

## **US Print Media Framing of Nuclear Ambiguity: Israel vs. Iran**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This research work aims at studying the “Nuclear Ambiguity” by evaluating the coverage of Israeli and Iranian nuclear issue in the US print media. The main objective of the study was to examine the news stories and editorial treatment of the above mentioned issue with reference to the foreign policies of the related countries. Content analysis was employed to study the two newspapers; The New York Times and The Washington Post. The data was collected by using census approach and the whole population was considered as sample from the time period of January, 2014 to December, 2015. The theoretical framework of the study comprised of Agenda setting and Framing theory that explain how media can “play up” or “play down” any issue. To determine the significance of the research hypothesis, statistical test chi square was applied and results approved all the hypotheses. The study concluded that US print media followed their national policies and played up the issue of nuclear ambiguity in case of Iran’s nuclear program, while played down the Israel’s nuclear program because Israel is a vital ally of American.

**Keywords:** *Nuclear Opacity, Iran and Israel’s Nuclear Program, US Media coverage, Content Analysis, Agenda Setting and Framing*

### **Introduction**

In the current era of power, the war cannot be won through swords or magnanimity; even chemical weapons can only succor to defend not to win wars. Particularly, with the innovation of atomic weapons, a large number of countries have been indulged in a race to attain these weapons for the strategic omnipotence over other states. As a result a new level of devastation and cataclysm in the form of nuclear weapons has become a necessity of human beings. To enjoy regional and international sovereignty, the two most imperative and strategically strong states of Middle East, Israel and Iran also have indulged in a race to attain these nuclear weapons.

In 1960s, during the regime of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, Iran started its nuclear program with the alliance of United States. According to Fitzpatrick (2012), Iran shares its boundaries with nuclear possessed countries; likewise, Iran also shares its border with Afghanistan and Iraq that has been already hegemonic by the Western imperialistic powers. Consequently, there was a crucial need for Iran to develop its own atomic weapons. On the other hand, Cohen (1998) exposes that “Israel has acquired operational atomic weapons perhaps since 1973, and possibly as early as 1967. It is widely speculated that up till now Israel has not merely “the bomb,” but certainly it also possesses a huge and technically advanced nuclear armory installed on compound delivery systems”. Being a nuclear power, the status of Israel is totally different. Like other nuclear powers it did not publicly declared itself as a nuclear power and permitted a policy of nuclear ambiguity grounded on the principle that “it will not be the first nation to introduce nuclear weapons to the Middle East”. The United States (US) was a strong ally in influencing this dogma of nuclear ambiguity on the condition that Israel dyed-in-the-wool itself to keeping its nuclear bomb as a secret.

Here the factor to contemplate is, that with the backing of the United States, Israel is daunting Iran to possess a nuclear weapon and on the other side it itself own a nuclear weapon. This twofold dogma has given birth to a new phenomenon; known as “Nuclear Ambiguity”. Cohen (2010) reveals that “the term ambiguity was firstly categorized in a confidential accord between Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir and America President Richard Nixon in September 1969”. The nuclear ambiguity issue has not only importance for the Middle Eastern region but it holds a noteworthy value of the preservation of the international peace. Israel and Iran, both are main players of the region, and any armed conflict between both adversaries can lead to another world war. Iran is familiar with Israel as an imperialist country and an interloper of Palestinian land. On the other hand, Israel identifies a nuclear-armed Iran to be amongst the definitive threats to its national security that will jeopardize the endurance of the Jewish state.

Currently, where the nuclear weapons are responsible for physical impairment, the importance of media cannot be ignored as it seizes the human mind and alter the thinking patterns. Through this, media coax the public opinion and perspicacity about an event (Reese, 2007) by telling the people what to consider (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) and the way to consider (Ray, 2004). Likewise, in the perspective of “nuclear ambiguity”, the US media play a significant role not only depict its country’s stance or position on a specific issue, but also influence the public opinion and the process of policy making. Keeping in mind the above revealed status quo, this research paper aims to scrutinize the US media’s preconceived notion on the issue of nuclear ambiguity as it favors or criticizes some actors and actions more over others while transferring a certain understanding about the problem to its audience according to its national interests.

Mozzoleni (1999) discusses that “the interdependence of media and politics has given birth to a new era of media’s political opinion making, now politics and media coverage, go hand in hand”. People usually trust in that version which is impersonated by the spiritualists. An enormous responsibility of the media is to cowl issues accurately and without taking sides. But the matter of reality is, the stance of US media is not unbiased and objective on the issue of nuclear ambiguity

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it covers this topic according to its foreign policy. While reporting on international issue US media follow its domestic policies, national interests and political economy of media (Wanta, Golan, & Lee, 2004).

In this way, the opinion makers and public only perceive the media reported version of the ambiguity as reality. The biases in the media's coverage can lead to cataclysmic results for the Middle Eastern region as well as for the world. The basic intention of the research study is to examine how US media propagate the information about an international issue according to its culture, ideology, national or domestic interests and political orientations to cultivate the schemata of elucidation.

