State of the Union address on January 29, 2002, when President George W. Bush famously coined his “axis of evil” phrase in his accusations of Iran, North Korea, and Iraq. Bush (2002) noted:

States like these and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world. By seeking weapons of mass destruction, these regimes pose a grave and growing danger. They could provide these arms to terrorists, giving them the means to match their hatred. They could attack our allies or attempt to blackmail the United States. In any of these cases, the prices of indifference would be catastrophic (see <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/>).

In her speech to the American-Iranian Council, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright stated that the hostage crisis was not over in the minds of Americans: “It is no secret that, for two decades, most Americans have viewed Iran primarily through the prism of the U.S. Embassy takeover in 1979, accompanied as it was by the taking of hostages, hateful rhetoric and the burning of the U.S. flag” (Albright, 2000). More than 30 years after the hostage crisis, an America’s Point of View (APOV) survey, released in April 2010, showed that Americans identify Iran as the nation’s biggest threat.

Today, Iran’s population is in the world’s top 20, at approximately 75 million (Wright, 2010; Bayat, 2010). Its modernity “manifests itself in a host of social processes, including the ‘nuclearization’ of the family, the general trend toward smaller, two-child households and apartment living, [and] new trends of possessing individualism” (Bayat, 2010, p. 45). According to Bayat (2010), “The Islamic state has been neither totalitarian (at least not yet) nor stubbornly pre-modern (it utilizes the contemporary institutions of a parliament, a president and a modern bureaucracy). But it remains deeply authoritarian,

patriarchal and ideological, and it deprives millions of citizens participation in the decisions concerning public life” (p. 47, parentheses in original). While Iran holds approximately 10% of the world’s oil reserves (Wright, 2010) and boasts an 80% literacy rate and a well-developed industrial infrastructure, its unemployment rate is a staggering 30% (Bayat, 2010). The economy’s lagging growth is to blame for much of the backlash Iran has had to face within its own borders and it is deeply affected by U.S. and international sanctions (Maloney, 2010).

Sanctions against Iran began in 1979 after the American embassy was seized. Carter froze approximately \$12 billion in Iranian assets, most of which remain frozen until today. Sanctions increased in the 1980s when arms sales to Iran were forbidden, and President Regan later restricted all imports/exports and services with Iran. President Clinton toughened sanctions against Iran with the Iran and Libya Sanctions Act of 1996 (ILSA), prohibiting all U.S. trade with Iran including oil sales. The 2003 Congressional Research Service (CRS) report prepared for Congress noted, “When U.S. allies refused to adopt similar sanctions, the Clinton Administration and Congress believed that it might be necessary for the United States to try to deter foreign countries from undermining the U.S. effort against Iran” and imposed further sanctions that severely penalized countries choosing to do business with Iran (Katzman, 2003). In 2004, the U.S. Department of Treasury prohibited the publication or editing of scientific reports from Iran, warning that American scientists who worked with Iranian scientists would be prosecuted. Restrictions continued, including freezing transactions and assets from Iranian banks, U.N. sanctions on uranium enrichment, E.U. sanctions on trade and financial services,

and sanctions from other countries including Israel, Canada, Australia, Japan, and India. These policies have been met with criticism: “Traditionally skeptical of economic sanctions as a policy tool, the EU states took exception to ILSA as an extraterritorial application of U.S. law. Some EU states criticized ILSA as a ‘double standard’ in U.S. foreign policy, in which the United States worked against the Arab League boycott of Israel while at the same time promoted a worldwide boycott of Iran. The EU countries threatened formal counter-action in the World Trade Organization” (Katzman, 2003). In summer 2010, President Obama signed the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act of 2010 (CISADA) into law with little press coverage. This law bans domestic and international sales of petroleum to Iran. While Iran has one of the largest supplies of oil in the world, it does not have the capacity to refine enough crude to meet its own country’s demands. For that reason, Iran imported up to 40% of its gasoline and approximately 10% of its diesel. CISADA also prohibits other industries from engaging in business with Iran’s oil companies, such as refineries and insurance and shipping companies. In February 2013, the Iran Threat Reduction and Syria Human Rights Act of 2012 went into effect. The sanctions further restrict the actions of the Central Bank of Iran, as well as Iran’s petroleum industry.

Political rhetoric outside the Islamic Republic of Iran has remained high. In March 2006, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice stated that Iran is the Middle East’s “central banker” for terrorism and that the U.S. faces “no greater challenge from a single country than from Iran” (Tarock, 2006, p. 646). During his inaugural address on January 20, 2009, Obama said, “To the Muslim world, we seek a new way forward, based on

mutual interest and mutual respect. To those leaders around the globe who seek to sow conflict, or blame their society's ills on the West, know that your people will judge you on what you can build, not what you destroy. To those who cling to power through corruption and deceit and the silencing of dissent, know that you are on the wrong side of history, but that we will extend a hand if you are willing to unclench your fist” (see [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov)). In his first term, Obama had repeatedly named building a stronger relationship with Iran as one of his top foreign policy objectives, but no understanding between the two countries developed. Though a new relationship was promised, Limbert (2010) noted that the rhetoric in both countries repeatedly cited the other’s intention to “trick” or “cheat.” On November 6, 2010, U.S. Senator Lindsey Graham, speaking at a security conference in Canada, called on the U.S. “not to just neutralize [Iran’s] nuclear program, but to sink their navy, destroy their air force and deliver a decisive blow to the Revolutionary Guard, in other words neuter that regime” (Duss, 2010, p. 1). Tarock (2006) noted, “In such stark perceptions there can be no peace and no room for compromise. ... Put into political terms, there is a clash here between a superpower intolerant of a perceived dissident and ‘rogue’ state, an assertive and old but glorious civilization that has had the ‘temerity’ to challenge that superpower in a region where Washington demands submission” (p. 647). On September 25, 2012, Obama addressed the United Nations General Assembly on Iran. The president said, “Make no mistake, a nuclear-armed Iran is not a challenge that can be contained.” Obama warned of grave consequences should Iran develop nuclear weapons; he claimed that such a development would “threaten the elimination of Israel, the security of Gulf nations, and

the stability of the global economy. It risks triggering a nuclear-arms race in the region, and the unraveling of the non-proliferation treaty. ... That is why the United States will do what we must to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon” (Johnston, 2012). In the third debate between the president and candidate Mitt Romney in 2012, Obama “touted” his tough actions against Iran, saying that his administration had “organized the strongest coalition and the strongest sanctions against Iran in history, and it is crippling their economy” (Goodenough, 2012). Obama continued, “Their currency has dropped 80 percent. ... Their economy is in a shambles” (Goodenough, 2012). Furthermore, on March 15, 2013, in an interview with Israeli TV, Obama toughened his rhetoric against Iran saying the country is a year away from being able to develop nuclear weapons and that he would use “all options” to stop them. Dwyer (2013) noted that several days before Obama’s interview, Vice President Joe Biden had “warned Iran in a spirited speech to the American Israeli Public Affairs Committee, the powerful pro-Israel lobby, that those ‘options’ include U.S. military action.” Biden said, “Let me make clear what that commitment is: It is to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon. Period. End of discussion. Prevent — not contain — prevent.” Days ahead of his trip to Israel, Obama noted that Iran has not “made a fundamental decision to get right with the international community” in their alleged aims to build the bomb. However, Dwyer (2013) noted that there is disagreement in the administration; in February 2013, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta said, “The intelligence we have is [Iran has] not made the decision to proceed with the development a nuclear weapon. I can’t tell you they are in fact pursuing a weapon, because that’s what not intelligence say they’re doing right

now.” Comments such as Panetta’s are unusual in mainstream media, according to Afrasiabi (2005), who noted that the press has shut out official voices that do not advocate tough sanctions or direct military action.

### **The Green Movement**

**The uprising.** Commonly referred to as the Green Movement — also the Green Revolution, or the Twitter Revolution, due to its mass utilization of social media — the uprising was sparked by the reelection of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, and surprised the world 30 years after the Islamic Revolution. The mood leading into the presidential election had been enthusiastic and hopeful for replacing Ahmadinejad. Hashemi and Postel (2010) noted, “The country was engulfed in a peaceful public debate about the future of Iran. As it had done in the past, the Iranian regime loosened political restrictions in the lead-up to a national election in order to encourage a high voter turnout and bolster the regime’s sagging legitimacy” (p. xi). During Ahmadinejad’s first term, dozens of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) had been closed, inflation reached 25%, and a host of government subsidies were been cut. Voters blamed Ahmadinejad for Iran’s fractured relationship with the West and its plummeting economy. On May 26, 2009, 17 days before the presidential election, supporters of candidate Mir Hossein Mousavi filled Tehran’s 90,000-seat stadium to capacity (Mann, 2009). Protesters dressed in green, Mousavi’s campaign color, and sported green flags and banners, or face and body paint. During an “American-style debate” (Hashemi & Postel, 2010), which hundreds watched from big screens mounted above city sidewalks, Mousavi called Ahmadinejad a “liar,” and crowds exploded with support (Ahadi, 2010). Ahadi’s

documentary (2010) noted that this moment awakened the youth and first-time voters, and made people believe that they could achieve change through the Iranian system. A commentator in the film stated that there was “not just a wave of support” for governmental change, “but a tidal wave.” On election day, Friday, June 12, the anti-Ahmadinejad draw to the voting polls was so large across the country that it “caused voting hours to be extended four times during the day” (Bakhtavar, 2009, p. 75). Only two hours after the polls had closed, officials reported that Ahmadinejad was in the lead with 69% of the votes tallied. Cell phone text messaging was immediately blocked.

