Peace- and War Journalism

A critical discourse analysis of newspaper editorials
on the topic of Iran's nuclear program

Uppsats för C-seminariet i freds- och konfliktstudier vid Umeå universitet, vårterminen 2012

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1. Media and Conflict

The media has a great responsibility in reporting on conflict. We, the public, are often left with little choice but to rely on its accounts to form an understanding of events that are typically unfolding in faraway countries of which we frequently have very limited knowledge. Ideally, the media's role is to observe, investigate and subsequently report its findings as objectively as humanly possible. If this is sometimes difficult in everyday reporting, it is exceedingly challenging in the context of an ongoing conflict.

Moreover, modern media is under pressure to produce news at an increasingly rapid pace. Consequently, journalists often find themselves with little time to verify information and check sources, and even less time to analyze events in any depth, let alone place them within a wider, historical context. What may ensue is a loop of misinformation and simplification, this in turn resulting in a very limited basis from which any deeper understanding of core issues may develop.¹

Further, reporting by necessity involves selection. Everyday, there's a virtually endless source of potential news from which journalists must sort out the smallest fraction to report on. It can - and often has been - argued to what extent media can tell us what to think, but most agree that it has a great influence on what we think about. If a conflict – or certain aspects of a conflict – is largely absent in the news, chances are the public's awareness and understanding of the conflict will be limited.² As such, media has considerable power in that it is able to shape discussions and – to a certain extent - shape reality.

According to Johan Galtung, today's media reporting on conflict is predominantly war-oriented. He argues that, whether the media producers aware of it or not, news coverage often serves to encourage perceptions of conflicts that are, in essence, war fueling. As an alternative to this kind of reporting, which he refers to as war journalism, Galtung has developed a framework for what he calls peace journalism.³ While peace- and war journalism promotes two very different discourses, Galtung argues that:

“Both are based on reporting facts, and are based on underlying cognitive and emotional assumptions rather than one being idealistic and normative and the other...

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² Ibid.
realistic and descriptive.”

Galtung understands war journalism as a product of the modern state system. Consequently, it mirrors the dominant – primarily western and American – ideologies inherent to that environment. In this way, war journalism becomes the default mode of reporting for a majority of journalists. With the peace journalism model, Galtung seeks to encourage a new style of reporting on conflict that is peace-oriented rather than war-oriented.

Why then is all this important? First, assuming Galtung is right when he theorizes that media coverage fuels war, this is a concern in itself. If the public receives its information from the media - and media news is framed in favor of conflict - it seems reasonable to assume that this will influence popular perceptions of a conflict. Further, media discourses may be able to influence policy outcome, especially under such circumstances where there is little consensus among policy makers on a certain issue.

Following such arguments, a prevalence of war journalism could effect both public perceptions and elite policy. It is therefore important to study news reporting on conflicts and highlight how such reporting may impact ongoing violent conflicts, as well as decisions on whether or not a conflict should be solved with military means.

In recent years – and, perhaps to an even greater extent, in recent months – Iran's nuclear program has been a growing concern in much of the world. Iran's leaders maintain that they have only peaceful intentions but far from everyone is convinced, fearing instead that Iran is, at the very least, on the threshold of acquiring technology sophisticated enough to allow them to produce nuclear weapons.

In order to study the prevalence of war journalism, this paper will analyze the discourses of elite newspaper editorials on the topic of Iran's nuclear program. In addition, the analysis will attempt to identify characteristics of peace journalism in the editorial sample, and thus highlight what might be regarded as a positive counterpart to war journalism.

5 Galtung, Johan (2007) pgs. 7-9
2. Purpose and Research Questions

The aim of this paper is to examine the prevalence of war- and peace journalism in a sample of newspaper editorials dealing with the topic of Iran's nuclear program.

1. What characteristics of peace journalism, if any, are discernible in the editorial sample?
2. What characteristics of war journalism, if any, are discernible in the editorial sample?
3. Can the sampled editorials be categorized as either peace-oriented or war-oriented?

2.1 Demarcation
While the chosen theories (including Critical discourse analysis) assume that there exists a pattern of bidirectional influence between the media, the public and elite policy, the aim of this study is not to explore the extent or direction of such influence. Neither does it seek to explain media behavior as such and consequently, while – for example – it might be interesting to speculate why there is a tendency in war propaganda to demonize 'the other', this study will stop at concluding that such a tendency exists.

2.2 Clarification
In this paper, the issue – or tensions – regarding Iran's nuclear program will be referred to as a conflict. While it is not a violent conflict at the moment of writing, it involves several parties with – it is presumed – conflicting goals, thus placing them in conflict with one another.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Peace- and War Journalism
In Peace Journalism as an Ethical challenge, Johan Galtung identifies two modes of journalism; Peace/Conflict Journalism (PJ) and War/Violence Journalism (WJ). While these modes of journalism may report on the same events, the discourses they advance are in stark contrast. Crucially, the former is hypothesized to promote peace while the latter promotes violence and conflict.

According to Galtung, mainstream media has traditionally been dominated by WJ. This
tradition is in turn a product of the modern state system and therefore reflects the ascendant views of that system. At present, there is no such thing as a globalized media independent of western influence. PJ is, however, not just reporting that lacks the characteristics of WJ. Rather, it draws on concepts and theories from the field of Conflict Studies in order to be able to analyze a conflict and practice journalism that actively promotes peace. In this way, PJ can be said to be framed, in that it involves making conscious choices (in reporting on a conflict) to highlight factors which are believed to promote peace.

3.2 War/Violence Journalism
This mode is war/violence-oriented. In reporting, the conflict is often isolated from its greater context, both in time and in space. As a consequence, it follows that causes and solutions can, and indeed must, be found in the conflict arena.

War is portrayed as a zero-sum game between two players with a clear distinction between 'us' and 'them', 'them' being the problem. Another important feature of this kind of reporting is the dehumanization of 'the other'.

Focus is narrow and on the visible effects of war. Consequently, reporting is often reactive, taking an interest only after something has happened.

War journalism is propaganda-oriented in the sense that it is very concerned with exposing the lies and secrets of 'the other' while protecting those of its 'own', in essence aiding in cover-ups. It can be said to be elite-oriented because it is largely represented through white males and the only peace-makers that are given any credence belong to the powerful elite.

Finally, war journalism is victory-oriented. Victory is regarded as achieved when there is a ceasefire, meanwhile other alternatives are kept out of the discourse, at least until victory seems probable. In addition, much focus is on treaty and institution, and interest fades as soon as the war is over.

In Peace Journalism, Jake Lynch and Annabel McGoldrick expand on Galtung's theory of Peace- and War Journalism. Like Galtung, they argue that most reporting inadvertently function as an agent of war, not least by serving as an outlet for one of the key elements of war journalism; propaganda. Much information reaches the media through parties involved in

7 Galtung, Johan (2007) pgs 7-9
8 Lynch and McGoldrick (2005) pgs 33-48
9 Galtung, Johan (2007) pgs 8-9
the conflict and, where media representation and public perception is important, that information may not be accurate.  

Lynch and McGoldrick identifies six war fueling 'claims' that are recurrent in war propaganda in the US. These claims in turn mirror six criteria that must be met before the US public condone their country going to war.

'We are under threat.' This threat may be a rogue leader in possession of dangerous weapons, such as Saddam Hussein.

'We have the support of.' Military allies to share responsibility and expenses seem to be important, as is the support of the international community and preferably also a repressed population in the land in question.

'We are taking on “evil-doers”.' Evidence of wicked crimes having been committed by leaders. The propaganda usually fails to examine the extent of such crimes.

'We are left with no alternative.' Diplomatic strategies have been exhausted, the 'rogue leader' or regime is unwilling to accept a peaceful solution. War is the only option.

'We must save them.' A sense of taking a stand against evil, saving the population from its cruel leader or bringing peace to a region are commonly propagated incentives.

'We must act now.' Lack of time to act with peaceful means due to some imminent threat or ongoing atrocities.

It should be noted that these 'claims' have been found to be relevant in the US. It may well be that UK and Israeli citizens value different factors and, consequently, that other 'claims' would be more relevant in convincing them that military action is necessary.

3.3 Peace Journalism

As a contrast, this mode is Peace/conflict-oriented. Rather than just focusing on the conflict arena, it seeks to explore how the conflict arose in the first place. It recognizes that there are often more than two parties to a conflict and that a favorable solution is one in which all are winners.