This research study is mainly a three-fold analysis of the conflict. In its first step, the difference in the quantity and nature of insurance or coverage given to the nuclear ambiguity issue and its actors through the chosen newspapers has been decided; in its second step, the evaluation of media frames used by chosen newspapers in their coverage of the issue and actors has been examined; and the third step, the implanted meanings in media texts, used to explain the issue and actors, in both newspapers have been interpreted. Hence, the study is a quantitative analysis of the issue.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. examine the extent of coverage given to the Nuclear Ambiguity, Iran vs Israel, by the selected newspapers i.e. *The New York Times and the Washington Post*;
2. investigate the treatment given to the issue of Nuclear Ambiguity by the selected newspapers;
3. explore the difference in coverage (extent and treatment) given to the Nuclear Ambiguity, Iran vs Israel, by the selected newspapers; and
4. analyze whether US media has “played up” or “played down” this issue in accordance with its vested interest and foreign policy.

### **Research Questions**

The study seeks to inquire following questions:

1. How much coverage (amount in terms of space and frequency) was given to the Iranian and Israeli nuclear programs in regard of nuclear ambiguity by the selected newspapers (*The New York Times and The Washington Post*) during the selected time period?
2. Was the tone of coverage and treatment given to the nuclear ambiguity issue differs in the case of Israel and Iran by the selected newspapers?
3. Does the amount and type of coverage given to Iranian and Israeli nuclear programs in regard of nuclear ambiguity varied?
4. Are the US media covering the issue of nuclear ambiguity equally in the case of Israel and Iran?

5. What is the editorial policy of the selected newspapers regarding this issue?

### **Hypotheses**

The Hypotheses of the present research study are:

**H1:** The US media publish more news stories and editorials on Iran nuclear ambiguity than the Israel nuclear ambiguity.

**H2:** In terms of mean length of news stories and editorials, the US media do not give equal coverage to Israel and Iran nuclear ambiguity issue.

**H3:** The tone of US media is pro-Israel and anti-Iran towards the nuclear ambiguity issue.

**H4:** The US media “play up” the Iran nuclear ambiguity and “play down” the Israel nuclear ambiguity issue according to its vested interests.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Media has the capability to underscore any problem by giving it additional treatment and furthermore media has the potency to conceal any imperative information by excluding central and decisive aspects of any issue. Follow a line of investigation two theories have been anticipated, Agenda Setting Theory and Framing Concept, to acquire better perceptive regarding media role.

McCombs & Shaw (1972) described that Agenda-Setting Theory describes the “ability of the news media to influence the salience of topics on the public agenda”. It tells about in what manner media set any agenda by given supplementary coverage and space to any specific issue of concern, as well as, media has the power to grasp the minds of general community. To highlight the issue of nuclear plan, the present study explores the US print media coverage and its flow of information regarding nuclear ambiguity program of Iran and Israel. By examining these two aspects of nuclear program it can be drawn that media has the power to promote or favor any specific issue or country in contrast to other one. Specifically, if stories about any issue “frequently” and “prominently” published, the target audience will be familiar with the issue as the most important one. So by bringing out innumerable news on any existing issue media made it extra essential for public.

McCombs & Shaw, 1997; Scheufele, 1999, elaborate that in terms of media effects, Framing is an extension of agenda setting theory and is accredited to second-level agenda setting. It helps in the erection of realism that how media frame any specific issue and shape the real world into convenient chunks for the public (Tuchman, 1978). The present research study is only restricted to media frames, therefore only frames embedded in text are analyzed in the context of Iranian and Israeli nuclear ambiguity issue. The present research has drawn frames that are based on inductive approach, emphasizing on specific characteristics of an issue that is being highlighted by the nominated newspapers and it used diagnostic (identifying the issue) and prognostic (solution based) frames that have been already used in US media.

## **Methodology**

The present research study employed quantitative content analysis which considered appropriate according to the objectives of the study. The universe of this research study comprised of The New York Times and The Washington Post from January 2014 to December 2015. The US mainstream newspapers including *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* were selected due to their higher circulation and worldwide readership. Since 1851, *The New York Times* has been publishing from New York City and deliberated as the most prestige newspaper. According to the press release of The New York Times Company, it has largest worldwide online readership. Cooper,1992; Mnnokin, 2004 reveal that in setting the US media's agenda daily The New York Times has significant influence. Similarly *The Washington Post*, daily English newspaper, has been publishing from Washington, D.C since 1877. It is considered as the most highly distributed and area's oldest existing newspaper.

News stories and editorial of the selected newspapers have been selected as the unit of analysis by doing quantitative analysis. News stories were selected due to the fact that they help to aware its public regarding ongoing issue and the editorials exemplify the selected newspapers' policy towards the selected issue as they are accountable for framing the public opinion.

The whole universe of the selected newspapers was taken as sample by using the census approach. All the news and editorials from the selected time period were taken as units of analysis. Space given to each news story and editorials related to the issue was measured by the wordage. For the chosen newspapers, General OneFile provided the total word count for each story.