The following morning Ahmadinejad was declared the winner, and the backlash was immediate — “hundreds of thousands poured onto the streets of Tehran and other cities asking, ‘Where is my vote?’” (Bakhash, 2012, p. 337). The growing and “intense demonstrations brought the Iranian police, who used batons and tear gas to stop the clash that followed” (Bakhtavar, 2009, p. 79). These were “by far” the largest street protests and demonstrations in Iran since the 1979 Iranian Revolution (Bakhtavar, 2009). Wright (2010) noted the shift in focus among protesters as the demonstrations endured: “For millions of Iranians in many cities, the issue quickly escalated from alleged voter fraud to condemnation of the regime, its leadership and even the Islamic system” (p. 1). The Green Movement became “the biggest threat to the regime since the revolution. Beyond the immediate election issue, they reflected the degree of public daring, the diversity of political thought, and the growing unease about the system, even among those inside it” (p. 3). Mousavi called for his supporters to peacefully keep up the demonstrations and for an official investigation into the election along with fellow candidate Mohen Rezaee.

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei dismissed all allegations of electoral fraud. The official explanation for Ahmadinejad's win was that he had a strong base in the rural areas, where voters' opinions were not as prominent as those in Tehran and other Iranian cities. Yet analyses, such as one by Chatham House in 2009, showed that fraud was rampant during the elections and that government claims that Ahmadinejad had a strong base in the rural areas were not accurate. The report concluded that in two conservative provinces, Mazandaran and Yazd, the government alleged that more ballots were cast than those provinces had voters (*Preliminary Analysis*, 2009). Of the rural population explanation, the report concluded, "In 2005, as in 2001 and 1997, conservative candidates, and Ahmadinejad in particular, were markedly unpopular in rural areas. That the countryside always votes conservative is a myth" (*Preliminary Analysis*, 2009, p. 2). On June 26, during televised prayers, senior leader Ayatollah Ahmad Khatami called for the execution of opposition leaders and instructed followers as such: "Anybody who fights against the Islamic system or the leader of Islamic society, fight him until complete destruction" (Fletcher, 2009). Citing the events of 1953, the Islamic Republic alleged that the protesters were agitators paid by the U.S. and the U.K., and justified their harsh treatment of their citizens with this rhetoric. Protests raged on, and when Ahmadinejad was sworn into office on August 5, thousands gathered outside the Majlis and chanted "Death to the Dictator!" ("Iran's Defiant," 2009).

The demonstrations continued for months, filling the streets of Iranian cities with bold demands for democracy and justice (Bakhtavar, 2009). Similar to other Iranian uprisings, the Green Movement drew its support "from a cross-section of Iranian society

— the country’s sizable educated and middle classes as well as working-class Iranians (particularly trade unions), and overwhelming support from Iran’s intellectuals, students, women’s groups, and especially the country’s youth” (Hashemi & Postel, 2010, p. xix, parenthetical in original). Thousands of activists, organizers, journalists, and leading politicians were arrested, and dozens were killed. On August 11, the Iranian government conceded to holding 4,000 detainees due to the uprisings, however they stated 3,700 were released after a few days (“Iran Admits,” 2009). The documentary *The Green Wave* depicted the physical and psychological trauma those detained received, causing the deaths of at least 150 people (Ahadi, 2010). Moreover, there were numerous allegations of rape that were later confirmed by Iran’s police chief, though other officials denied the allegations (“Opposition Party Leader,” 2009). Bakhsh (2012) noted:

The sentences handed down by the revolutionary courts have been severe. The human rights lawyer Abdolfattah Soltani was sentenced in March 2012 to 18 years in prison and barred for an additional 20 years from practicing law. Bahareh Hedayat, a women’s rights activist and a leader of the “One Million Signatures Campaign” to secure equal rights for women, was sentenced to nine and a half years in prison. Another women’s rights activist, the lawyer Nasrin Sotudeh, was sentenced to 11 years in prison and barred for 20 years from practicing law or traveling abroad. Mohammad Ali Dadkhah, a founding member of the Center for Defenders of Human Rights, began a nine-year prison sentence in September for membership in an organization “seeking to overthrow the government.” ... The university student organization, Tahkim Vahdat, has listed dozens of students sentenced to prison terms of up to 10 years on similar charges. The list includes Majid Tavakoli of Amir Kabir University, sentenced to an eight-year prison term, and the blogger Hossein Ronaghi-Maleki, sentenced to 15 years (p. 338).

Bakhsh (2012) continued, “The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Iran, Ahmed Shaheed, reported in March 2012 that the Iranian judiciary executed 700 persons (one-third of them secretly) in 2011” (p. 338, parenthetical in

original). And Amnesty International released a report in which “the state of human rights in Iran was described as ‘the most severe period of repression since the end of the revolutionary period’” (Hashemi & Postel, 2010, p. xvi).

### **U.S. Reaction.**

*U.S. government.* The Obama administration was cautious in expressing much enthusiasm for what some saw as a counter to the revolution of the 1970s: a much-anticipated pro-West movement in Iran. Though he “vowed to stay out of the situation,” Obama expressed doubt about the legitimacy of Ahmadinejad’s presidency and asked for the rights of protesters to be recognized (Bakhtavar, 2009, p. 101). One year later, on the uprising’s anniversary, Obama issued a statement read at a reception by the National Endowment for Democracy honoring the protesters of Iran. Obama (2010) said:

We mourn each and every innocent life that is lost. We call on the Iranian government to stop all violent and unjust actions against its own people. ... The Iranian people will ultimately judge the actions of their own government. If the Iranian government seeks the respect of the international community, it must respect the dignity of its own people and govern through consent, not coercion. ... Right now, we are bearing witness to the Iranian peoples’ belief in that truth, and we will continue to bear witness (see [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov)).

Support for a counterrevolution did not begin with Obama. In 2006, Congress passed the Iran Freedom and Support Act, allocating \$10 million toward groups in Iran opposing the Islamic regime, and another \$60 million was allocated in 2008 (Wright, 2010).

Moreover, in 2007, \$400 million was authorized by President George W. Bush to the CIA for destabilizing measures in Iran (Ross & Esposito, 2007). The authorization put “into motion a CIA plan that reportedly includes a coordinated campaign of propaganda, disinformation and manipulation of Iran’s currency and international financial

transactions” (Ross & Esposito, 2007). Iranian officials cited these campaigns as evidence that the Green Movement was not an indigenous uprising in Iran. Though the Obama administration stated that it would not be involving itself in Iran’s internal politics, *The New York Times* reported that Jared Cohen, a U.S. State Department official, asked Twitter to “delay scheduled maintenance of its global network, which would have cut off service while Iranians were using Twitter to swap information and inform the outside world about the mushrooming protests around Tehran” (Landler & Stelter, 2009). Twitter complied.

***U.S. public.*** Websites such as HelpIranElection.com urged readers to “show support for the people who fight for democracy at Iran, and change your Twitter avatar to have green overlay or green ribbon [sic] (green is the official color of the movement)” (HelpIranElection.com, 2009, parenthetical in original). Public figures such as Madonna, the rock band U2, Noam Chomsky, Robert Redford, Jon Bon Jovi, Joan Baez, and others expressed support for demonstrators in Iran. A *New York Times* article reported that thousands of American viewers protested CNN’s small amount of coverage of the Green Movement, calling on CNN, MSNBC, and other cable news outlets to support Iranian demonstrators (Stelter, 2009).

***U.S. media.*** According to Cassel (2009), the U.S. media select which national uprisings to spotlight, depending on the interests of the state. Historically, media support their governments’ positions on foreign affairs — even media outlets operating in democratic societies with “free” press (Cook, 2005). Cassel (2009) noted that while the Iranian protests were being covered daily, mass protests in Peru and Georgia went mostly

unreported since the protesters' aims did not serve those of the "U.S.'s global agenda." Khorshid (2009) noted, "Although news feeds about the current situation in Iran abound, the image depicted by Western media is generally subjective, siding with the Iranian opposition in what is often portrayed as a good-versus-evil drama" (para. 3). The articles' framing were often clear from their headlines. *The New York Times* used such titles as: "In Iran, a Real Race, and Talk of a Sea of Change"; "Wide Reverberations as Door Slams on Hope of Change"; "Innocent Googling? No Such Thing in Tehran"; "Tear Down This Cyberwall!"; "Shadowing Iran Vigilantes, Attacking Protesters at Night, Promise Daylight Action"; "A Different Iranian Revolution"; and "Obama Condemns Iran's Iron Fist Against Protests." One *New York Times* editorial noted:

Looking at the courage of the hundreds of thousands of protesters who have taken to the streets, one can only feel admiration and anxiety for their safety. Government authorities ... are threatening and killing protesters, arresting opposition leaders, trying to block journalists from reporting and predictably blaming everyone but themselves. Fortunately, many of the same people who fomented the 1979 revolution with what was then advanced technology — recorded speeches by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini — are being thwarted by Twitter and the Internet ("Iran's Nonrepublic," 2009).