Context is vital to understand the outbreak of a conflict (which should not be seen as an isolated event). Instead, causes, issues and goals can often be traced back through history. By focusing only on the ongoing conflict, reporting is more likely to fuel further violence.

11 Lynch and McGoldrick (2005) pgs 95-97
Culture can also be an important factor, by allowing room in news reporting for a greater understanding of the cultural context, what had originally seemed like ‘strange’ behavior from one party may become more understandable.

This kind of reporting is proactive in that it strives to reduce the risk of an outbreak of violence through prevention, rather than waiting for something to happen before making news of it. It also recognizes less visible effects of war such as cultural damage and emotional traumas, aspects that are often left out in war-oriented journalism.

Whereas war journalism often serves to make a conflict opaque, peace journalism seeks to make it transparent. All parties to the conflict is given room in the reporting and efforts are made to facilitate understanding and promote empathy between groups. Rather than dehumanizing one party, it aims at humanizing all parties. If war journalism intensify dehumanization strategies to correspond with perceived levels of threat, peace journalism attempts to reduce the threat by humanizing actors.

Efforts to expose lies and unravel cover-ups on all sides makes peace journalism truth-oriented. It is also people-oriented, highlighting suffering across all levels of society, likewise, evil-doers are exposed regardless of which party they belong to. In addition, a voice is given to grass root peace-makers.

Finally, the reporting is solution-oriented. Ideally, conflicts can be contained and resolved before becoming violent. Where this is not possible, peace journalism empathizes creativity in conflict resolution and the fact that conflicts can come to an end without one side winning and the other side loosing. Moreover, media coverage should not cease once direct hostilities are no longer evident. Reporting should focus on patterns of structural- and cultural violence often evident in the aftermath of conflict. Media should also take a role in the reconciliation process.12

The theoretical frameworks of Galtung, Lynch and McGoldrick will provide the foci of the analysis.

Ontologically and epistemologically, these theories adhere to the same perspectives as poststructuralism, emphasis being on how we construct our reality through discourse and therefore, competing truths are bound to exist, often resulting in the marginalization of discourses that are not dominant. They also highlight the importance of deconstructing

12 Galtung, Johan (2007) pgs 8-9
discourses (or specifically, news texts) in order to understand how a particular meaning is created.\(^\text{13}\)

In studying the prevalence of WJ, the six 'war claims' of Lynch and McGoldrick's model provide a very concrete set of terms to be on the lookout for. While no equivalent set of indicators have been developed for PJ, Lynch and McGoldrick provide many examples of how it might look in practice.

Galtung's model of Peace-and War journalism provides a broader framework. Further, it merges theories from the field of conflict studies with theories from the field of media studies. Many of the properties of peace journalism, as well as war journalism, correspond with ideas of reconciliation, identity and conflict resolution.

Naturally, these theories lend themselves well to discourse analysis. If the chosen method had been something else, they may not have been as suited. There are competing theories on media influence, one example being The Propaganda Model which suggests that news is best viewed as propaganda from the media owning class, a way for elites to advance their own interests at the expense of the weak and less privileged.\(^\text{14}\) Such a theory might have been interesting if the aim of this paper was to understand media behavior, but this paper is more concerned with the construction of media output where it concerns conflicts and the presumed prevalence of war journalism.

PJ is, however, not without its critics. Thomas Hanitzsch, for example, argues that proponents of peace journalism tend to ignore nuances in journalism and use extreme cases to illustrate war journalism. Moreover, he believes that they often exaggerate the influence that media has on policy makers and underestimate the public rather than seeing them as critical consumers of news media.\(^\text{15}\)

4. Method

4.1 Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical discourse analysis (CDA), like all models of discourse analysis, is a method for the systematic study of discourses. Moreover, CDA sees discourse not merely as written or


\(^{15}\) Hanitzsch, Thomas (2007) Situating peace journalism in journalism studies: a critical appraisal. Conflict and Communication Online. Vol. 6, No. 2
spoken language, but as a social practice. As such, discourses cannot be studied without regard for the context in which they exist. Discourses are framed by the society—or culture—in which they occur, but are also seen as being able to influence or change that environment. According to CDA then, media discourse on conflict will not only be framed by the society or culture in which it is produced, but it may also be able to influence that society in turn. By this reasoning, the prevalence of war-oriented or peace-oriented journalism should have an effect upon how the society in question views a certain conflict.

Norman Fairclough distinguishes between three types of discourse; text, discursive practice and discourse as a social practice. Discursive practice refers to the way in which a text is produced, distributed and consumed, while discourse as a social practice denotes the relationship between text, discursive practice and other discourses as well as non-discursive practices in society. Due to time constraints, the focus of this analysis will primarily be on text.

The advantage of a CDA method of analysis over that of a content analysis is that it allows for interpretations of the meanings of texts rather than simply counting the recurrence of certain features in a text and drawing meaning from this. In other words, CDA is concerned with both the explicit and implicit meanings of a text. Naturally, any method that relies on interpretation—which, CDA proponents argue, is by necessity subjective—can be subject to criticism. For this reason, it is especially important that the method of analysis is transparent, thus allowing readers to understand how meanings are derived from the studied texts.

4.2 Data

To study the prevalence of War and Peace Journalism in conflict reporting this analysis will focus on editorial articles (leading articles, leaders) on the topic of Iran's nuclear program published during a six month period between November 2011 and April 2012.

While many case studies on WR have focused on violent conflicts—and often past conflicts rather than ongoing conflicts—it might be interesting to analyze the reporting on a conflict of which the outcome is still uncertain. Mainly, it could allow for a more general discussion of WJ and PJ characteristics in the studied texts. Consequently, the chosen case

17 Bergström & Borèus (2005) pgs. 307-308
also eliminates any opportunity to draw conclusions on the cause and effect relationship between the prevalence of PJ, WJ and the outcome of a conflict. This is, however, not a focus of this study and therefore not a relevant argument against the chosen case.


Editorials for analysis have been collected by visiting the website of each paper and – utilizing the websites search function – perform a search on the key words 'Iran' and 'editorial' or, for the UK papers, 'leaders'. Where such an option was available, the search was modified to limit displayed results to articles published during the selected time period.

All displayed results were read and evaluated according to their perceived relevance for the case study. More specifically, articles dealing directly with the subject of Iran's nuclear program were prioritized over articles that only partly focused on this subject, and articles without any discernible relevance were dismissed. This process yielded a selection of between six and twelve editorials from each newspaper. From this sample, five articles were selected from each newspaper – again, based on their perceived relevance for the case study – for analysis.

The decision to analyze editorials was made primarily for two reasons. First, it provides a focus category, drastically limiting the number of articles to be considered and, consequently, the amount of time needed to compile available data and select a sample for analysis.

Second, unlike other forms of newspaper reporting – where objectivity is explicitly desirable –, editorials are often concerned with expressing opinions. It is not uncommon for editorials to go beyond merely describing events, processes and actors involved, often taking it upon themselves to evaluate, caution against, and/or make recommendations on specific topics.19 According to Teun A. van Dijk, editorials fill an important function in the shaping of public opinion and discourse. Further, as editorials typically appear unsigned, they are seen to reflect the institutional view – or ideological position – of the newspaper as a whole rather than the personal opinion of the author.20

It should be noted that there are potential disadvantages to study editorials rather than ordinary news reports. Primarily, it may to some extent deprive the analysis of the potential to describe how reporting on conflict inadvertently serves as a war-fueling component, precisely because the purpose of editorials is to express opinion. On the other hand, one aim of this analysis is to go beyond overt opinions to unveil hidden meanings in the text. In this way, the analysis may still highlight how a certain meaning is constructed and purported, whether it is done intentionally or not.

The selection of newspapers – from which editorials have been drawn – was prompted in part by practical reasons. Crucially, it had to be English language newspapers that offer online access to articles. Since the method of this study is CDA, in which language becomes meaningful even at a micro level, it did not seem appropriate to attempt to translate texts for analysis as meaning can be lost (or added) in the process. For this reason, all sampled text are in their original language.

The selection of countries was also based on an anticipated interest in Iran's nuclear program. Granted, one could argue that a host of countries (if not most) have an interest in matters concerning nuclear weapons. Since, however, this analysis will focus on conflict related aspects of reporting and Galtung's theory that journalism is predominantly war oriented, and as such favors war over peaceful alternatives, newspapers from the US, UK and Israel have been selected because it seems reasonable to assume that those nations will have a considerable influence on the eventual outcome. Assuming that media can indeed influence public opinion, and that public opinion has an effect on policy, editorial discourses in those countries may be of special interest.