The data from dailies *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* were retrieved from eLibrary USA, General OneFile Resource via electronic database "GALE" (<http://elibraryusa.state.gov/resources.html>) against the key terms "Iran", "Israel" and "nuclear Weapons" and picked up only those news stories and editorials that were closely related to the context of nuclear ambiguity. The final population comprised of 488 news stories and 48 editorials from *The New York Times* and 322 news stories and 6 editorials from *The Washington Post*. Thus, by assembling the contents of selected newspapers, the overall population of the study comprised 810 news stories and 54 editorials.

## **Slant/Tone**

Slant/Tone means approach or attitude of US media towards nuclear ambiguity issue. The slant/tone for the present research was categorized as Pro-Israel, Anti-Israel and Neutral for those stories that were related to Israel nuclear ambiguity and the stories have been coded as Pro-Iran, Anti-Iran or Neutral that were related to Iran nuclear ambiguity issue.

## **Frames Visibility**

As this research paper is concerned with the analysis the coverage of issue of Israeli and Iranian nuclear power in US print media which has different ideologies, foreign policies, economy and political orientations for different countries according to its own national interests, the frames were designated on diagnostic

(identifying the issue) and prognostic (solution based) standpoints or perspectives of the issue.

**1. Diagnostic frames** involve how the nuclear ambiguity issue and actors were presented in news stories and editorials to emphasize and identify the issue.

**Fairness and equality frame/ injustice Frame** defines that either the US media frames or cover the nuclear ambiguity issue with balance or equally in the case of Israel and Iran or not.

**“Play up” and “play down” frame** emphasis on how the US media depict the both actors and “play down” or “play up” the issue of Israeli and Iranian nuclear agenda.

**2. Prognostic frames** involve how the solution of the nuclear ambiguity issue is highlighted in news stories and editorials.

**Defense and security frame** defines the threats and pressures to security and safety of a state. Usually an actor an appeal to act that can be taken to defend the safety of a state or sometimes from a not yet revealed hazard.

**Law and order frame** relates to particular strategies in practice and their execution, inducements and implications. Stories consist on implementation and elucidation of laws by law administration and individuals, loopholes breaking laws, condemning and punishment.

**External reputation and regulation frame** defines the US external relations with Israel and Iran; this comprises treaties among them and their outcomes, evaluation of policy consequences or preferred strategy outcomes.

**Political frame** defines the US political deliberations surrounding the nuclear ambiguity issue with Israel and Iran. Political attitudes, efforts or actions such as lobbyist involvement and partisan, etc will come under political frames.

**Policy recommendation and evaluation frame** possesses certain US media policies or dogmas anticipated for addressing a notorious problem (Israeli and Iranian nuclear ambiguity issue), and estimate if particular strategies will work, or if existing dogmas are effective.

**Peace resolution frame** has been comprised that in what way US media is encouraging the solution of the issue, in the favor of the solution either by dialogues, diplomacy, or peaceful means, consideration efforts by the United Nations, meetings of UN representatives and giving a roadmap for the peace resolution.

## **Findings**

The present research study has been analyzed by scrutinizing the frequency and length of the published news stories and editorials on Israel and Iran nuclear ambiguity issue. In the selected newspapers, total 269 news stories and 39 editorials were published regarding Israel nuclear ambiguity with a mean length 524.81 words per news story and 421.12 words per editorial. While on the other hand, total 810 news stories and 67 editorials were published regarding Iran nuclear ambiguity with a mean length 652.06 words per news story and 592.26 per

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editorial by the selected newspapers. The present research study, data was analyzed through SPSS by taking 0.05 standard level of alpha (Table 1 & Table 2).

**Table 1: Distribution of US media coverage regarding Israel and Iran nuclear ambiguity issue by No. of stories, topics, space, tone/slant and frames visibility**

<b>US Media Coverage Categories</b>	<b>Israel Nuclear Ambiguity N(%)</b>	<b>Iran Nuclear Ambiguity N(%)</b>	<b>Total N (%)</b>
<b>No. of News Stories*<sup>1</sup></b>	260 (24.29)	810 (75.70)	1070 (100)
<b>Space/Mean Story Length*<sup>2</sup></b>	524.81	652.06	551.81
<b>Topics</b>			
Sanctions	6 (2.30)	126 (15.55)	132 (12.33)
Nuclear Non Proliferation	22 (8.46)	98 (12.09)	120 (11.21)
Nuclear Arms Control	14 (5.38)	261 (32.22)	275 (25.70)
Israel Foreign Relations	124 (47.69)	0 (0)	124 (11.58)
Iran Foreign Relations	0 (0)	211 (26.04)	211 (19.71)
United State Foreign Relations	83 (31.92)	24 (2.96)	211 (19.71)
Uranium Enrichment	0 (0)	86 (10.61)	211 (19.71)
Peace Negotiation	11 (4.23)	4 (0.49)	107 (10)
<b>Slant/Tone*<sup>3</sup></b>	218 (83.84)		86 (8.03)
Pro-Israel	24 (9.23)		15 (1.40)
Anti-Israel	18 (6.92)	43 (5.30)	745 (91.97)
Neutral		745 (91.97)	218 (20.37)
Pro-Iran		22 (2.71)	24 (2.24)
Anti-Iran			18 (1.68)
Neutral	13 (5)	57 (7.03)	24 (2.24)
<b>Frames Visibility *<sup>4</sup></b>	24 (9.23)	379 (46.79)	18 (1.68)
Fairness and Equality Frame/Injustice Frame	22 (8.46)	106 (13.08)	43
“Play Up” and “Play	34 (13.07)	73 (9.01)	