Another *New York Times* editorial noted, "There is no transparency or accountability in Iran, so we may never know for sure what happened in the presidential election last week. But given the government's even more than usually thuggish reaction, it certainly looks like fraud" ("Neither Real," 2009). The editors stated that "we understand" why Iranians found the election results "impossible to believe. ... If the election were truly 'real and free' as Mr. Ahmadinejad insisted, the results would be accepted by the voters and the government would not have to resort to such repression. The elections are

another potent reminder that there can be no illusions about Iran's government and its malign intent. That is a hard political fact. Iran's centrifuges are still spinning and its nuclear program is advancing at an alarming rate. That is an even harder scientific fact" ("Neither Real," 2009).

### **Stereotypical Themes for Iran: Women, East vs. West, and Islam**

The following section will introduce other themes that will be examined in *Time's* coverage of Iran and its two major uprisings, namely women in Iran, the East vs. West framework, and Islam and Muslims.

#### **Women**

Though women's rights were not at the forefront of the uprising, scholars noted that many women who were active in the struggle felt abandoned and even duped after the Islamic Revolution (Reeves, 1989). Moghissi (1996) wrote, "It is no secret that women have been the main losers of the 1979 Revolution in Iran" (p. 1). The author noted, "Political repression that stifled any political debate outside religious or formal state institutions and discouraged development of feminist consciousness prevented young women activists from seeing the conservative patriarchal character of the revolutionary movement under the leadership of Khomeini" (Moghissi, 1996, p. 59).

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, women's emancipation and education were growing issues in the Islamic world where scholars, most of them male, argued for the abolition of the veil and the end of polygamy and harems, as well as for increased participation from women in public and political life. According to Reeves (1989), "What linked all nations in the Middle East toward the end of the nineteenth and

beginning of the twentieth centuries both physically and intellectually — and indeed what formed the heart of the political instability in the region — was the attempt of these countries to develop economically and socially in accordance with Western models while they tried to liberate themselves from Western colonialism” (p. 60). Women’s emancipation also shared this dichotomous challenge: Female activists had to balance their own independence with that of their nation’s. Reeves (1989) stated that it was “impossible” to separate nationalism from feminism at this time for those fighting for women’s rights. According to Rahnavard (2010), this phenomenon emerges throughout national liberation movements in modern world history. “The general political movements of the past two centuries — the Industrial Revolution, the French Revolution, the pursuit of American democracy, the Bolshevik Revolution, the fall of the Russian communist regime — did not do much to propagate the advancement of women’s rights. It was only much later, when women put up a separate fight of their own, that they began to advance their legal rights” (p. 264).

While the advancement of women’s rights was largely initiated by men in other Middle Eastern countries, Reeves (1989) noted that Iran’s feminist movement was primarily directed by women. However, early Iranian feminists were influenced by their counterparts in Europe — decades would pass before women would use Islam, or indigenous sources, as their vehicles of emancipation. While Mohammad Reza Pahlavi was championed for his social reforms and campaign for women’s rights, he did not change much for women other than add to their responsibilities, according to Reeves (1989); women were then expected to work outside the home though their status in

society had not changed measurably. “Even the much-praised suffrage for women was a farce, since there were no free elections in which they could vote” (p. 96). Reeves (1989) noted that these were tactics used by the Shah used to get the support of women and intellectuals. In a 1976 interview with Italian journalist Oriana Fallaci, the Shah famously stated:

Women are important in a man’s life only if they’re beautiful and charming and keep their femininity. ... This business of feminism for instance. What do these feminists want? You say equality. Oh! I don’t want to seem rude, but ... you’re equal in the eyes of the law but not, excuse my saying so, in ability. ... You’ve never produced Michelangelo or Bach. You’ve never even produced a great chef. And if you talk to me about opportunity, all I can say is, are you joking? Have you ever lacked the opportunity to give history a great chef? You’ve produced nothing great, nothing! (quoted from Reeves, 1989, p. 105).

From his exile, Khomeini instantly capitalized on the Shah’s blunder stating that the Shah viewed women as nothing more than sexual objects, and noted, “Our religion is opposed to this view of woman and not to their liberty and emancipation” (Reeves, 1989, p. 105).

Although their issues as women may have been pushed to the background, the Islamic Revolution boasted mass participation of women from various classes. According to Reeves (1989), “In no Islamic country has women’s struggle for liberation been so intense and so dramatic — indeed, so explosive — as in Iran” (p. 75). Numerous women trained in militia camps during the Islamic Revolution and found a brand of equality in their actions: “The new position of women as armed warriors or fanatical supporters of war breaks the classical image of women in Islamic society, for it contradicts the generally accepted view of them as subordinate and weak creatures with no part to play in the public life of a social order dominated by the rule of men” (p. 9).

The largest militia group against the Shah was the Organization of People's Mujahidin, a religiously motivated guerilla group, formed in 1965. "Their actions were aimed at symbols of foreign cultural, economic, and political domination, especially American ones. They attacked banks, public buildings, police stations, cinemas, liquor stores, and night clubs. Numerous women guerillas were killed in gunfights, others were captured, imprisoned, and tortured in the Shah's prisons" (p. 10). According to a list published in 1982, "between 1974 and 1981, 20,000 Mujahidin were executed and 50,000 jailed. Women form about half of both the executed and the jailed, an indication of the prominent female role in the guerilla activities" (p. 190).

According to Dorman and Farhang (1987), "There is no question that the ulama as a whole have reactionary and rigid views on the rights and humanity of women. Yet the American press in 1978 greatly distorted the significance and complexity of the issue in the Iranian revolution" (p. 177). Dorman and Farhang (1987) noted that the mullahs were against unveiling and the increase of women in the workforce, and Khomeini had written "violently" against women's liberation, though most Iranians were unaware of his writings on this topic at the time. Still, the authors noted, there is no evidence that a stance against women's rights played any role in mobilizing Iranians. "Not even the most conservative religious tracts or pamphlets cited lifting the veil, giving women the vote, or encouraging women to attend universities as reasons for opposition to the regime" (Dorman & Farhang, 1987, p. 177). According to Reeves (1989), women had been refusing to wear veils in Iran decades before Reza Shah's ban. Though his methods were often severe, Pahlavi had the support of many feminists and Westernized Iranians of

the time. Reeves (1989) noted, “Women had taken a prominent part in the 1906 constitutional uprising in Iran calling for social justice and equality” (p. xv), tearing their veils off and demanding public education for girls — “how bewildering, then, over eighty years later, toward the end of the twentieth century, to find women returning to the veil in the name of freedom” (p. xv). Once regarded as a symbol of women’s suppression, during the Islamic Revolution the veil became the hallmark of women’s emancipation in Iran as well as an emblem of their cultural identity. Donning the veil was not a religious act but a political protest against the Shah, and “a rejection of the Westernizing process” (p. 10). Thousands of women “who had for years worn Western clothes and followed Western concepts expressed their new appreciation of their role as Moslem women by wearing the veil. ... Wearing the veil now represented a graphic cultural and moral stance against immoralities of a decadent regime” (p. 109). Similarly, Bill (1988) noted, “Throughout 1977 thousands of young Iranians continued their movement to Islam as a force of liberation and a refuge from the oppressive secular politics of Pahlavi rule. The revival, unprecedented in recent Iranian history, was most visible in secondary schools and universities, where large numbers of young women reveiled themselves and attended classes completely clad in the black veils (*chadors*). When police authorities forbade them to wear the veil on the streets of certain provincial cities, the women carried them to campus, where they put them on upon arrival” (p. 218, parenthetical and emphasis in original). According to Reeves (1989), newsreaders in the West were baffled by the sight of Iranian women taking up the chador; for decades Iran was thought of as the most progressive and the Westernized country in the Middle East. “It was largely Iranian

women who stamped upon the Revolution an Islamic character by wearing their black veils so demonstrably” (p. 13). In their quest for “modernization,” the Pahlavis had used women’s dress as the “yardstick of the diminishing influence of Islam” (p. 96).

Since the creation of the Islamic Republic, wearing the veil has become compulsory, yet the republic has promoted other advances for women, such as in higher education. Women constitute 65% of the country’s university graduates and have made gains in the public and private job sectors (Esfandiari, 2010). However, Bashi (2010) noted, “One should not paint an overly rosy picture of women in Iran. Only 12.3 percent are part of the public workforce, and for many marriage is the only gateway out of their parental home” (p. 38). Although women fought for personal and political freedoms during the Islamic Revolution, the republic reversed many of the gains made during the Pahlavi era, according to Esfandiari (2010).