Following the same argument, the selected newspapers can be assumed to have a relatively high influence on public opinion. This is due in part to wide circulation and in part to its readership, which include policy makers and other influential individuals. The Jerusalem Post is an exception in that, although it is regarded as an influential newspaper in Israel, it has a relatively low daily circulation.21

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5. Analytical Tools

The features of Galtung's model for peace and war journalism, combined with Lynch & McGoldrick's outline of war propaganda characteristics, will provide a direction as well as a broader framework for analysis. In order to structure the analysis, however, a set of tools and concepts will be borrowed from the field of linguistics to create a schema for textual analysis.

5.1 Lexical Analysis

At a micro level, textual analysis is concerned with the choice of words and the connoted and denoted meaning of those words. Just as journalists make a choice on what to report on, they also choose how to report on a specific event. According to CDA, one factor that is likely to effect those choices is the dominant discourse – or ideology – to which the producer of the text adheres, often resulting in a text that echoes the value judgements of that particular society. Take as an example this leading sentence from an article in The Sun.

“AMERICA sent a stark warning to Iran last night after the rogue nation threatened to cut off the world’s oil.”

First of all, the choice of nouns to describe the actions of the two parties is of some interest, note that America 'warns' while Iran 'threatens'. If you continue reading the article, you find out that Iran has 'threatened' to block the Strait of Hormuz in protest of new U.S sanctions aimed at restricting the nations oil exports, and that the US 'warns' that no such blockade will be tolerated. What we need to ask ourselves is why one action is described as a threat while the other is described a warning?

Another constituent of textual analysis is concerned with naming and reference. Names and labels ascribed to a person can have a great effect on how he or she is perceived. Further, naming places the individual within one category and, consequently, excludes him or her from other categories to which he or she may also belong. Referential strategies denotes to the way a certain meaning is created, and a certain understanding promoted, through naming and reference.

Predication, and predicational strategies, refers to the choice of words used to assign

23 Tom Newton Dunn. The Sun. US Blasts Iran's threat to cut of the world's oil. Published 2011-12-29
characteristics and values to people, objects, events and so on. Looking back to the example from The Sun, Iran is described as a 'rogue nation'. Arguably, many other modifiers could have been used to describe Iran, but the author of the article choose to assign it with a decidedly negative attribute.

5.2 Sentence Construction

Transitivity is the way in which transpired events are recounted. This includes actor/actors involved in the process, the relationship between actors and what role they played in the process. Of special interest here is the construction – or syntax – of the clause. In an active construction, the subject (agent) appears before the object in the construction: 'Iran threatened America'. In a passive construction, the object appears before the subject: 'America was threatened by Iran'. Another construction that frequently appears in reporting is what is called actor deletion: 'America was threatened'. Such a construction lets us know what happened to whom (or what) but not who did it. Consequently, it also fails to assign any responsibility.

Analyzing modality is highly relevant when studying editorials and other forms of reporting that – rather than simply reporting an event – offers judgement, comment or a proposed course of action. Modality refers to the level of commitment the producer of a text has towards a claim or expressed proposition. Another example from the article quoted above:

“It would almost certainly lead to war as the West would have no option but to keep the 34-mile wide passage open by force to keep the oil — a fifth of the world’s supply — flowing.”

Referring to Iran's threat to block the Strait of Hormuz, the author expresses two propositions. First, that 'it would almost certainly lead to war', and then that 'the West would have no option'. Both is an example of truth modality, the author claims that if x happens it will lead to y, his commitment to that claim is expressed by the modal verbs and adverbs used: 'would almost certainly' is a form of hedging while 'would' is categorical. Another from of modality, obligation modality, refers to the way in which an author argue that a certain course of action

26 Richardson, John E. (2007) p. 54-55
27 Ibid. pgs. 59-62
28 Tom Newton Dunn. Published 2011-12-29
should or shouldn't be taken: ought to, must, should, mustn't, shouldn't etc.\textsuperscript{29}

Presupposition refers to hidden or presupposed meanings in texts\textsuperscript{30}. Returning to the same article from The Sun:

“President Obama is set to authorise biting measures aimed at Tehran’s oil and gas revenues for the first time – as part of the stand-off over the country’s bid to build up a nuclear arsenal.”\textsuperscript{31}

This sentence presupposes – or takes for granted - that Iran is attempting to develop and stock up on nuclear weapons.

5.3 Rhetoric
Like other forms of text, journalistic texts use rhetorical strategies to create meaning and to convince readers that their view or purported version of an event is the most correct. Hyperbole, metaphor, metonym, neologism and puns are examples of so-called rhetorical tropes.\textsuperscript{32}

5.4 Narrative
There are primarily two aspects of news narratives, narrative content and narrative form. Narrative content is how an event originally happened. Unlike fictional narratives, events in real life rarely follows a classic beginning-middle-end narrative structure, mostly because they tend to lack a definite resolution or ending. In news narratives the story is often separated into three structures; setting, event and outcome. Narrative form is the way in which the story is presented to the reader. Articles often follow the inverted pyramid structure, starting with the event (or climax) before moving on to setting and finally outcome. In hard news – that is, news dealing with serious topics or events – the first paragraph is often used to answer the Who? What? Why? Where? When? questions. In less serious news reporting, the 'W-questions' are sometimes held off until the second paragraph, presumably in

\textsuperscript{29} Richardson, John E. (2007) p. 59-60
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid. pgs. 62-63
\textsuperscript{31} Tom Newton Dunn. Published 2011-12-29
\textsuperscript{32} Richardson, John E. (2007) p. 64-70
6. Iran's nuclear program: a brief introduction

With the expressed intent of producing nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, Iran started constructions on its first nuclear facility at Bushehr in the 1970s.\textsuperscript{34} That same year, it ratified the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).\textsuperscript{35} The aim of NPT is to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and nuclear weapons technology while allowing states to share technology and develop nuclear power for peaceful purposes. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) functions as a safeguard to ensure that all parties comply with the conditions of the treaty.\textsuperscript{36}

The revolution of 1979 and the eight year long war with Iraq put a halt to the construction of Iran's nuclear facilities. At the end of the war Iran sought to resume constructions but soon found that its former partners, France and Germany, were no longer prepared to cooperate. The nuclear project was eventually resumed with assistance from Russia. The US, which strongly opposed Iran's nuclear program, made repeated attempts to persuade Russia to go back on deal. Even so – after much delay – the plant at Bushehr was activated 2010 and ready to start delivering electricity the following year.\textsuperscript{37}

The world's attention landed on Iran's nuclear program in 2002 after the National Council of Resistance Iran (NCRI), an oppositional group belonging to People's Mujahedin of Iran, presented evidence of two new nuclear facilities having been constructed in Iran without the knowledge of the IAEA. Moreover, the NCRI claimed that these new facilities were part of a nuclear weapons program. They had no evidence to support the latter claim however, and the Iranian government denied the existence of a nuclear weapons program, maintaining that the new facilities where intended for peaceful purposes.\textsuperscript{38} Nonetheless, the IAEA has often been dissatisfied with Iran's level of cooperation, fueling suspicions that a weapons program is under way. The UN security council has passed four resolutions relating to Iran's nuclear program. The first came in december of 2006 and demanded that Iran cease all uranium

\textsuperscript{33} Richardson, John E. (2007) p. 71-74
\textsuperscript{34} Landguiden. Irans kärnteknikprogram. Landguiden.se (retrieved 2012-05-20)
\textsuperscript{35} Izadi, Foad and Saghaie-Biria (2007) p. 145
\textsuperscript{37} Landguiden. Iran: Naturtillgångar och energi. Landguiden.se (retrieved 2012-05-20)
\textsuperscript{38} Izadi, Foad and Saghaie-Biria (2007) p. 146
enrichment. When Iran failed to comply, a new resolution was passed in 2007, imposing sanctions against Iran that included freezing the assets of organizations and individuals believed to be involved with the nuclear program. Successive resolutions have expanded those sanctions, among other things imposing a weapons embargo and freezing the assets of Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps.\textsuperscript{39} Meanwhile, the United States and European Union has imposed additional – mostly financial – sanctions. Crucially, sanctions have been directed at Iran's oil industry, the country's main source of revenue.\textsuperscript{40} In its February 2012 report, the IAEA stated that “The Agency continues to have serious concerns regarding possible military dimensions to Iran’s nuclear programme. . .”\textsuperscript{41} On April 14, the five permanent members of the security council and Germany (P5+1) met with Iran in Istanbul to discuss concerns regarding the nuclear program and, while no new agreement was reached on the issue, a date for further talks was set to May 23.\textsuperscript{42}

7. Analysis and Empirical Findings

7.1 Israel

The Jerusalem Post

In the five editorials taken from The Jerusalem Post (TJP), published between December 2011 and April 2012, four characteristics of War Propaganda are evident in all articles.