Down” Frame	82 (31.53)	46 (5.67)	(4.01)
Defense and Security Frame	21 (8.07)	42(5.18)	745 (69.62)
Law and Order Frame	33(12.69)	73(9.01)	22 (2.05)
External Reputation and Regulation Frame	31 (11.92)	34 (4.19)	70 (6.54)
Political Frame			403 (37.66)
Policy Recommendation& Evaluation Frame			128 (11.96)
Peace Resolution Frame			107 (10) 128 (11.96) 63 (5.88) 106 (9.90) 65 (6.07)

**Table 2: Distribution of US media coverage regarding Israel and Iran nuclear ambiguity issue by No. of editorials, topics, space, tone/slant and frames visibility**

<b>US Media Coverage</b> <b>Categories</b>	<b>Israel Nuclear Ambiguity N (%)</b>	<b>Iran Nuclear Ambiguity N (%)</b>	<b>Total N (%)</b>
<b>No. of editorials*<sup>5</sup></b>	39 (36.79)	67 (63.20)	106 (100)
<b>Space/Mean Editorial Length*<sup>6</sup></b> Wordage	421.12	592.26	506.5
<b>Topics</b>			
Sanctions	0 (2.30)	8 (15.55)	8 (7.54)
Nuclear Non Proliferation	6 (8.46)	12 (12.09)	18 (16.98)
Nuclear Arms Control	2 (5.38)	14 (32.22)	16 (15.09)



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Israel Foreign Relations	11 (47.69)	0 (0)	11 (10.37)
Iran Foreign Relations	0 (0)	9 (26.04)	9 (8.49)
United State Foreign Relations	9 (31.92)	14 (2.96)	23 (21.69)
Uranium Enrichment	0 (0)	8 (10.61)	8 (7.54)
Peace Negotiation	11 (4.23)	2 (0.49)	13 (12.26)
<b>Slant/Tone*<sup>7</sup></b>			
Pro-Israel	29 (83.84)		29 (27.35)
Anti-Israel	7 (9.23)		7 (6.60)
Neutral	3 (6.92)		3 (2.83)
Pro-Iran		14 (5.30)	14 (13.20)
Anti-Iran		44 (91.97)	44 (41.50)
Neutral		9 (2.71)	9(8.49)
<b>Frames Visibility*<sup>8</sup></b>			
Fairness and Equality Frame/Injustice Frame	3 (5)	11 (7.03)	14 (13.20)
“Play Up” and “Play Down” Frame	12 (9.23)	24 (46.79)	36 (33.96)
Defense and Security Frame	7 (8.46)	10 (13.08)	17 (16.03)
Law and Order Frame	5 (13.07)	8 (9.01)	13 (12.26)
External Reputation and Regulation Frame	6 (31.53)	6 (5.67)	12 (11.32)
Political Frame	3 (8.07)	1 (5.18)	4 (3.77)
Policy Recommendation& Evaluation Frame	2 (12.69)	7 (9.01)	9 (8.49)
Peace Resolution Frame	1 (11.92)	0 (4.19)	1 (0.94)