### **East vs. West**

Said (1994) highlighted the intellectual power of Orientalism, a system of thought in which “the world is made up of two unequal halves, Orient and Occident” (p. 12). In order to dominate, the West must draw clear distinctions, or “polarities.” Said (1994) wrote, “The Orient is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of Europe’s greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and more recurring images of the Other. In addition, the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience” (pp. 1-2, parenthetical in original). “The Orient that appears in Orientalism, then, is a system of representations framed by a whole set of forces that

brought the Orient into Western learning, Western consciousness, and later Western empire” (pp. 202-203). According to Said (1994):

It is ... correct that every European, in what he could say about the Orient, was consequently a racist, an imperialist, and almost totally ethnocentric. Some of the immediate sting will be taken out of these labels if we recall additionally that human societies, at least the more advanced cultures, have rarely offered the individual anything but imperialism, racism, and ethnocentrism for dealing with ‘other’ cultures. ... My contention is that Orientalism is fundamentally a political doctrine willed over the Orient because the Orient was weaker than the West, which elided the Orient’s difference with its weakness (p. 204).

The Oriental then becomes “depicted as something one judges (as in a court of law), something one studies and depicts (as in a curriculum), something one disciplines (as in a school or prison), something one disciplines (as in a zoological manual). The point is that in each of these cases the Oriental is *contained* and *represented* by dominating frameworks” (p. 40, emphasis and parentheticals in original).

Dorman (1986) noted that the U.S. media often portray people in the East as being incapable of self-rule and regularly suggest that Western-installed leaders are the best solution. “In this view, developing countries do not have politics, only fates. Whether intentionally or not, ethnocentric reporting, and the ethnocentric reactions it triggers, have often enabled Washington to take actions, such as interventions, that might otherwise meet with greater resistance” (p. 431). Dorman and Omeed (1979) noted, "It is not difficult to discredit resistance to oppression, at least for Americans, if it can also be made to appear resistant to progress. Such coverage encourages the assumption, articulated by some theorists in industrialized Western societies, that underdeveloped countries simply cannot modernize without autocratic or dictatorial rule" (p. 32).

Although the term “terrorism” is often applied to violent public acts committed by Muslims or Middle Easterners, there is little agreement on its definition. According to Moeller (2009), the United Nations failed to approve a universally accepted definition of the word after 17 years of attempts. Moeller (2009) noted that the word is so highly loaded that it is often used to make an enemy out of the opposing side without further discourse. It is also a label that excuses governments of having to deal with groups deemed to be terrorists, since “governments don’t — or can’t, in political terms — negotiate with terrorists. ... Furthermore, if governments claim that the accused are not only ‘terrorists’ but are evil, they make it difficult for any players in the civilized community of nations to engage with them” (p. 22). According to Entman (2004), the solution to the attacks of 9/11, which were the largest attacks on American soil and deemed terrorist attacks, were drawn clearly in the media:

The problematic effect was of course thousands of civilian deaths from an act of war against America; the cause, the Taliban government of Afghanistan, its de facto leaders, Mullah Mohammed Omar and Osama bin Laden, and the latter’s al-Qaeda terrorist network; the moral judgment, condemnation of these agents as evil; and the initial remedy, war against Afghanistan. All four of these framing functions hold together in a kind of cultural logic, each helping to sustain the others with connections among them cemented more by custom and convention than by the principles of syllogistic logic (p. 6).

Dorman and Farhang (1987) noted that the “East vs. West” framework of the U.S. press is not a conspiracy, but a deep-rooted “Cold War” ideology that operates mostly subconsciously. Said (1997) stated, “In short, fundamentalism equals Islam equals everything-we-must-now-fight-against, as we did with communism during the Cold War” (p. xix). According to Said (1994), contemporary commentators make the argument that

Islam is more of a threat than communism ever was: “Anyone who has been a resident in the United States for the past several decades has seen the East vs. West perspectives take hold. No one will have failed to note how ‘East’ has always signified danger and threat during this period, even as it has meant the traditional Orient as well as Russia. In the universities a growing establishment of area-studies programs and institutes has made the scholarly study of the Orient a brand of national policy” (p. 26). Ruigrok and van Atteveldt (2007) noted that this framework has been ramped up in recent years: “Following the attacks on the World Trade Center in New York, there has been an accelerating trend toward a global polarization of society into ‘Western’ cultures on one hand and Islam on the other, epitomized in the ‘War on Terror’ against the ‘Axis of Evil.’ Within this process, we can see an increasingly important role for the media” (p. 69). Ruigrok and van Atteveldt (2007) stated that the fall of the Berlin Wall changed the dynamic of who was defined as “them” in the “us vs. them” paradigm: “After 9/11, journalists enthusiastically embraced the new framework of the War on Terror to interpret the ‘friends’ and ‘enemies’ of a state, easily expanding the notion of ‘enemy’ to include all Muslims both in the Middle East and the West” (p. 69). September 11<sup>th</sup> intensified how those in Muslim countries were framed. According to Ruigrok and van Atteveldt (2007), 9/11 was immediately labeled a “war” and an “act of war,” and the men who committed the attacks were described as “cowards” and “madmen” by news media. “Moreover, journalists made atypical references to God and the need to pray or for prayer and used words such as *freedom*, *justice*, and *liberty* as simple descriptors of America and its ideals” (p. 74, emphasis in original). In the authors’ study of mainstream

representations, “not once did anyone, source or journalist, suggest that an option other than supporting the president would exist” (p. 74). Ruigrok and van Atteveldt (2007) noted that the closer events occur to the West, the more attention they receive, citing a study in which terrorist attacks in Spain and Africa were analyzed. The study found that the African attacks were framed as a tragedy and a crime, but Madrid’s attack was “a moral outrage everyone should care about; terrorism was labeled as something ‘new,’ ‘Islamic,’ and ‘global,’ increasing the association between Islam and terrorism” (p. 73).

According to Said (1994), Orientalist ideologies from centuries-old literature now appear in the digital age in mediums such as television and film, and these images lend credibility to previous stereotypes by reinforcing them. Said (1997) noted, “Instead of scholarship, we often find only journalists making extravagant statements, which are instantly picked up and further dramatized by the media” (p. xvi). Dorman (1986) noted, “The economic failures, human rights violations, and abusive treatment of minorities on the part of those Third World countries that oppose U.S. interests are treated as newsworthy, while similar behavior in client regimes goes relatively ignored” (p. 428). Dorman (1986) noted, “The press has completely accepted the dominant paradigm of an East-West struggle” (p. 428). The East vs. West “is a Manichaeian struggle, in the mainstream view, between freedom and unfreedom, hope and despair. ... It is the ultimate competition, in short, between good and evil” (Dorman & Farhang, 1987, p. 221).

**Islam.** In the seventh century, Iran, Syria, Turkey, and North Africa fell to Islamic armies, and by the ninth century, so did Spain, Sicily, and parts of France.

According to Said (1994), “Not for nothing did Islam come to symbolize terror, devastation, the demonic, hordes of hated barbarians. For Europe, Islam was a lasting trauma” (p. 59). By the 14<sup>th</sup> century, India, Indonesia, and regions of China were ruled by Muslims; “and to this extraordinary assault Europe could respond with very little except fear and a kind of awe” (p. 59). Said noted that Christians had little interest in the higher learning and “frequent magnificence” of the Muslims, and noted gleefully when Europe seemed to be rising over the East in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Islam was a “latecoming challenge” to Christianity, according to the author. From the Middle Ages through the early part of the Renaissance, Islam “was believed to be a demonic religion of apostasy, blasphemy, and obscurity. It did not seem to matter that Muslims considered Mohammed a prophet and not a god; what mattered to Christians was that Mohammed was a false prophet, a sower of discord, a sensualist, a hypocrite, an agent of the devil” (p. 5). However, the West overstated the significance of Islam in these societies — it was secularism, not religion, that held Arab Muslim communities together, according to Said (1997). Islam also contained a political nature that was often misunderstood by Western media, as Reeves (1989) noted. It was more than a spiritual path for many of its followers; it was “meant as an antidote to the two worlds ideologies that until the last 1970s had dominated the postwar decades — capitalism and communism” (p. 21).

Said (1997) wrote, “Much in current representations of Islam is designed to show the religion’s inferiority with reference to the West, which Islam is supposed to be hell-bent on opposing, competing with, resenting, and being enraged at” (p. xxv). The author noted that the rules of impartiality in journalism do not seem to apply when covering

Islam: “No one bothers to ask, for instance, how verifiable is the statement that martyrdom is spreading among Sunni youth, all several hundred million of them, from Morocco to Uzbekistan, and, if it is, what sort of evidence it is likely to be in the first place” (p. xix). “In other words, covering Islam is a one-sided activity that obscures what ‘we’ *do*, and highlights instead what Muslims and Arabs by their very flawed nature *are*” (p. xxii, emphasis in original). According to Said (1997), school textbooks, TV serials, films, comic strips, and cartoons depict Muslims the same way, as oil suppliers, terrorists, and bloodthirsty mobs. “Far from being naïve or pragmatic accounts of Islam, the images and processes by which the media has delivered Islam for consideration to the Western consumer of news perpetuate hostility and ignorance” (p. xlvi).