The claim 'We are under threat' typically appears in one of two forms. In the first form, the

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{39} Regeringen. Bakgrund till Sanktionerna. \url{http://www.regeringen.se/sb/d/9364/a/179143} (retrieved 2012-05-22)
\bibitem{40} Regeringen. Bakgrund till Sanktionerna, and
\end{thebibliography}
editorial argues that Israel is under threat from Iran.

“Also, because of our geographical proximity to Iran, we in Israel feel all the more vulnerable. This feeling is amplified by the fact that we are in a constant state of conflict with terrorist organizations that are Iranian proxies – Hamas on our southern border and Hezbollah to our north.”

In the other form, the editorial argues that Iran is a threat not just to Israel but to much of the western world and the Middle East as well.

One article, titled *Iran's tentacles*, starts off by mentioning the February 13 terrorist attacks on Israeli diplomats in New Delhi and Tbilisi, describing these attacks as having been “. . . orchestrated by Iran's mullah regime with the help of its proxy Hezbollah. . .” The editorial in question was published on February 14, and Iran has stated that it had no part in the attacks.

The article then goes on to describe other “murderous attacks” that it accredits to Iran and Hezbollah, like the 1983 bombing of military barracks in Beirut in which 299 American and French servicemen died (although, according to the former US Secretary of Defense, Caspar Weinberger, it has never been established who was responsible for the attacks). More recent examples are also presented, such as Iran's Revolutionary Guard “murdering US troops” in Iraq, and Iran having “joined forces” with Syria's Bashar Assad. The article concludes that “it has become abundantly clear that Iran is a menace to the West”.

The second claim, 'We have the support of', is most often evident where the editorials argue that – in the event of an Israeli attack on Iran – the US will support Israel.

“In his keynote speech to AIPAC on Sunday, US President Barack Obama sought to dispel any doubts about his resolve to prevent Iran's mullah's from obtaining a nuclear weapon.”

“US President Barack Obama has made it clear on numerous occasions that with

43 JPOST EDITORIAL: *Iran and Israel's fate*. Published 2012-03-06
44 JPOST EDITORIAL: *Iran's tentacles*. Published 2012-02-14
46 JPOST EDITORIAL: *Iran's tentacles*. Published 2012-02-14
47 JPOST EDITORIAL: *Obama and Iran*. Published 2012-03-02
regard to stopping Iran, “all options are on the table.” In recent days, his message has become more emphatic.”

While such excerpts may give the impression that the editorials are confident in the matter, the articles show signs to the contrary, with much space being allocated to arguing why it is in Obama's interest to go to war with Iran.

The 'We are taking on evil-doers' claim is partly evident in such articles as the one quoted above, in which Iran's past and current offenses, especially those drawing links between Iran and terrorist organizations, are described. But there are examples where Iran's internal affairs are criticized, such as in the following quote where the editorial argues why a recent attack on the British embassy in Tehran must have been state-sponsored: “Anarchy would never be tolerated in a capital rife with secret police, where torture is prevalent, as are public executions and corporal punishments.

On a micro level, the claim is manifest in the predicational-, naming- and referential strategies used: “rouge regime”, “Iranian regime”, “Iran's mullah regime”, “Iran's ayatollah regime”, “anxious and stultified theocracy”, “maniacal enemies such as Iran”. Use of the word 'regime', in this context, seems designed to generate negative connotations. Further, the various religious references used may serve to place Iran within a certain category which separates it from the West.

Finally, the 'We must act now' claim is prevalent in all of the sampled editorials. The urgency for action sometimes – at least explicitly – refers to the economic sanctions against Iran, and the importance of all countries joining in imposing these sanctions. Referring to Swiss reluctance to impose an oil embargo, one editorial argues “Neutrality cannot possibly justify inaction in the face of evil; Inaction can be tantamount to complicity.” In the same article, however, the sanctions are referred to as “doubtfully adequate measures” and “feeble strictures”.

48 JPOST EDITORIAL: Iran and Israel's fate. Published 2012 -03-06
49 JPOST EDITORIAL: Confronting Iran. Published 2011-12-03
50 JPOST EDITORIAL: The Swiss and Iran. Published 2012-04-21
51 JPOST EDITORIAL: Obama and Iran. Published 2012-03-02
52 JPOST EDITORIAL: Iran's tentacles. Published 2012-02-14
53 JPOST EDITORIAL: Confronting Iran. Published 2011-12-03
54 Ibid.
55 JPOST EDITORIAL: Iran and Israel's fate. Published 2012 -03-06
56 JPOST EDITORIAL: The Swiss and Iran. Published 2012-04-21
Further, while the US wants to wait and see if diplomacy, sanctions and covert actions will have an effect, for Israel, such a timetable "stretches beyond the time frame in which we in Israel feel it is imperative to act in our own defense".\(^{57}\)

Keeping such statements in mind, one could argue that there are instances where the 'We must act now' claim might have been better categorized as a 'We are left with no alternative' claim. Certainly, while the editorials do not fail to bring up the sanctions, the impression one is left with is that the sanctions are bound to fail and, consequently, the implicit meanings of the texts seem to stand in contrast to the overt content. A further example of this, referring to the attacks in New Delhi and Tbilisi:

"A fierce Western response to these attacks, in contrast, would send a counter-message to the mullahs in Tehran: Just as tentacles can spread out, they can also be amputated."\(^{58}\)

Arguably, the metaphor (Iran's ability to orchestrate terror attacks around the world being likened to 'tentacles') seems to suggest a more violent response than economic sanctions.

In addition to these four war claims (indicative of war propaganda) there are three more characteristics that could classify the editorial sample from TJP as WJ. First, the articles clearly distinguish between 'us' and 'them' and appear entirely uncritical of Israels actions while assigning much blame on Iran. Second, it is elite-oriented in that it highlights the international community, especially the US, as the only viable peace-maker. Finally, it is victory-oriented because rather than considering reconciliatory solutions or a win-win outcome, it relies on treaty and controlled society, i.e. economic sanctions.

The only characteristic of PJ that is prevalent is prevention, although the sole source of such journalism in the editorials is the mention of sanctions. Again, it's questionable to what extent the articles are – in any sincere fashion – highlighting the sanctions as a viable alternative to violence.

Moreover, it can be argued whether economic sanctions should be considered a peaceful solution to conflicts. Crucially, economic sanctions can have severe repercussions for

\(^{57}\) JPOST EDITORIAL: *Iran and Israel's fate*. Published 2012-03-06
\(^{58}\) JPOST EDITORIAL: *Iran's tentacles*. Published 2012-02-14
civilians, as was the case in Iraq. Even so, an editorial preference for sanctions (over military action) will be classified as PJ in this analysis. That said, it is still far from indisputable whether TJP should qualify. On a whole, the editorial sample could be classified as war-oriented.

**Haaretz**

The sample of editorials from Haaretz (published between February and April 2012) exhibits mainly one war claim, 'We are under threat'. It should be stressed, however, that such claims in Haaretz are expressed more cautiously than in TJP. For example:

> “Israel does not believe, perhaps rightly so, in the power of diplomacy to remove the Iranian threat. . . . The threat of attack, even if not real, has already raised international support for imposing unprecedented sanctions on Iran, while at the same time accelerating the diplomatic process.”

Suggesting that the Iranian threat can be removed is a presupposition in that it implicitly assumes that there is an Iranian threat. However, the second part of the excerpt – drawn from the same paragraph – seems to indicate that the threat posed by Iran is not necessarily believed to be military. Another article poses the question:

> “Does Iran truly intend to use nuclear technology for military purposes, or do its leaders recognize that the international response to such a development could jeopardize its very survival?”