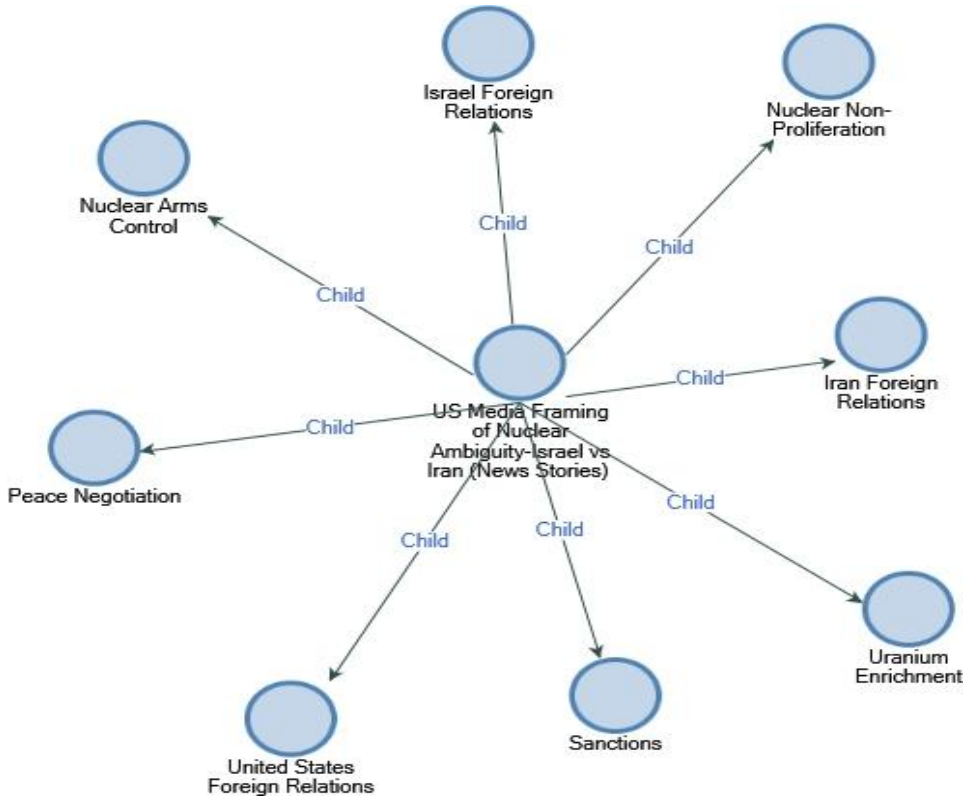
**Note:**

\*1,\*<sup>5</sup>Chi-square = 50.07; p: .000      \*2,\*<sup>6</sup> F=14.663; p: .000      \*3,\*<sup>7</sup>Chi-square = 1360.77; p: .000

\*4,\*<sup>8</sup>Chi-square = 44.023; p: .000

In terms of frequency, the difference between the coverage of Israel and Iran was statistically significant (Chi Square =50.07;p=.000) and the outcome is in the postulated direction. This approves the hypothesis (H1) which presumed that *The US media publish more news stories and editorials on Iran nuclear ambiguity than the Israel nuclear ambiguity* (Table 1& Table 2). It is also clear from the data that

in terms of mean length of stories, the difference between the coverage of Israel and Iran was also statistically significant ( $F= 14.663$ ;  $p=.000$ ) which elucidates that the US media did not publish same length of news stories and editorials regarding Israel and Iran’s nuclear ambiguity issue. This approves the hypothesis (H2) which assumed, *In terms of mean length of news stories and editorials, the US media do not give equal coverage to Israel and Iran nuclear ambiguity issue.*



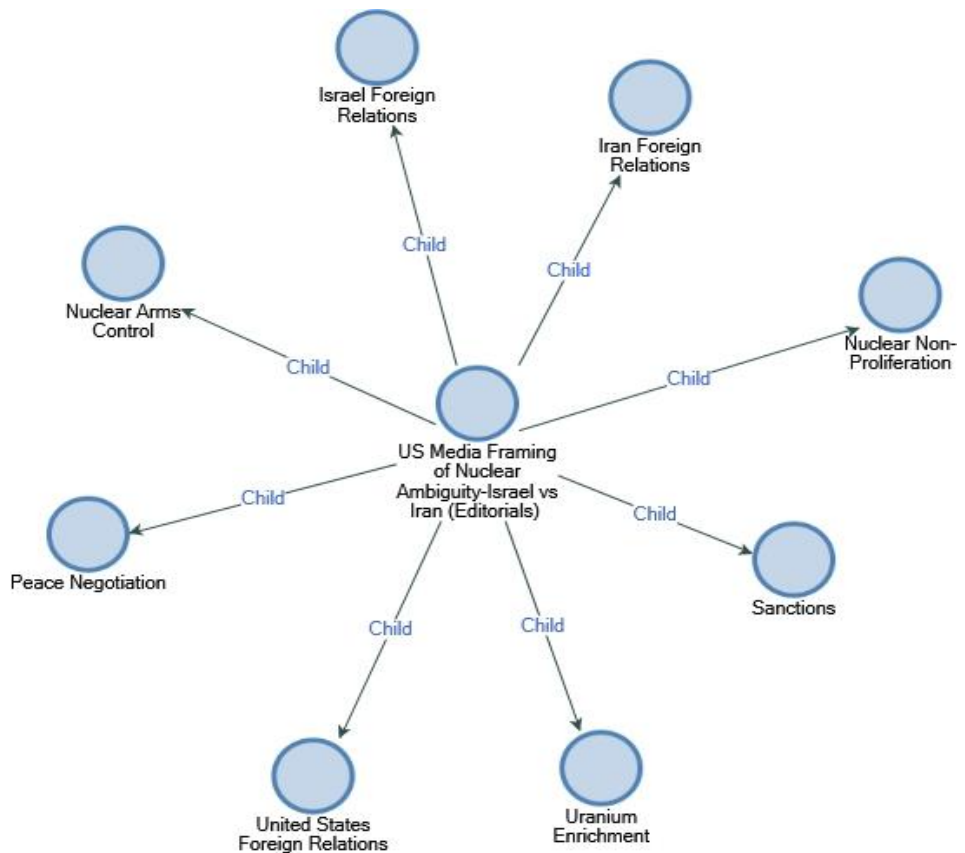
**Figure 1: Project map of nodes of topics/themes regarding framing of nuclear ambiguity issue in news stories of selected newspapers**