The West defines who is “freedom fighter” and who is “terrorist” by its own interests and those of our allies (Said, 1997). The media write in “Islam vs. the West” terms rather than researching the political realities of the crises that evolve. Media coverage “has given consumers of news the sense that they have understood Islam without at the same time intimating to them that a great deal in this energetic coverage is based on far from objective material. In many instances ‘Islam’ has licensed not only patent inaccuracy but also expressions of unrestrained ethnocentrism, cultural and even racial hatred, deep yet paradoxically free-floating hostility. All this has taken place as part of what is presumed to be fair, balanced, responsible coverage of Islam” (p. li). The author noted that there is little accountability in the connections of ideology between government and media: “There is scarcely an expert on ‘Islam’ who has not been a consultant or even an employee of the government, the various corporations, the media”

(p. lvii). Said (1997) noted, “There is a consensus on ‘Islam’ as a kind of scapegoat for everything we do not happen to like about the world’s new political, social, and economic patterns. For the right, Islam represents barbarism; for the left, medieval theocracy; for the center, a kind of distasteful exoticism. In all camps, however, there is agreement that even though little enough is known about the Islamic world there is not much to be approved of there” (p. lv).

### **Research questions**

- (1) Did *Time* magazine follow the U.S. government’s positions on the Shah of Iran and the Islamic Revolution that opposed him?
- (2) How did *Time* frame Iran during the Islamic Revolution?
- (3) Did *Time* follow the U.S. government’s positions on the Islamic Republic and the Green Movement that opposed it?
- (4) How did *Time* frame Iran during the Green Movement?
- (5) What were the differences and similarities in the way *Time* framed the two uprisings?

## Chapter Three

### Method

This framing study analyzed the way *Time* magazine portrayed Iran's rulers and its political uprisings during 1978-79 and June-December 2009.

While there had been periodic unrest throughout the Shah's rule, scholars generally note the start of the Islamic Revolution at January 1978 (Dorman & Farhang, 1987). However, *Time's* coverage did not begin until its June 5, 1978, issue. This analysis ends with *Time's* February 5, 1979, issue, at which the Shah had left Iran and the country waited anxiously for the return of Khomeini who had been living in exile for 16 years. The analysis ended one issue before Khomeini took office in order to parallel the coverage of the Green Movement, where uprisings have not been successful in changing the structure of the government or leadership. The study included the nearly three-week interim period between the Shah's departure and Khomeini's return because the Shah was initially on "temporary" leave, and there was some confusion domestically and internationally as to whether he was still the ruler of Iran. Therefore, the Islamic Revolution data for this study span eight months — starting with the June, 5, 1978, issue and ending with the February 5, 1979, issue.

The second data pool was compiled to survey the Green Movement. For this period, all *Time* issues from June 2009 until January 2010 were examined, however, similar to the Islamic Revolution's coverage, actual coverage was smaller than the period surveyed. Coverage of the Green Revolution was much more immediate, however — two stories appear in the June 29, 2009 issue, yet the last story on the movement was

published in the August 31, 2009 issue, approximately four months before demonstrations ended. While articles were accessed via print and online resources, this study covers only the articles that appeared in the magazine itself — content from the magazine's website that did not appear in *Time* magazine was not included. This decision was made so that both time periods could parallel one another, as there was no Internet in the earlier period.

It is also important to note that the articles studied were limited to those focusing on the Iranian government and/or the uprisings; other topics, such as the nuclear issue, were not a part of this study. Within these parameters, *Time* published a total of 45 articles on these two events, 38 in the first period and 7 in the second. These 45 articles were selected due to their publication dates and subject matter, and analyzed for relevant frames. These 45 articles represent the only print coverage the news magazine gave to the events in the time periods noted.

The method used to examine the data was a qualitative framing analysis. This researcher coded each period separately for number of articles and specific frames. The frames that were examined are as follows: Iranian government, uprisings/protesters, Islam, Muslim leaders, Manichaeism, American exceptionalism, women, "Other"/Orientalism, and rescue motif. *Time* articles were analyzed to determine whether they had positive, neutral, or negative frames within the themes noted. Since the sample size was not large enough for a t-test, the study will show percentages for each theme.

The Iranian government theme examined how *Time* depicted the leaders of Iran in the two periods, namely Mohammad Reza Pahlavi ("the Shah") and President Mahmoud

Ahmadinejad. The uprising/protesters frame analyzed how mainstream media framed each of the uprisings in the time periods studied, the Islamic Revolution and the Green Movement. U.S. policymakers were largely opposed to the revolution in Iran, which sought to displace the Shah, a loyal ally to the United States (Bill, 1988). This pattern is in juxtaposition to current situation where all diplomatic ties with Iran have been severed, and the Iranian government's opposition, the Green Movement, has had the support of various U.S. policymakers (Hashemi & Postel, 2010).

The Islam frame looked at how the religion was portrayed in *Time* during the two periods. This framing was especially relevant in the Islamic Revolution period, where militant Islam, not the lack of human rights, was often cited as the reason for the uprising in U.S. media (Said, 1997; Dorman & Farhang, 1987). The frame is also relevant today as Iran is run by the theocracy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which has been an experiment in blending Islam with democratic principles (Wright, 2010). The Muslim leaders frame examined how the ulama, the religious clerics and leadership, was portrayed in *Time* stories during the two periods.

Manichaeism is an ideology that depicts a perpetual battle between forces of good and evil. Scholars have noted this frame was regularly used in articles about the Islamic Revolution, where some viewed the Shah as a hero fighting the evil forces of Islam (Rojecki, 2005). In recent years, President George W. Bush used Manichaeian frames when he told Americans, "You're either with us or against us," following the attacks on 9/11 (Rojecki, 2008), and cast Iran as an evil force in the world with his "axis of evil"

speech (see <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/>). Similarly, Manichaeism is found in the oft-repeated term applied to Iran, “rogue state” (Jenkins, 2013).

American exceptionalism, Walt (2011) noted, is a belief that presumes America’s “values, political system, and history are unique and worthy of universal admiration. They also imply that the United States is both destined and entitled to play a distinct and positive role on the world stage” (para. 2). Walt wrote that belief is a “myth” and becomes problematic in that it “blinds” Americans to “the ways that they are a lot like everyone else” (para. 3).

“Other” is a worldview that defines non-Europeans as being somehow different and less significant than their counterparts. Orientalism, a term was coined by Said (1994), uses stereotypes to categorize people from the Middle East region as being “exotic” and barbaric.

Mainstream media often depicts women in Muslim countries as being oppressed by their religion and subservient to men (Jiwani, 2009). The women frame looked at how Iranian women’s activities and issues were discussed in *Time*, including what significance the magazine gave to women in Iran, and if the articles fit the oppressed and subservient frame.

The rescue motif is a theme that depicts people in other countries as being helpless or incapable and needing a “civilized” country to rescue them. Jiwani (2009) wrote, “The ‘civility’ of ‘civilized’ nations clothes violence in a velvet glove, legitimizing and rationalizing its deployment. The violence of the state through its brutal invasion and occupation, then, needs to be rationalized in the discourse of care,

compassion, and rescue” (p. 729). This frame analyzed whether *Time* used the rescue motif to discuss possible U.S. intervention.

These themes were chosen because they are ideologies commonly associated with Iran and Iranians. In addition to the framing study, each article was analyzed for its tone; articles were measured using the 3-point Likert scale — where a positive tone received 3 points, a neutral tone received 2, or negative tones received 1. *Time* magazine was chosen due to its national circulation, coverage of foreign affairs, and its worldwide prestige. Articles were accessed through the *Time* website, [www.time.com](http://www.time.com), and also through hard copy issues found via the San Jose State University Martin Luther King Jr. Library catalogue.

As noted previously, media tend to agree with their government’s stance on foreign policy. This study examined the frames used in *Time* magazine to determine if the publication followed this pattern in reporting on Iran’s Islamic Revolution and Green Movement.

## Chapter Four

### Findings

This chapter provides the research findings for this study, as well as an interpretation of the framing analysis and the overall tone used in the data.

#### Islamic Revolution Frames

**Government v. uprising.** To answer the question, “Did *Time* magazine follow the U.S. government’s positions on the Shah of Iran and the Islamic Revolution that opposed him?” magazine articles were compared with U.S. policy during this time.

During the Shah’s reign, Iran-U.S. relations were at an all-time high. The Shah enjoyed a close relationship with every sitting U.S. president during his 38-year reign and had wide support from various U.S. policymakers and Washington insiders (Bill, 1988). As a result, special provisions were granted to the Shah that allowed Iran to become the largest purchaser of U.S. military weaponry (Bill, 1988; Sick 2010).

Although the coverage in *Time* grew more critical of the Shah as he began to lose control of Iran, it was largely positive with 68.4% of the articles showing positive frames on the Iranian government, as shown in Table 1. This coverage followed the U.S. government’s pattern on the Shah, which was highly supportive but became more critical during his last months in power. Neutral frames of the Iranian government were shown in 26.3% of the *Time* articles and negative frames in 5.2%. The Shah’s administration was represented in 100% of the articles.

The Islamic Revolution’s early objective was to depose the Shah; with time it evolved into a movement that advocated for the establishment of an Islamic state. Both

objectives threatened U.S. projects with Iran and U.S. lawmakers were largely opposed to the revolution and its leaders (Abrahamian, 2008).