This may be indicative of a more critical journalistic approach, calling into question whether an attack on Israel is even in Iran's interest. The article proceeds with a statement from the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Martin E. Dempsey “. . . Iran is a rational actor that considers the political implications of its actions. . . “

Whereas TJP refers to Iran as (among other things) a maniacal enemy, rogue regime and

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59 Global Issues - Effects of Iraq Sanctions  
60 Haaretz Editorial. Israel has to give Iran nuclear talks a chance. Published 2012-04-12  
61 Haaretz Editorial. Israel must listen to U.S. Warnings against Iran attack. Published 2012-02-20  
62 Ibid.
menace to the West – thus indicating that Iran is irrational and thereby dangerous/unpredictable – Haaretz' editorials seem to at least entertain the idea that Iran is rational, a stance exemplified by the choice to quote Dempsey's statement. In conclusion, the 'We are under threat' claims are perhaps better described here as more moderate 'We might be under threat' claims.

Both TJP and Haaretz published an editorial on May 5th, the day after Obama's speech before the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC). These editorials provide an interesting example of how the ideology of the newspaper may have an effect on how the same event – in this case a speech – is presented or framed. Here follows the two first paragraphs of both editorials, first TJP and then Haaretz:

"Stopping Iran is a cardinal interest of the US, the Middle East and the entire world. It's not just about Israel. In his keynote speech to AIPAC on Sunday, US president Barack Obama sought to dispel any doubts about his resolve to prevent Iran's mullahs from obtaining a nuclear weapon."

"Israel would do well to internalize an important statement by Obama: 'As president and commander in chief, I have a deeply held preference for peace over war'. . . Speaking at the annual conference of AIPAC / . . / the U.S leader urged everyone to set the war drums aside."

Obama's speech did contain the elements of both excerpts, but since the speech is much longer than an average editorial, the newspapers had to make a choice on which parts of the speech to highlight in their article. Clearly, their priorities differ. Moreover, as a reader, interpretations of Obama's intentions would likely depend on – or at least be influenced by – which of the two editorials is read. The Haaretz article goes on to mention that while Obama is still committed to Israel's peace and security, he would only consider using military force if, or when, all else has failed.

While both editorials claim to have the support of the U.S., Haaretz argues that such

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63 JPOST EDITORIAL: Obama and Iran. Published 2012-03-02
64 Haaretz Editorial. Israel would be wise to listen to Obama's advice on Iran. Published 2012-03-05
66 Haaretz Editorial. Israel would be wise to listen to Obama's advice on Iran. Published 2012-03-05
support is an opportunity to give diplomacy a chance. TJP, on the other hand, seems to view it primarily as military support, and perhaps as the US giving Israel leave to attack Iran, should it deem an attack necessary. Meanwhile, a different Haaretz editorial claims that the world powers “fear an Israeli attack no less than the Iranian nuclear weapon”.

In order to be classified as being peace/conflict-oriented, reporting should, ideally, explore conflict formation. The Haaretz editorials fail to do this, and – while they do not demonize Iran – neither do they make any discernible effort to promote empathy and understanding between Israel and Iran. Where Iran is concerned, the articles appear quite neutral, refraining from name-calling, and appealing to Iran's rationality. Naturally, this is a considerable improvement from how Iran is portrayed in TJP.

Interestingly, Haaretz does not shy away from criticizing Israel, or at least its leaders. Referring to a speech by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, in which he draws parallels between the current situation with Iran and that of European jews during World War II, one header reads: “Israel must not bind itself to Netanyahu's vulgar rhetoric on Iran.”

Drawing light to such propaganda, and questioning the motifs of Netanyahu for making such comparisons, should classify the article as truth-oriented. Further, the article argues that the speech was a threat to Israel's security by narrowing the diplomatic window.

There are more examples of the editorials questioning their own government, among other things, pointing out that the the conflict with Iran has pushed the Palestinian conflict into the background. One editorial, titled 'Israel wants Iran isolated but instead isolates itself', argues that boycotting the UN Human Rights Council – rather than allowing it to investigate allegations of systematic violations of human rights – is suspect behavior from a state that claims to seek peace.

In conclusion, the editorial sample from Haaretz can not be classified as WJ. It shows a strong preference for a non-violent solution to the conflict, and counters what it sees as inadequate arguments for military action, thereby contributing anti-war elements to the discourse. Whether it should be classified as PJ is another matter. It does tick a few boxes, but PJ requires more of reporting than an absence of WJ. By this standard, the sample is lacking. Most notably, no effort is made to explore conflict formation. One article argues that Iran is rational actor and therefore unlikely to use nuclear weapons, but although Iran is seen as

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67 Haaretz Editorial. Israel has to give Iran nuclear talks a chance. Published 2012-04-12
68 Haaretz Editorial. Israel must not bind itself to Netanyahu's vulgar rhetoric on Iran. Published 2012-03-09
69 Haaretz Editorial. Israel would be wise to listen to Obama's advice on Iran. Published 2012-03-05
70 Haaretz Editorial. Israel wants Iran isolated, but instead isolates itself. Published 2012-03-28
wanting to attack Israel, there is no mention of why – repercussion aside – it would want to do so. In this sense, the conflict is isolated in time. Granted, the sample only consists of five articles and it may well be that such information is considered redundant for the newspaper's intended audience, but just the same it becomes problematic to – based on this sample – classify the Haaretz editorials as practicing PJ.

7.2 The United States

The Washington Post
In the Washington Post (TWP) editorials, published between December 9 and April 12, there are very few explicit war claims. The word 'threat' only appears in one editorial which describes the “The flurry of initiatives and threats”\(^{71}\) launched by Iran in response to tightened sanctions, and even then it goes on to argue that such threats are implausible. This is not to say, however, that the idea of Iran as a threat is not purported. The prospect of a nuclear armed Iran – and its process of becoming nuclear – is a returning feature of the editorials.

For example, the above mentioned 'initiatives and threats', it is speculated, might be an intentional distraction, designed to keep the world powers occupied while Iran launches its new enrichment plant, Fordow. The dramatic qualities of the narrative form here is particularly interesting, the tone is notably ominous and the Fordow facility is sometimes portrayed more as an actor than as an object. Referring to the risks of delaying further sanctions, the editorial hypothesizes that it would “buy time for the Fordow centrifuges to do their work.”\(^{72}\) The general narrative alters between the 'Fordow narrative' and arguments why the Obama administration should not make any concessions. In this sense, the editorial is implying that there is a looming threat, without ever saying as much.

Overtly, the newspaper is very clear on where it stands, stating that: “We continue to believe that military action against Iran, by Israel or the United States, is not yet necessary or wise.”\(^{73}\) The main argument why military action 'is not yet necessary or wise' is the possibility that the economic sanctions will have their intended effect, forcing Iranian leaders to back down and stop all uranium enrichment. Criticizing the Obama administration and Defense

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71 The Washington Post Editorial Board. *The U.S needs to intensify sanctions on Iran*. Published 2012-01-11
72 Ibid.
73 The Washington Post Editorial Board. *The U.S.-Israeli trust gap on Iran*. Published 2012-02-15
Secretary Leon Panetta for publicly voicing his objections to a U.S. or Israeli strike on Iran – and his concerns that such an attack, by Israel, might be imminent –, the editorial goes on:

“. . . they should be more clearly spelling out U.S willingness to take military action if Iran is discovered taking steps toward bomb-making / . . . / Saying 'all options are on the table' is not enough; the Obama administration should be explicit about Iranian actions that will violate its red lines – and what the consequences will be.”

TWP objects to such spelling out of concerns publicly because it fears that “alarmed Iranian leaders could well conclude that they have no reason to fear after all.” Naturally, not voicing such concerns publicly would entail concealing to the public important arguments why military action might not be a good solution to the conflict, potentially leaving the public with the impression that a U.S. military strike on Iran would be a fairly uncomplicated, swift solution. Such concealment serves to make conflicts opaque and secret, which is characteristic of WJ.

While TWP believes that the success or failure of the nuclear talks should determine whether military action is necessary or not, its criteria for what might be regarded as a successful outcome is relatively set, insisting that Iran comply with the UN resolutions demanding that it cease all uranium enrichment. The level of pessimism in the editorials – regarding the possibility of such an outcome – is quite striking.