As far as the topics/themes of the news stories concerned, the data is presented in Figure 1 which shows smaller the arrows go to a specific node, the less coverage that receives whereas larger the arrows go towards any node, more the coverage that node receives. It is clear from Figure 1 that the US media have published total 132 stories under the category of ‘Sanctions’ in which 6 news stories were related to Israel nuclear ambiguity and 126 stories were related to Iran nuclear ambiguity issue. Similarly, total 120 stories related to ‘Nuclear Non Proliferation’ theme have been published in which 22 stories were related to Israel while 98 were related to Iran. Likewise 275 stories were coming under the category of ‘Nuclear Arms Control’ in which 14 stories were correlated to Israel and 261 stories were related to Iran. Total 124 stories have been published under the category of ‘Israel Foreign Relations’, while total 211 stories were coming under the theme of ‘Iran Foreign

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Relations'. In United State 'Foreign Relations' category, total 107 stories have been published in which 83 were in favor of Israel and 24 were related to Iran nuclear ambiguity. On 'Uranium Enrichment' theme, total 86 stories have published regarding Iran nuclear ambiguity issue whereas the theme of 'Peace Negotiation' was covered in total 15 stories in which 11 news stories were associated with Israel nuclear ambiguity while 4 news stories were related to Iran nuclear ambiguity issue.

It is evident from the data that regarding the Israeli nuclear ambiguity issue US print media gave maximum coverage to Israel foreign relations theme while the theme of 'uranium enrichment' was ignored altogether and not a single news story based on it. At the same time, regarding the Iranian nuclear ambiguity issue selected newspapers published maximum news stories covered the theme of nuclear arms control, whereas minimum coverage was given to the peace negotiation theme.



**Figure 2: Project map of nodes of topics/themes regarding framing of nuclear ambiguity issue in editorials of selected newspapers**

Even though the topics or themes of the editorials concerned, the data is presented in Figure 2 which demonstrates that smaller the arrows go to a specific node, the less coverage that receives whereas larger the arrows go towards any node, more the coverage that theme receives.

It is manifest from Figure 2 that the US print media have published total 8 editorials under the theme of ‘Sanctions’ and all were linked up to Iran nuclear ambiguity issue. Similarly, total 18 editorials related to ‘Nuclear Non Proliferation’ theme have been published in which 6 editorials were related to Israel while 12 were related to Iran. Likewise 16 editorials are coming under the theme of ‘Nuclear Arms Control’ in which 2 were allied to Israel and 14 were related to Iran. Total 11 editorials have been published under the topic of ‘Israel Foreign Relations’, while total 9 were coming under the theme of ‘Iran Foreign Relations’. The theme of ‘United State Foreign Relations’ received total 23 editorials in which 9 were in favor of Israel and 14 were related to Iran nuclear ambiguity. On ‘Uranium Enrichment’ theme, total 8 editorials have published regarding Iran nuclear ambiguity issue whereas not a single was published related to Israeli nuclear ambiguity issue. On ‘Peace Negotiation’ topic total 13 editorials have been published in which 11 were associated with Israel nuclear ambiguity while 2 were related to Iran nuclear ambiguity issue.

As the data demonstrates that regarding the Israeli nuclear ambiguity issue US print media gave maximum coverage to Israel foreign relations and ‘peace negotiation’ themes while no coverage was given to ‘sanctions’ theme as not a single editorial was published on it. Simultaneously, regarding the ‘Iranian nuclear ambiguity’ issue, selected newspapers published maximum editorials under the theme of ‘nuclear arms control’ and United State foreign relations, whereas minimum coverage was given to the peace negotiation theme.

Under the category of tone, as the data shows, 218 (83.84%) news stories were Pro-Israel, 24 (9.23%) carried Anti-Israel slant, whereas tone of 18 (6.92%) news stories was neutral towards Israel. Likewise the tone of 43 (5.30%) news stories was Pro-Iran, 745 (91.97%) carried Anti-Iran slant, whereas the tone of 22 (2.71%) news stories was neutral towards Iran (Table 1). On the other side the tone of 29 (83.84%) editorials was Pro-Israel, 7 (9.23%) carried Anti-Israel slant while the tone of 3 (6.92%) was neutral towards the Iranian nuclear ambiguity issue. The overall difference in the coverage of US media regarding Israel and Iran nuclear ambiguity issue in terms of slant or tone was statistically significant (Chi Square= 1360.77;  $p=.000$ ) which depicts that the US media did not cover the issue in a similar tone. This supports the hypothesis (H3) which implicit that the tone of US media is pro-Israel and anti-Iran towards the nuclear ambiguity issue.