As shown in Table 1, the U.S. government's critical stance on the Islamic Revolution was closely mirrored in *Time*, with none of the articles represented in this study using positive frames, 40.5% using neutral frames, and 59.5% carrying negative frames. The revolution was noted in 97% of the articles surveyed.

**Table 1**

*Islamic Revolution, Government v. uprising*

<i>Frame</i>	<i>Articles using frame (%)</i>	<i>Positive frames (%)</i>	<i>Neutral frames (%)</i>	<i>Negative frames (%)</i>
Government	100	68.4	26.3	5.2
Protesters/ uprisings	97	-	40.5	59.5

**Thematic frames.** To answer the question, “How did *Time* frame Iran during the Islamic Revolution?” the coverage was analyzed for the following frames, Islam, Muslim leaders, Manichaeism, American exceptionalism, women, other/Orientalist, and rescue motif.

As shown in Table 2, *Time* framed Islam during the Islamic Revolution in a largely negative way. The only frames to receive any positive framing during this time period were the Muslim leaders and women frames.

Frames for Islam were used more heavily than the other frames analyzed in this section, appearing in 92% of the articles surveyed. None showed positive frames on Islam. Neutral frames on Islam were found in 54.3% of the articles, and negative frames

in 45.7%. *Time* portrayed the Muslim leaders of Iran negatively, with 63.7% of the data showing a negative frame, 9% showing a positive frame, 27.3% a neutral frame. The Muslim leaders frame appeared in 87% of the articles in this time period, as shown in Table 2.

The Manichaean frame appeared in 55% of the *Time* articles, as shown in Table 2 —100% of the articles applied this frame negatively. As shown in Table 2, the American exceptionalism frame appeared in 71% of the data. Of these articles, 100% of the frame was used negatively. *Time* framed Iranian women in a mostly neutral or stereotypical way during the Islamic Revolution (see Table 2), with 46.7% depicting neutral frames, another 46.7% depicting negative frames, and 6.6% of the articles showing positive frames. It is also important to note that women did not appear in most of the articles analyzed — 39% of the data contained frames on women.

The “other”/Orientalism frame appeared in 66% of the data. None of the articles used this frame positively; 4.0% had neutral frames and a considerable majority had negative frames at 96.0%. As shown in Table 2, the rescue motif was the least used frame at 24%. None of the articles had positive representations of this frame, or frames that debunked American exceptionalism. Neutral frames were shown 55.6% of the articles and negative frames in 44.4%.

**Table 2***Islamic Revolution frames*

<i>Frame</i>	<i>Articles using frame (%)</i>	<i>Positive frames (%)</i>	<i>Neutral frames (%)</i>	<i>Negative frames (%)</i>
Islam	92	-	54.3	45.7
Muslim leaders	87	9	27.3	63.7
Manichaeism	55	-	-	100
American exceptionalism	71	-	-	100
Women	39	6.6	46.7	46.7
Other/Orientalism	66	-	4.0	96.0
Rescue motif	24	-	55.6	44.4

**Green Movement**

**Government v. uprising.** To answer the question, “Did *Time* follow the U.S. government’s positions on the Islamic Republic and the Green Movement that opposed it?” magazine articles were compared with U.S. policy during this period.

The United States and Iran have run the political diplomacy gamut from an unusually warm relationship during the Shah’s reign to an unusually hostile relationship today under the leadership of the Islamic Republic (Abrahamian, 2013). Iran has been under continual sanctions from the U.S. since 1979, the year the republic took power, and two U.S. presidents have alluded to possible military action against Iran (Levine, 2013).

As shown in Table 3, *Time* adhered to the U.S.’s government’s critical stance on the Islamic Republic and President Ahmadinejad with 85.7% of the articles showing

negative frames and 14.3% neutral. There were no positive frames on government in this time period. The frame appeared in 100% of the articles analyzed.

While President Obama and other policymakers were reluctant to show too much enthusiasm for the Green Movement, the U.S. government was effectively supportive of this uprising, which threatened the Islamic Republic's stability (Bakhtavar, 2009; Landler & Stelter, 2009; Wright, 2010).

The protesters/uprising frame also followed the U.S. government's position on the Green Movement, as shown in Table 3, with 71.4% of the articles showing a positive frame, 28.6% showing a neutral frame, and none showing a negative frame. The frame was used in 100% of the articles surveyed.

**Table 3**

*Green Movement, Government v. uprising*

<i>Frame</i>	<i>Articles using frame (%)</i>	<i>Positive frames (%)</i>	<i>Neutral frames (%)</i>	<i>Negative frames (%)</i>
Government	100	-	14.3	85.7
Protesters/ uprisings	100	71.4	28.6	-

**Thematic frames.** To answer the question, “How did *Time* frame Iran during the Green Movement?” the specific frames used to analyze the earlier time period's data — Islam, Muslim leaders, Manichaeism, American exceptionalism, women, “other”/Orientalist, and rescue motif — were used to examine coverage of the Green Movement.

As shown in Table 4, *Time* framed Iran in a slightly negative way overall, though two frames showed positive results. The Islam frame in the Green Movement period was 100% neutral in its position. Of the articles surveyed, 43% used the Islam frame. The Muslim leaders frame was the most constant theme in this period, appearing in 71% of the data. *Time* framed the ulama in a largely negative way at 80.0% negative and 20.0% neutral. None of the articles surveyed in this period showed positive frames for Muslim leaders, as shown in Table 4.

The Manichaeian frame in Green Movement articles appeared in 29% of the data; 50.0% of these were positive and another 50.0% were negative. *Time* coverage used the American exceptionalism frame in only 29% of the articles, as shown in Table 4. This frame appeared the least in this time period, although each article with this frame had a negative application. The frames used to portray Iranian women were 100% positive in their depictions. This theme was used in 43% of the articles.

As shown in Table 4, the “other”/Orientalism frame became less critical in the Green Movement coverage with half (50.0%) showing positive frames and another half showing neutral frames. The frame was represented in 57% of the articles analyzed. The rescue motif theme was found in 29% of the articles surveyed, with 50.0% of the data depicting negative frames and another 50.0% showing neutral frames, shown in Table 4.

**Table 4***Green Movement frames*

<i>Frame</i>	<i>Articles using frame (%)</i>	<i>Positive frames (%)</i>	<i>Neutral frames (%)</i>	<i>Negative frames (%)</i>
Islam	43	-	100	-
Muslim leaders	71	-	20.0	80.0
Manichaeian	29	50.0	-	50.0
American exceptionalism	29	-	-	100
Women	43	100	-	-
Other/ Orientalism	57	-	50.0	50.0
Rescue motif	29	50.0	50.0	-

**Comparative Frames for the Islamic Revolution and the Green Movement**

To answer the question, “What were the differences and similarities in the way *Time* framed the two uprisings?” both time periods were compared in each frame, as shown in Tables 5 through 17. In addition, the tone of each article was assessed, and the overall tone measurements of both uprisings were compared.

*Time* depicted both periods in Iran using mostly negative framing, although the Green Movement coverage was significantly less negative, with three themes ranking negatively overall (government, Muslim leaders, and American exceptionalism), and two themes showing positive representations (protesters/uprising and women) (see Tables 3 and 4). It is important to note that another two themes in this time period were 50.0% positive (Manichaeian and rescue motif). The Islamic Revolution data showed five

themes that ranked negatively (protesters/uprising, Muslim leaders, Manichaeism, American exceptionalism, and “other”/Orientalism). Only the government frame, which discussed the Shah, showed a positive depiction in this period. Furthermore, only two additional themes (women and Muslim leaders) received any positive results at all; both measured at less than 10%, however (see Tables 1 and 2).

**Government.** As shown in Table 5, the government frame showed a drastic difference in representation in the two time periods. The Shah’s administration was represented positively in 68.4% of the articles, whereas the Islamic Republic was depicted negatively 85.7% of the time in the Green Movement. The frame appeared in 100% of the data.

**Table 5**

*Government frame for both uprisings*

<i>Frame</i>	<i>Articles using frame (%)</i>	<i>Positive frames (%)</i>	<i>Neutral frames (%)</i>	<i>Negative frames (%)</i>
The Shah	100	68.4	26.3	5.2
Islamic Republic	100	-	14.3	85.7

**Protesters/uprising.** Similarly, *Time*’s coverage of the protesters/uprising theme in each event showed high contrast — the Islamic Revolution was depicted negatively 59.5% of the time, however 71.4% of the Green Revolution coverage was positive, as shown in Table 6. These frames were used in 97% and 100% of the data pools, respectively.

**Table 6***Protesters/uprising frame for both uprisings*

<i>Frame</i>	<i>Articles using frame (%)</i>	<i>Positive frames (%)</i>	<i>Neutral frames (%)</i>	<i>Negative frames (%)</i>
Islamic Revolution	97	-	40.5	59.5
Green Movement	100	71.4	28.6	-

**Thematic frames.** Themes were compared in each period to determine the similarities and differences in coverage of the two events. The themes were: Islam, Muslim leaders, Manichaean, American exceptionalism, women, “other”/Orientalist, and rescue motif. Tables 7 through 13 compared how these particular frames were utilized by *Time* during the Islamic Revolution and the Green Movement.