When it seemed clear that the U.S. would agree to resume negotiations on the nuclear issue with Iran in February, TWP published an article titled The test of talking to Iran. First, the title itself suggests that such a simple thing as 'talking' to Iran might not be possible. Granted, although it was Iran that requested these new talks, it had refused to discuss its nuclear program during a meeting held in January of 2011. The editorial reads “The immediate question is whether Iran is using diplomacy – as it has several times before – as a way of buying time, even as it presses ahead with steps towards a bomb.” It proceeds to report that “Fortunately, a test of Iran's seriousness was under way this week”. This test,

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74 The Washington Post Editorial Board. The U.S.-Israeli trust gap on Iran. Published 2012-02-15
75 The Washington Post Editorial Board. The wrong signals to Iran. Published 2011-12-09
76 The Washington Post Editorial Board. A test of talking to Iran. Published 2012-02-22
77 Ibid.
78 Ibid.
79 Ibid.
apparently, came in the form of an IAEA inspection, which the WTP describes as having ended in “another Iranian failure to cooperate”. In other words, Iran failed 'the test', suggesting that Iran is still unreasonable and that the new talks are likely to fail as well.

Another article, published one day before the April 13 talks in Istanbul, is titled *A last chance for a deal with Iran on nuclear weapons?* There are two interesting elements to this title. First, such a 'deal' would likely not be on 'nuclear weapons' but on Iran's nuclear program. Moreover, it implies that Iran is already in possession of nuclear weapons. Second, although it is punctuated by a question mark, the title suggests that this may be the last chance for a peaceful settlement of the issue. It continues “If Tehran again refuses to make concessions, and continues to press ahead with uranium enrichment / . . . / military action by Israel or the United States may become inevitable” It can be argued under what circumstances a military attack is 'inevitable'. As if a military attack would be a natural consequence, rather than an action that requires initiation and active participation by at least one actor. Either way, the editorial concludes: “For better or for worse, the chances the regime will meet Mr. Obama's terms don't look good” Obama's terms, in this context, refers to deal in which both Iran and the U.S would make concessions. A deal that TWP fears may prove counterproductive.

To summarize, TWP does not believe that military action is necessary yet because the economic sanctions could force Iran's leaders to comply with UN resolutions. At the same time, the editorials appear rather confident that the negotiations will be unsuccessful. In this way – while readily observable arguments favor sanctions over military action – the broader discourse in the editorial sample is largely dismissive of the diplomatic effort. Although TWP has not claimed that 'We are left with no alternative', the implicit meaning suggests that it is only a matter of time. Further, the impression one is left with after reading the sample is that a non-military solution is preferable – so long as Iran is the only actor forced to make any concessions.

Worth nothing, however, is that the articles appear mildly preoccupied with criticizing the Obama administration. Referring again to the administration's expressed concerns regarding a possible military strike, one editorial reads:

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80 Ibid.
81 The Washington Post Editorial Board. *A last chance for a deal with Iran on nuclear weapons?* Published 2012-04-12
82 Ibid.
83 Ibid.
“In effect, it is signaling that it is determined to prevent an Iranian nuclear weapon – unless it means taking military or diplomatic risks, or paying an economic price.”

It may well be that ideological differences predisposes contrasting views on conflict, but even so - considering how elements of the discourse may be influenced by partisan loyalties could be relevant here. In other words: is a particular argument made to promote a certain view of the conflict, or is it made to undermine the Obama administration?

In conclusion, although TWP is openly against military action, it exhibits very few signs of PJ (and even those are highly debatable). Similarly, what war claims are present are mostly covert. Unlike the editorials of TJP, however, one does not get the sense that TWP is actively promoting military action. Neither does it appear to be promoting peace, especially since the prospect of a nuclear armed Iran is regarded as more daunting than the prospect of a war.

The New York Times
The editorial sample from the New York Times (NYT), published between November 9, 2011 and April 16, 2012, shows a similar lack of overt war claims as TWP.

The 'We are under threat claim' may be said to appear in an explicit form, especially if 'we' is seen as encompassing Israel. But there is no sense of imminent threat from Iran, rather it is Iran's nuclear ambitions that are seen as “real and dangerous”. One editorial argues:

“Iran's nuclear appetites are undeniable, as is its malign intent toward Israel, toward America, toward its Arab neighbors and its own people. Israel's threats of unilateral action have finally focused the world's attention on the danger. Still, there must be no illusions about what it would take to seriously damage Iran's nuclear complex, the high costs and limited return.”

First, in this excerpt, it becomes quite clear that the NYT regards Iran as a 'rogue regime', and a liability to world peace. Further, it appears to applaud Israel's effort to swing the world's

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84 The Washington Post Editorial Board. The wrong signals to Iran. Published 2011-12-09
85 The New York Times Editorial. Trading threats with Iran. Published 2012-02-03
86 The New York Times Editorial. Iran, Israel and the United States. Published 2012-03-05
attention toward the 'danger' posed by Iran. It is, however, a curious sentence in that it might as well be taken to mean that the danger of an Israeli attack on Iran is what has brought the world's attention to the issue.

While the primary concern of the editorial is to argue in favor of further diplomatic efforts, it is no more optimistic than TWP. For example: “We don't know if there is any mix of sanctions and and diplomacy that can persuade Iran's mullahs to abandon their nuclear ambitions.”

87 and “Tehran's recent offer to return to the negotiations is almost certainly another feint, but must be tested.”

88 The NYT does none the less differ from TWP in that it frequently highlights arguments against military action, stressing the uncertain outcome of such an attack, and the likelihood that it would create further contempt for America and Israel around the world. There is, however, no sign of empathy toward Iran. Indeed, one overarching arguments of the editorial sample seems to be that Iran deserves to be attacked, but that the costs would be too high for the U.S. and/or Israel. For example:

“Many officials, experts and commentators increasingly expect some kind of military confrontation. No one should want to see Iran, with its contempt for international law, acquire a nuclear weapon. But a military strike on the nuclear facilities would be a disaster.”

90 In this sense, Iran – or 'them' – is still portrayed as the primary problem. A more peace-oriented view would maintain that war/conflict itself is the main problem. The danger – of promoting the idea of 'the other' as the problem – is that it implicitly suggests that it is this 'other' that must be dealt with, rather than the situation which gave rise to the conflict.

Another point on which the NYT differ from TWP is regarding the desirability of a negotiated deal. One editorial argues that:

“Catherine Ashton, the European Union foreign policy chief, was right to stress a 'step-by-step' approach and reciprocity' if Iran complies with its obligations under

87 The New York Times Editorial. Iran, Israel and the United States. Published 2012-03-05
88 The New York Times Editorial. Iran, Israel and the United States. Published 2012-03-05
89 The New York Times Editorial. The Truth About Iran. Published 2011-11-09
90 The New York Times Editorial. Dangerous Tension With Iran. Published 2012-01-12
the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, including a promise to forgo nuclear weapons.”

Since there seems to be a consensus that Iran is unlikely to cease all uranium enrichment, a more flexible stance on the issue would likely decrease the risk of the negotiations arriving at a deadlock – one where military action may come to be viewed as the only alternative. For this reason, the NYT promoting a negotiated deal might be regarded as a characteristic PJ. Moreover, a deal in which Iran promised to forgo nuclear weapons in return for a lifting of sanctions, and access to nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, could be seen as a win-win resolution of the conflict. That said, the editorials appear moderately interested in a solution in which all are winners. Rather, the negotiations are seen as a tool for avoiding military action, and a deal – involving concessions on both sides – more as a necessary compromise than a desired outcome.

“The major powers need also need to confront Iran's divided leadership by spelling out explicitly a vision for the kinds of diplomatic and economic incentives... that Iran would gain if it gives up its weapons-related nuclear activities.”

The choice of words in the excerpt is interesting. It argues that 'major powers' should 'confront' Iran's leadership by 'explicitly' 'spelling out' what Iran stands to gain. As a result, the tone seems quite forceful, and although it is promoting a variation of a win-win solution; it comes off sounding more like a threat.

In conclusion, the NYT editorial sample is promoting diplomatic efforts and a negotiated deal over military action. Like TWP, however, it does not purport a view that diplomatic efforts will be successful, mainly because Iran's leaders are seen as unreliable or, as one editorial put it “They are masters at diplomatic sleight of hand and have provided ample reason for mistrust”. Moreover, the editorials put a lot of emphasis on Iran, and particularly what it refers to as 'Iran's nuclear ambitions', being dangerous. In this way, although it does not explicitly state that 'we are under threat', it certainly portrays Iran as a threat.