Table 1 illustrates that out of 70 counts of fairness and equality frame/inequality in news stories, 13 were visible while covering the Israel and 57 focusing Iran nuclear ambiguity issue. However, out of 107 counts of law and order frame in news stories, 34 times appeared in covering the Israel and 73 times targeting the Iran nuclear ambiguity issue. Whereas, out of 63 counts of political frame in stories, 21 were visible while covering the Israel and 42 focusing the Iran nuclear ambiguity issue. Likewise, out of 128 counts of external reputation and regulation frame in news stories, US media used this frame 82 times covering the Israel and 46 times while highlighting the Iran nuclear ambiguity. Similarly, out of 106

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counts of policy recommendation and evaluation frame in stories, 33 times appeared in covering the Israel and 73 times showed highlighting the Iran nuclear ambiguity. Out of 65 peace resolution frame in news stories, 31 were visible while covering the Israel and 34 focusing the Iran nuclear ambiguity issue. However, out of 403 counts of “play up” and “play down” frame in news stories, 24 times appeared in covering the Israel and 379 times highlighting the Iran nuclear ambiguity issue. Whereas, out of 128 counts of defense and security frame, 22 were visible while covering the Israel and 106 discussing the Iran nuclear ambiguity issue.

While Table 2 illustrates that in editorials out of 14 counts of fairness and equality frame/inequality, 3 were visible while covering the Israel and 11 Iran nuclear ambiguity issue. However, out of 36 counts of “play up” and “play down” frame in editorials, 12 times appeared in covering the Israel and 24 times Iran nuclear ambiguity issue. Though, out of 17 counts of law and order frame, 7 times appeared in covering the Israel and 10 times the Iran nuclear ambiguity issue. Whereas, out of 13 counts of defense and security frame, 5 were visible while covering the Israel and 8 highlighting the Iran nuclear ambiguity issue. Likewise, out of 12 counts of external reputation and regulation frame, US media used this frame 6 times while covering the Israel and 6 times for Iran nuclear ambiguity. Whereas, out of 3 counts of political frame in editorials, 1 was visible while covering the Israel and 4 for Iran nuclear ambiguity issue. Similarly, out of 2 counts of policy recommendation & evaluation frame in editorials, 7 times appeared in covering the Israel and 9 times the Iran nuclear ambiguity. Only 1 peace resolution frame was visible while covering the Israel and in the case of Iran nuclear ambiguity issue not a single editorial has been published.

Table 1 & 2 depict that the difference in covering both the countries by the US media is statistically significant at all the frames (Chi-square = 44.023; p: .000). This supports the hypothesis (H4) which presumed that *The US media “play up” the Iran nuclear ambiguity and “play down” the Israel nuclear ambiguity issue according to its vested interests.*

### **Discussion and Analysis**

The findings of the research study depicts that there is a significant difference in covering (in terms of frequency and mean length of stories) both the countries, Israel and Iran, regarding nuclear ambiguity issue by the US media. Likewise, the overall treatment by attitude or tone of the US media towards the Israeli and Iranian nuclear agenda was not similar. US media gave negative coverage to Iranian nuclear issue while cover up the Israeli nuclear agenda by employing the Fairness and Equality frame/Injustice frame. This is in consistent with the outcomes of earlier research studies (Cordesman, 1996; Majid & Ramaprasad, 1998; Yang,2003). These research studies concluded that US media frame an international issue by conforming and following its culture, national interests and ideology according to the foreign policy of its government on the issue, as to maintain its vested strategic welfares in the region.

According to the findings of this research study, the coverage of US print media is cripplingly blue-penciled while reporting the Israeli nuclear agenda as it never exposed Israel’s ownership of nuclear weapons, by either declaring that it had

these weapons or by testing them. Simultaneously, the US media criticize or censure Iran by substantially highlights the issue of Iran's nuclear program, and exposed that Iran with nuclear arms would be hazardous and dangerous. As both the countries have been indulged in a race to attain nuclear weapons, it can be concluded by employing the "play up" and "play down" frame that US print media only exposed Iranian nuclear ambiguity while it pays no attention to the Israeli nuclear issue. The outcomes of this frame are in consistent with the previous study (Cohen, 2010) that the US media totally cover up the Israeli nuclear agenda, due to the fact that Israel is the strongest ally of the western powers whereas covering the Iranian nuclear issue the US media not only highlighting this issue but also gave negative coverage.

As far as defense and security frame concerned, the US media gave negative coverage to Iran because it's a well thought-out a threat to US welfares and world peace as Iran tried to become capable to acquire nuclear weapons. But the Americans tried to hamper its goal by convincing other countries, not to sell any material to Iran that can assist to produce plutonium or enrich uranium. The results of above mentioned frame support the earlier researches (Guthe, 2011; Eisenstadt, 2007) that proposed there are probabilities that Iran could become more hostile and antagonistic after attaining the atomic weapons and could use as means for restraining U.S. and Israeli armed responds. The outcomes of law and order frame proposed that US has laws to resist the Iranian nuclear weapons and impose sanctions on Iran to avoid its agenda to become a nuclear state. With the assistant of US, Israel is a most interested nuclear equipped state because no one know about Israel nuclear program not even their connoisseurs, Israel made strong efforts to wrap there nuclear endeavor. The findings of external reputation and regulation frame depicts that the US external relations with Israel are progressive. The authentic reasons behind America's sincerity with Israel are its political, moral and ethical interests. Israel is not only the America's most trustworthy ally in the Middle East, but it is probably the "greatest asset outside the US military".