**Islam.** As Table 7 shows, coverage for both uprisings was largely neutral in its framing of Islam, though the Islamic Revolution coverage had a small majority of neutral frames at 54.3%, as compared to the Green Revolution, which showed 100% of articles exhibiting neutral frames in this area. It is important to note that the Islamic Revolution coverage used this frame in most every story — 92% of the coverage showed the Islam frame, where 43% of the Green Movement data depicted this theme.

**Table 7***Islam frame in both uprisings*

<i>Event</i>	<i>Articles using frame (%)</i>	<i>Positive frames (%)</i>	<i>Neutral frames (%)</i>	<i>Negative frames (%)</i>
Islamic Revolution	92	-	54.3	45.7
Green Movement	43	-	100	-

**Muslim leaders.** The ulama were depicted primarily negatively in both time periods, with 63.7% negative coverage during the Islamic Revolution and even more negatively in the Green Movement at 80.0%, as shown in Table 8. However, the use of this frame was moderately higher in the Islamic Revolution period, appearing in 87% of the articles surveyed, compared with 71% in the Green Movement.

**Table 8***Muslim leaders frame in both uprisings*

<i>Event</i>	<i>Articles using frame (%)</i>	<i>Positive frames (%)</i>	<i>Neutral frames (%)</i>	<i>Negative frames (%)</i>
Islamic Revolution	87	9.0	27.3	63.7
Green Movement	71	-	20.0	80.0

**Manichaeian.** The Manichaeian frame showed a strong presence during the Islamic Revolution where 100% of the coverage containing this theme showed negative frames; 55% of the articles in this period used the Manichaeian theme. The Green Revolution data carried this frame in only 29% of the articles, using it 50.0% positively, and 50.0% negatively, as shown in Table 9.

**Table 9***Manichaeian frame in both uprisings*

<i>Event</i>	<i>Articles using frame (%)</i>	<i>Positive frames (%)</i>	<i>Neutral frames (%)</i>	<i>Negative frames (%)</i>
Islamic Revolution	55	-	-	100
Green Movement	29	50.0	-	50.0

***American exceptionalism.*** As shown in Table 10, the American exceptionalism frame was used negatively in 100% of the articles containing this theme. Its representation was significantly higher in the Islamic Revolution data where it appeared in 71% of the stories, compared with 29% during the Green Movement period.

**Table 10***American exceptionalism frame for both uprisings*

<i>Event</i>	<i>Articles using frame (%)</i>	<i>Positive frames (%)</i>	<i>Neutral frames (%)</i>	<i>Negative frames (%)</i>
Islamic Revolution	71	-	-	100
Green Movement	29	-	-	100

***Women.*** As shown in Table 11, *Time* gave approximately the same amount coverage to Iranian women in both periods, appearing in 39% of the Islamic Revolution coverage and 43% in the Green Movement data. However, coverage in the earlier period was less positive — ranking evenly in neutral and negative frames at 46.7% each. Conversely, 100% of the frames for Iranian women were positive in the latter period.

**Table 11***Women frame for both uprisings*

<i>Event</i>	<i>Articles using frame (%)</i>	<i>Positive frames (%)</i>	<i>Neutral frames (%)</i>	<i>Negative frames (%)</i>
Islamic Revolution	39	6.7	46.7	46.7
Green Movement	43	100	-	-

**“Other”/Orientalism.** Table 12 shows how *Time* used the “other”/Orientalism frame in its coverage of both events. The frame appeared in the majority of coverage in the earlier event at 66%, and overwhelming negatively at 96.0%. The use of the frame in the Green Movement was moderately less at 57%, and was evenly neutral and negative at 50.0% each.

**Table 12***“Other”/Orientalism frame for both uprisings*

<i>Event</i>	<i>Articles using frame (%)</i>	<i>Positive frames (%)</i>	<i>Neutral frames (%)</i>	<i>Negative frames (%)</i>
Islamic Revolution	66	-	4.0	96.0
Green Movement	57	-	50.0	50.0

**Rescue motif.** The rescue motif frame was the least used theme in *Time*’s coverage of the Islamic Revolution, as well as one of the least used in the Green Movement period, as shown in Table 13. However, its usage was primarily neutral in the earlier event at 55.6%, and evenly positive and neutral in the more recent period, at 50.0% each.

**Table 13***Rescue motif frame for both uprisings*

<i>Event</i>	<i>Articles using frame (%)</i>	<i>Positive frames (%)</i>	<i>Neutral frames (%)</i>	<i>Negative frames (%)</i>
Islamic Revolution	24	-	55.6	44.4
Green Movement	29	50.0	50.0	-

**Tone**

Articles were measured using a 3-point scale, where a score of 1 was given for negative tone, 2 for neutral tone, and 3 for positive tone. *Time* magazine demonstrated an overall moderately negative tone in the Islamic Revolution period ( $M = 1.5$ ), and an overall neutral tone for the Green Movement period ( $M = 2.4$ ), as shown in Table 14.

**Table 14***Comparison of tone used in Time magazine articles*

<i>Uprising</i>	<i>Time articles (n)</i>	<i>Tone (M)</i>
Islamic Revolution	38	1.5
Green Movement	7	2.4

*Note.* n represents number of articles; means range from 1 to 3, where 1 represents a negative tone, 2 represents a neutral tone, and 3 represents a positive tone.

## Chapter Five

### Summary and Conclusion

This thesis analyzed how *Time* magazine portrayed Iran during the Islamic Revolution and the Green Movement. The study showed that *Time* framed Iran and Iranians in a largely negative light during the Islamic Revolution, and in a less negative light during the Green Movement.

#### Overview

During the Islamic Revolution, the Iranian government frame was the only theme to receive a positive interpretation from the magazine. This position mirrored the U.S. government's strong support of the Shah, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi (Bill, 1988; Roosevelt, 1979). The other themes examined were depicted only neutrally or negatively, with five of the nine frames showing negative results. In particular, the protesters/uprising theme was depicted negatively, which demonstrated alignment with the U.S.'s stance on the Islamic Revolution.

In the Green Movement period, Iran also received mostly negative framing from *Time*, though it was notably less negative than the earlier period. Three of nine frames received negative coverage, although two frames received positive coverage. The Iranian government frame was portrayed negatively, a position that shadows the U.S. administration's stance on the Islamic Republic government (Wright, 2010). Though *Time* continued to frame Iran in a moderately negative way, it viewed the uprising — which was depicted as going against Iranian culture or norms — in a positive fashion, a position that also followed U.S. action (Bakhtavar, 2009; Landler & Stelter, 2009). In

addition to the framing analysis, each article's tone was measured on a 3-point scale; *Time* took a moderately negative tone overall toward Iran and Iranians during the Islamic Revolution ( $M = 1.5$ ), and a neutral tone ( $M = 2.4$ ) during the Green Movement.

As noted in Chapter 2, bias and framing unavoidable. However, the practice becomes problematic when the social construction of reality created by selection is interpreted as the unwavering truth (Entman, 2007). A particular method of selection favored by journalists is to rely on official sources in order to interpret international events and U.S. foreign policy, which often leads to slanted news coverage (Moeller, 2009). *Time* regularly reported the actions and rhetoric of the president and other U.S. officials without offering another interpretation of the events in Iran. The results of this study support the cascade model presented by Entman (2008b) who argued that foreign policy frames cascade down from the White House to the press and then to the public. *Time* fit to this model by duplicating White House positions on Islamic Revolution and the Green Movement. As noted by Dimitrova et al. (2005) the relationship between government and media draws even closer in times of national security crises. The U.S. government has considered Iran a threat to national security since the hostage crisis in 1979 (Wright, 2010). In its coverage of the two uprisings, Iranian groups deemed anti-Western or anti-American by U.S. officials were portrayed unfavorably in the pages of *Time*. Said (1997) observed that coverage of Iran often relies on ethnocentric biases. In both periods, *Time* magazine resorted to ethnocentric or Orientalist stereotypes to depict the people of Iran, noting the beards and black robes of the clerics, the chadors of the women, and the "Allahu akbar" chants in its depictions of Iranians and their concerns.

### ***Time* Coverage**

For two and a half decades, Iran and the U.S. shared an unusually close and unprecedented relationship via the Shah, and under his reign the Middle Eastern country became the largest recipient of U.S. aid outside of NATO (Bill, 1988). *Time*'s coverage of the Shah and his government paralleled the U.S. administration's policies, with an overall positive depiction of the Shah. At times when the magazine cited the Shah's widespread abuse, it regularly downplayed the repression to focus on the king's achievements in modernizing Iran. As the revolution progressed and it became clear that the Shah's power would not last, *Time*'s tone toward both parties moved toward the center and became more neutral. This also reflected the U.S. government's stance, which basically dismissed the Shah after he was removed from power, and initially attempted to create a cordial relationship with the Islamic Republic (Sick, 2010).