91 The New York Times Editorial. Talking with Iran. Published 2012-04-16
92 The New York Times Editorial. Talking with Iran. Published 2012-04-16
93 Ibid.
7. 3 United Kingdom

The Guardian

The editorial sample from the Guardian (published between November 2, 2011 and March 5, 2012) exhibits no overt claims that could be classified as war propaganda and, what is more – nor does it seem to feature any implicit war claims.

First, it should be noted that The Guardian appears to approach the subject of Iran's nuclear program in a rather pragmatic fashion. One editorial, published in November of 2011, starts with the following reflection:

“How often before have we been at this very crossroads? First comes a flurry of leaks about Iran's nuclear programme, always tending to suggest, without being able to absolutely prove, that Tehran is working to acquire nuclear weapons capacity.”

This is an important observation, and – one might suspect – a pointed reminder. It is no secret that news media, if to a varying extent, favors sensational news. Here, The Guardian seems to caution against jumping on the bandwagon.

Moreover, the editorials seek to explore how concerns regarding Iran's nuclear program went from being a longstanding, low-intensity issue, to a critical point on the international agenda. Referring to Israeli prime minister Benyamin Netanyahu, one article remarks that “The very suspicion of an Iranian bomb programme is framed by the latter as a threat to the state's existence, as if Israel does not possess up 400 nuclear bombs of its own.” The article goes on to argue that Israeli leaders stressing the need to act before the program enters a 'zone of immunity' is a deliberate tactic to move the timeframe for a military attack forward.

Calling out war propaganda serves to make the conflict formation transparent, and illustrates the fact that just because the debate has been intensified, it does not necessarily mean that much has changed with the actual situation.

Where The Guardian differs most from the other newspapers is in its attitude toward Iran's

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94 The Guardian Editorial: Iran: bolting the stable door. Published 2011-11-09
95 The Guardian Editorial. Israel and Iran: straining the leash. Published 2012-03-05
96 Ibid.
nuclear program. One editorial argues:

“An attack on Iran would of course be madness. It really is time to drop the pretense that Iran can be deflected from its nuclear path. It really is time for Iran to drop the pretense that it is not on that path. It really is time for the United States to recognise that there is no military solution. And it really is time for both America and Israel to put aside the idea that they can stop history with high explosives, cyber-attacks, sanctions and assassinations.”\(^{97}\)

In short, while it is inevitable that Iran will become a nuclear power, a war to prevent it is not. The article maintains that any spread of nuclear weapons is undesirable, but that it would be wiser to accept that Iran will become a nuclear power and instead focus on “how a nuclear-capable Iran will fit into the Middle Eastern Security landscape.”\(^{98}\) This is a characteristic of PJ in that it clearly regards the prospect of a war as a greater issue than the possibility of a nuclear armed Iran. Moreover, the article groups sanctions, covert operations and conventional military power in the same category of what it deems as ineffectual methods for changing Iran's course. Arguably, this last sentence could also be taken to mean that violence in general has proved a poor method for achieving positive outcomes. Presenting another argument against sanctions, one editorial – published before the Iranian parliamentary elections on May 2 – argues that further sanctions are likely to win votes for hardliners that support the supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, because he is seen as resisting pressures from the west\(^{99}\) (as it turned out, loyalist did win over 75 percent of seats in the parliament, leaving the slightly more moderate President Ahmadinejad in a weak position\(^{100}\)).

When one article states that “It is hugely important that negotiations are restarted before this nightmare becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy”\(^{101}\), it does not refer to the prospect of Iran achieving nuclear weapons capacity, but to the 'drumbeats' sounding as Britain, The United States and Israel make contingency plans for a possible aerial attack. In another editorial, titled *Iran: stumbling into war*, The Guardian warns that a hardline policy toward Iran – demanding that is cease all uranium enrichment and threatening with military action of it

\(^{97}\) The Guardian Editorial. *Iran: bolting the stable door*. Published 2011-11-09
\(^{98}\) Ibid.
\(^{99}\) The Guardian Editorial. *Iran: time for cool heads*. Published 2012-01-10
\(^{100}\) Reuters, US edition. *Khamenei allies trounce Ahmadinejad in Iran election*. Published 2012-03-04
\(^{101}\) The Guardian Editorial. *Iran: war games*. Published 2012-11-02
does not – is dangerous. The article argues:

“And yet, if you do not believe that sanctions will deter Tehran from its alleged pursuit of nuclear weapons (and this newspaper talked to senior US officials who do not), one judgement inexorably leads to the other.”

In other words, if sanctions and military action are the only options on the table, and the sanctions are likely to fail, military action becomes inevitable. This is an important observation in that it recognizes that if war should ever become inevitable, it is because policy makers made it so. In this way, it highlights actors and assigns responsibility rather portraying the path to war as a natural progression. Moreover, it assigns blame to all parties, instead of purporting a view that Iran deserves to be attacked if it does not cease its nuclear activities.

Further, the Guardian offers the only editorial that includes civilian casualties in Iran on its list of likely consequences of a military strike. While the inclusion, by itself, is a considerable improvement from the other newspapers, this factor is only mentioned briefly. Overall, The Guardian exhibits quite a few characteristics of PJ. It is overtly opposed to military action and, unlike with some of the other newspapers, this claim appears genuine. The sample does not explore the historical context of the conflict's formation, but it does take a critical stance and attempts to analyze the current conflict formation. Further, although it goes to no great lengths to create sympathy for Iranians, it refrains from portraying them as irrational, and does not – to an unduly degree – promote a view of Iran as dangerous. What is more, with the exception of most focus being out on elite peace-makers, the sample shows no clear signs of WJ.

**The Times**

The editorial sample from The Times (published between November, 2011 and Marsh, 2012) features four claims common in war propaganda.

As with the samples from the American newspapers, the 'We are under threat claim' comes in a slightly modified form, where 'We' most often does not refer directly to Britain but to

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102 The Guardian Editorial. *Iran: stumbling into war*. Published 2012-02-19
103 The Guardian Editorial. *Iran: war games*. Published 2012-11-02
Israel and, to a lesser extent, other countries in the region. One does not need to look hard or close to find examples of this. One articles with the dramatic title Republic of Fear, states that “Sanctions against Iran are a necessary step against an aggressive and brutal regime.”

Referring to statements by made by Netanyahu, another article argues that:

“And in depicting Tehran's nuclear ambitions as a threat to the peace, freedom and stability of the region and the security of Western democracies, he does not exaggerate at all.”

Still, it is the perceived danger that Iran poses toward Israel that is awarded most foci:

“Throughout this appalling history, Iran's rulers have lied, threatened the extinction of a member state of the United Nations and engaged in grotesque anti-Semitic invective.”

The 'We are taking on evil-doers' claim is also a prominent feature in the editorials, as is made evident by the excerpts above. And there's more, of course. As predicted by Lynch and McGoldrick, examples of the regime's wicked crimes are given but the extent of such crimes remains vague.

One editorial mentions the recent case where US citizen Amir Mirzaei Hekmati was sentenced to death for espionage while visiting his grandmother in Iran. It then concludes that “He is but the latest US citizen to be subject to this type of abduction on trumped-up charges”. Arguably, 'he is but the latest' suggests that there has been a number of such cases, but it might as well mean that there has been a total of two.

Curiously, this is the only editorial sample to exhibit the claim; 'We must save them':

“As the stolen election of 2009 and the plight of Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani (who was sentenced to death by stoning for adultery) both show, few today would wish to be Iranian. The country is an illiberal theocracy, with scant regard for the wellbeing

104 The Times Editorial. Republic of Fear. Published 2012-01-24
105 The Times Editorial. Nuclear Brinkmanship. Published 2012-03-05
106 The Times Editorial. Deadly Deceit. Published 2012-11-10
107 The Times Editorial. Republic of Fear. Published 2012-01-24
of its own people.’”

It could be argued that to assume ‘few today would wish to be Iranian’, based on two examples, is a hasty – and likely false – conclusion. Indeed, results from the recent parliamentary elections indicates a growing support for the conservative ayatollah. These examples – rather than providing further evidence of the regime's cruelty toward its people – appeared in an editorial published a month before:

“Yet of all the mullah's depredations, the greatest are against the Iranians themselves. They extend from stealing the elections of 2009 by faking the results to using the veneer of legal process to commit murder and cruelty.”

As becomes clear a few lines down in the article, the latter example refers to the fate of Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani. Note again that the extent of 'the mullah's depredations' is almost absurdly vague. In fact, all we are told is that it extends from point A to point B.