The outcome of this frame is in consistent with the early research study that concluded as a defensive armor for America, Israel keep away extremist nations and sub-state actors from disastrously damage of America's interests (Cordsmen,1996). On the other hand, present study concludes that the US external relations with Iran are not so good. Previous US media research studies reported on this aspect specifically about Iran include (Fitzpatrick, 2007; Poneman,1981; Reese & Lewis, 2009; Wanta, Golan & Lee,2004) have investigated the US media's negative portrayal about Iran in hostage crisis. The corporate and hegemonic US media is following and patronizing the schemata of western powers against Iran. In the present research study, the results of political frame induced that US media follow its country's political stance while covering the Israeli and Iranian nuclear ambiguity issue. The media's role cannot be denied in articulating the political ethos and opinion of commonalities according to its country's policies. The US media's political stance towards Iran is very antagonistic or aggressive and considered Iran with atomic power as threatening and destabilizing region for world peace. In the current research study the outcomes of policy recommendation and evaluation frame possesses that US media follow their country's dogma for addressing this problem (Israeli and Iranian nuclear ambiguity issue).

## US Print Media Framing of Nuclear Ambiguity: Israel vs. Iran

The outcomes of this research study illustrates that there was a significant difference between the coverage of Iranian and Israeli nuclear ambiguity issue in US print media (Table 1 & 2). The selected newspapers gave not only negative coverage to the Iranian nuclear ambiguity issue in its news stories for giving awareness to its public but the stance of editorials is anti-Iran too. By doing this media can help the government by influencing the public opinion in its favor on numerous policy matters. US media follow their government policies and interests while covering an international conflict or issue to protect its country's interests in foreign policy issues. If the government interests or policies change towards any nation then the USA media also shapes its policies accordingly. Thus, the media can support or assist the authorities in shaping public opinion or sentiment in the favor of government on numerous policy matters. As Cohen (1963) and Herman & Chomsky (2010) stated that "the media and foreign policy of a country has an affirmative association and strong bond". Thus the US print media carefully followed their own country's official foreign policy about the Israeli and Iranian nuclear ambiguity issue. The results of present research study were in lined with the previous research studies (Hachten, 2006; Saleem, 2007; Yang, 2003) that media conform to the interests and foreign policy of a country while covering an international or global issue or conflict.

### **Conclusion**

The present research was proposed to study the agenda setting and framing of nuclear ambiguity issue in US print media. This research study anticipates to analyze the difference in coverage (extent and treatment) given to the Nuclear Ambiguity, Iran vs Israel, by the selected newspapers. The nuclear ambiguity issue in the Middle East is one of the most serious problems and it can play active role to destabilize or undermine the region. In the Middle East, Israel and Iran are the main rival states thus the significant of this issue, at the international level, cannot be ignored. The data revealed that the issue of nuclear ambiguity is related to both the countries but the US print media censure only Iran and cover up the matter of Israel, because Israel is the closest partner of the western powers. It can also be acknowledged that the difference in treatment given to the issue by the US media relatively differs and according to its State's foreign policies. All the hypotheses are approved as the results are statistically significant which highpoint the US print media's biasness on the issue. Thus the study can conclude that US media is not covering the issue of Israeli and Iranian nuclear ambiguity independently rather highlighting it according to its national interests and foreign policy of its own government. Therefore In the context of this research study it can be said that the role of US media is not unbiased because it depicting the stance or viewpoint of the country on the issue and designing the frames to alter the public opinion accordingly. Thus the study concludes that media frames of any issue follow their foreign policy, culture, political orientations, and interests of particular governments.

### **Recommendations**

This study is not closing statement of the issue but the opening of further discussion on the role of media and its agendas. A number of topics related to this research can be taken as research projects in future. Following can be some of the topics to be researched in future.

- Comparative analysis of broadcast media and newspaper is possible.
- Future study can be conducted to study the news coverage of the nuclear opacity in the news, columns, features and letters to the editors.
- Newspaper's policy in forming public opinion on the issue of nuclear opacity can be studied in future research and impact on public opinion can be gauged by survey.
- A comparative analysis of the books published in Israel and Iran on the issue of nuclear opacity can be conducted.



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1. Sanctions

2. Nuclear Non Proliferation
3. Nuclear Arms Control
4. Israel Foreign Relations
5. Iran Foreign Relations
6. United State Foreign Relations
7. Uranium Enrichment
8. Peace Negotiation

Slant ID:

1. Pro-Israel
2. Anti-Israel
3. Neutral
4. Pro-Iran
5. Anti-Iran
6. Neutral

Frames ID:

(tick the relevant box if frame located)

1. Fairness and Equality Frame/Injustice Frame
2. “Play Up” and “Play Down” Frame
3. Defense and Security Frame
4. Law and Order Frame
5. External Reputation and Regulation Frame
6. Political Frame
7. Policy Recommendation & Evaluation Frame
8. Peace Resolution Frame