Similar to the U.S. administration, *Time* felt that the Shah was the only option worthy of U.S. support, and depicted the uprising's participants as oppressed by religion and extremism. The Shah was regularly portrayed as the only acceptable ruler in Iran, as well as a leader who struggled diligently for a country too backward to appreciate his modern ideas. November 13, 1978's "Iran: Another Crisis" reported on what *Time* saw as a lack of reasonable alternatives to the Shah: "A major reason for backing the Shah is the absence of credible alternatives." The story quoted a U.S. "administration analyst" who said, "If you look at [the alternatives to the Shah], they're more frightening than the crisis itself." In the June 5, 1978, issue, "Iran: The Shah vs. the Shi'ites" noted that although the Shah was undoubtedly "autocratic and often oppressive," his achievements

in making Iran a “modern society” were praiseworthy. The article also noted Iran’s “great importance to the West,” in respect to its geographical position in the Middle East, its shared border with the Soviet Union, and its oil reserves. *Time* used the Soviet theme frequently in its defense of the Shah and its alienation of the opposition, as it had done in the Mohammad Mossadegh era in the 1950s. The September 18, 1978, issue, which featured the Shah on the cover, stated his significance in acting as “a bulwark of anti-Communism at the confluence of the Persian Gulf oil routes” (“Iran: The Shah’s Divided Land”). The article referred to him as “His Imperial Majesty” and “Shahanshah” (King of Kings). This theme of royalty made *Time*’s pages often, such as in “Business: An End to Iranian Dreams,” in the December 4, 1978, issue: “The Shah of Shahs, ruler of Iran’s Peacock Throne, once dreamed of lifting his country’s backward economy at breakneck speed into the 21st century.”

Opposition to the Shah was framed negatively, usually with implications that it was a dangerous movement that lacked any real grievances against Pahlavi and his administration. This position in *Time* also mirrored the U.S.’s stance on the Iranian revolutionaries; President Carter’s administration frequently noted that the demonstrators were against progress, depicted the movement as having no basis, and repeatedly cited the Shah as the only viable option in Iran for Iranians as well as for global security (Dorman & Farhang, 1987). In its coverage, *Time* often cited communist ideology and Islamism as reasons for the turmoil. In the September 4, 1978, issue, “Iran: After the Abadan Fire” described the left-right political alliances in Iran, which had engaged in a “campaign ... of terror” catalyzed by extremist ideology. “Iran: Another Crisis,”

published November 13, 1978, quoted President Carter as saying that the Shah's opponents are people who "don't like democratic principles." The article "Iran: The Crescent," in the January 15, 1979, issue, stated that the unrest was due to the dissatisfaction of the mullahs, who felt jilted after government subsidies were terminated, and the merchant class, which opposed governmental control on inflation. It is worthwhile to note that the media also used these frames when covering earlier Iranian uprisings and national movements discussed in Chapter 2.

Noting the U.S. government's framing of the revolution as an extreme religious movement rather than a democratic struggle (Dorman & Farhang, 1987), it may not be unexpected that *Time* used the Islam frame more than any other outside of the government and uprising frames. In the September 4, 1978, issue, *Time* employed labels such as "fanatics" and "extremists" in discussing demonstrators, and alleged that they were "outraged by Western-style diversions" ("Iran: After the Abadan Fire"). *Time* further reported, "It seemed that Iran's uncertain advance into the 20<sup>th</sup> century had stumbled again, and that the nation had been thrust back into the dark Islamic puritanism of the 18<sup>th</sup> century." Another article, "World: One Man's Word," published in the January 22, 1979, issue, reported that the "ancient faith" of Islam was a threat to Iran as well as the global economy; "In other words, the country's bounteous oilfields have now been Islamized."

Iran's women were depicted as bound by the veil and oppressed by Muslim tradition. December 25, 1978's article, "Back to the Chador," was the only article of those analyzed in either period that focused primarily on women. The article noted the

large number of female demonstrators who were “encased from head to foot in black, shapeless chadors, while their men formed a protective chain on either side of the street.” The article added irony to this image by noting that the Shah’s policies had made Iranian women some of the most liberated in the Middle East. *Time* reported that conservative mullahs aimed to bring this progress to a halt.

Results for the Green Movement also followed the U.S. administration’s stance, with a highly critical depiction of the Islamic Republic and a positive portrayal of the movement’s participants. While the Obama administration has spoken of “extending a hand” to Iran, much of its rhetoric toward Iran has been threatening (Levine, 2013; Johnston, 2012). The magazine’s coverage was largely negative of the Islamic Republic, noting “the internal rivalries” in the government that had been aired “in the most embarrassing fashion.” In the presidential campaign, *Time* noted that Ahmadinejad was “a slick combination of facts and accusations” (“Joe Klein: What I Saw”). The article stated Obama’s “appropriately cautious” wording after the demonstrations, which criticized “the use of violence against the protesters, but not the results of the vote.” The article stated, “it seems clear” that the Obama administration “will continue to seek negotiations,” and warned: “If the Iranians are smart, they will respond quickly.”

The Green Movement demonstrations received positive framing in *Time*. Concurrently, Obama showed his support for the Green Revolution by addressing their struggles and calling on the republic to respect protesters’ rights (Bakhtavar, 2009). *Time* featured the Green Movement on its June 29, 2009, cover, which showed a public demonstration at Tehran’s Freedom Tower with a woman dressed in green in the

foreground, both hands held out and forming peace signs. In the same issue, “Power of the People” quoted a demonstrator who referenced the Shah’s autocratic rule and argued for democracy: “We already deposed one of the strongest dictatorships in the world 30 years ago. They should know that we won’t tolerate another.” The article “Joe Klein: What I Saw” quickly labeled the uprising a “revolution,” and showed empathy for the demonstrators: “It was possible to believe, for a moment, that these genial young people, from both sides, might be creating a new, more open Iran for themselves. And then, the door slammed shut again.” The prolonged struggle for democracy also received context in the pages of *Time*, which was notably absent in the Islamic Revolution coverage. “Iran Protesters: Phase 2 of Their Feisty Campaign,” in the August 10, 2009, issue, reported that “the protests tap into a long Iranian tradition” of democratic struggles in Iran, noting the Tobacco Revolution of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the Constitutional Revolution in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

With respect to the Muslim leaders frame, *Time*’s July 6, 2009, “Can the U.S. Deal with a Divided Iran?” took a mocking tone toward the ulama, which cited foreign interference in Iran as the cause of the latest uprising. *Time* quoted the Ayatollah Ali Khamenei during a Friday prayer as saying, “The most treacherous government is Britain.” The reporter commented, “I had to laugh. The Supreme Leader, in the midst of announcing a crackdown on the Green Revolution demonstrators, was sounding like the lead character in the most famous contemporary Iranian novel, *My Uncle Napoleon*, ... a beloved paranoid curmudgeon. He blames everything — the weather, the economy, the moral vagaries of his family — on the British.”

Women were shown in only positive frames in this period. The June 29, 2009, story “Power of the People,” demonstrated the courage of a female demonstrator, Maryam, who is warned by a male passerby about the dangers in protesting. “Just then,” the article stated, “a Basiji [secret police] charged at her from nowhere carrying a metal rod. As he prepared to strike her, a group of men got out of their cars, tackled the man and started beating him.” The article noted that Maryam “got up from the ground, composed herself and went right back to her spot to continue her mission.”

### **Contributions to the Literature**

This study juxtaposed the U.S. media coverage of the Islamic Revolution and the Green Movement. Previous studies have discussed press coverage of Iran’s nuclear capabilities, or have examined the Islamic Revolution alone. This study was unique in its comparison of both uprisings and the U.S. media’s interpretations of them. As the study showed, *Time* was not critical of the U.S. government’s positions on Iran in either time frame. An understanding of this phenomenon in which media regularly shadow U.S. foreign policy is indispensable in the field of journalism and for those who critique journalistic practices.

The findings also showed that although *Time* framed the Shah and the uprising of Green Movement favorably, overall it was negative in its frames of Iran and Iranians. A more balanced approach from mainstream media outlets is imperative in building better U.S.-Iran relations.

This research also adds to the literature regarding media frames of international events and foreign policy. Similar to other research, this study showed that the media

espoused repetitive, state-sanctioned ideology in the framing of two international events, and did not act as the “fourth branch” of government.

### **Limitations to the Study**

The study was limited in its examination of one publication, *Time* magazine. While the research yielded similar results to other studies analyzing coverage of international events, other publications may have produced varied results.

Additionally, this study was limited by the relatively small samples *Time* produced, particularly in the second period where only seven articles were available. Larger samples may yield different results.

### **Directions for Future Research**

Studies that expand upon this research could examine additional publications to determine if that would produce unexpected results. Also, future studies could compare mainstream publications with the reporting of independent media to note any differences between the types of publications.

Further studies may compare the coverage of *Time* and mainstream U.S. media to coverage from the media of other countries. Another important study might examine how U.S. media coverage impacted American perceptions during the Islamic Revolution and Green Movement. Since the media was less critical of Iran in the latter period, the American public may have also become more favorable toward Iranians during this time. Studies have shown that how media select and frame events has a direct correlation to the public opinion on those events (Entman, 2004).

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