Overtly, The Times supports economic sanctions, arguing that “Sanctions, pressure and reward are problematic, but can work.” That said, the editorials do not discuss the sanctions – or other alternatives, for that matter – at any length. Statements, such as the one above, are typically followed and/or preceded by descriptions of Iran's historical, present or future offenses. Embedded between predictions of how a nuclear armed Iran would threaten peace in the Middle East and the existence of Israel, one article claims that “The best hope of averting the need for a military strike against its nuclear facilities is to convince Tehran of the seriousness with which its duplicity is regarded.” This 'seriousness' refers to Obama's willingness to use force to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon.

Overall, the tone on Iran is decidedly contemptuous. The editorial arguing that sanctions 'can work' concludes with the sentence “Before near conflict becomes actual conflict, Iran must be persuaded of the benefits of joining the rest of the human race”. The idea of Iran not being part of the civilized world is evident in much of the sample. One article, titled

108 The Times Editorial. We are sleepwalking to war with Iran. Published 2012-02-21
109 The Times Editorial. Republic of Fear. Published 2012-01-24
110 The Times Editorial. We are sleepwalking to war with Iran. Published 2012-02-21
111 The Times Editorial. Nuclear Brinkmanship. Published 2012-03-05
112 The Times Editorial. We are sleepwalking to war with Iran. Published 2012-02-21
*Iran's Licensed Vandalism*, reports on the attack on the British Embassy in Tehran. It describes how a mob broke into the embassy and vandalized the offices: “Doubtless imagining that British people attach the same totemic value to tribal symbols as they themselves do, they also burned the British flag and stole pictures of the Queen. . .” Not only does this establish the Iranians as uncivilized, but it creates a division between the civilized 'us' and the barbaric 'them'.

The editorial sample from *The Times* is permeated by a hostile rhetoric which has the effect of undermining claims that a non-violent solution is preferable. Consequently, it could be argued whether *The Times* overt support of economic sanctions over military action should qualify as a characteristic of PJ. Further, while the editorials offer suggestions of how a military strike might be avoided, arguments *against* military action are notably absent. Finally, in addition to several war claims, nearly all categories of WJ are featured in the sample.

8. Discussion

All sampled editorials feature, to some extent, characteristics of both PJ and WJ. This might in itself not be interesting. It seems reasonable to assume that all news reporting would inevitably exhibit one characteristic or another in reporting on a conflict. It becomes interesting only when there exists a discernible pattern in the editorial samples; recurrent arguments and – implicitly or explicitly – purported views that might be assumed to reflect the stance of the newspaper's editorial board.

The fact that the studied conflict is not currently a violent conflict has had some impact on the analysis. While it has not rendered any of the characteristics strictly inapplicable, some of them have been left out of the analysis because to use them would have necessitated a level of interpretation where any conclusions would become largely speculative. This has primarily affected the solution-oriented vs. victory-oriented categories, and more specifically where they concern the aftermath of a conflict.

Seen to the entire sample, all of Galtung's WJ 'orientations', or categories, are represented in

113 The Times Editorial. *Iran's Licensed Vandalism*. Published 2011-11-30
some form. Only two newspapers, however, can readily be classified as practicing WJ.

The Jerusalem Post features only one – admittedly dubious – PJ characteristic. Its support of the economic sanctions does not appear sincere, and it does not purport a view that the sanctions will be sufficient to avoid military action. Moreover, it exhibits a lot of war propaganda claims, such as dehumanizing 'the other' and portraying Iran as a threat to world peace and as well as an imminent threat to Israel's existence.

The Times could also be categorized as war-oriented. Again, its one claim to PJ is in its overt support of economic sanctions as a possible solution to the conflict, and again the sincerity of that support is undermined by the context in which it is voiced. The sample has a very hostile tone Iran and is preoccupied with describing the crimes, both nationally and internationally, of its leaders. Even more so than TJP, it also promotes a view of 'us vs. them', or the uncivilized Iran vs. the civilized west.

Similarly, all categories of PJ were – to some extent – evident in the sample as a whole. Worth noting, however, is that not all characteristics were present. Crucially, no editorial sample dealt extensively with conflict formation and no sample attempted to explore the issue from a grass root level, focusing instead on elite policy makers. It may be argued that, at this point in the conflict, it is indeed elite policy that is going to determine the immediate outcome and therefore such a perspective might be more interesting. But one aspect of peace journalism is to take focus off the elite and give voice to all parties, including those who might not be able to directly affect the outcome (but may well be affected by it). Moreover, no editorial makes much effort to create empathy and understanding where Iran is concerned, which might have acted as a valuable counterbalance to the dehumanizing war propaganda prevalent in many of the sampled editorials.

Since these rather important characteristics are missing, it is difficult to categorize any of newspapers as practicing PJ. Even so, The Guardian comes quite close. In addition to exhibiting several characteristics of PJ, it shows no discernible signs of WJ. Quite surprisingly, the sample seems to support a view that a nuclear armed Iran is preferable to military action to prevent it. Granted, it offers a lot of rather pragmatical reasons why a military strike would be a poor solution to the issue, but it nonetheless shows a very strong preference for a non-violent outcome. Further, it takes a critical stance against those promoting military action, and makes an effort to expose war propaganda.
The sample from Haaretz also exhibits a few characteristics of PJ. Primarily, it is opposed to a preliminary military strike, it refrains from demonizing Iran and questions whether Iran really poses an immediate threat to Israel. Further, the sample has proved an interesting contrast to the TJP. When compared, the two samples illustrate quite well how the ideology of the newspaper can affect how a certain event is reported. This is exemplified by the coverage of Obama's speech to AIPAC, where Haaretz chose to highlight a message of restraint, and TJP elected to highlight Obama's reassurance that he is prepared to use force. This is especially interesting because they are both Israeli newspapers and therefore presumably exposed to similar environments or discourses. If the TJP was contrasted against The Guardian, for example, one could hypothesize that a British newspaper could afford to keep a more moderate perspective since it sits at a distance from the conflict.

The American newspapers are the hardest to place. Neither of them show as strong tendencies – in either direction – as the Israeli and British newspapers. Overtly, they hold slightly different positions. While TWP does not think that military action is currently necessary, it has not dismissed it as a viable option if the sanctions should prove ineffective. The NYT times, on the other hand, actively argues against military action. Further, TWP holds that Iran should cease all uranium enrichment while the NYT are more supportive of a negotiated deal. Therefore, at this level, the NYT has a stronger tendency toward PJ and TWP as stronger tendency toward WJ.

There is, however, a lot of similarities to be found in the implicit meanings of the texts. Neither of them seem to hold much hope that the diplomatic effort will be successful, mainly because Iran is seen as fickle and devious. Similarly, they appear to be in agreement that Iran poses some kind of threat, if not to the United States directly, than to US interests and Israel. In this fashion, it could be argued that they promote similar discourses, even if their political position on the issue differs.

The two prevalent themes of Iran as a threat and Iranians as untrustworthy are consistent with the findings of a study by Foad Izadi, in which – using the concepts of Orientalism and the Ideological square – he analyzes editorials published in elite American newspapers (TWP and the NYT among them) between 1984 and 2004 on the topic of Iran's nuclear program.114

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114 Izadi, Foad and Saghyaye-Biria (2007) p. 150-151
To summarize, out of the six sampled newspapers, two can be categorized as practicing WJ. None can be categorized as practicing PJ, although two newspapers – in addition to a lack of WJ characteristics – show a strong tendency toward PJ. The remaining two do not manifest a clear orientation, but they do appear to lean more toward WJ than PJ.

It may well be that a larger sample would have generated more decisive results. Even so, the findings seem to support Galtung's argument that there is a prevalence of WJ. In spite of this, the results should not be altogether disheartening, as it does reveal a certain presence of PJ. Further, when evaluating the prevalence of PJ, one could argue that the criteria is rather high, and it might therefore be unrealistic to expect that such a limited sample should exhibit all the necessary criteria.

In *Peace Journalism as an Ethical Challenge*, Galtung predicts that a move from a war-oriented style of reporting to a peace-oriented style might entail “... exploring some compromise or eclectic in-between positions.”115 The findings of this study appear consistent with such a prediction. Rather than fitting comfortably into one category or the other, most samples show at least some signs of both PJ and WJ. The two newspapers with the strongest tendency toward PJ could well be seen as a compromise, representing a kind of journalism that is not war-oriented but pending between PJ and what might be regarded as a neutral middle-ground position. Arguably, most journalists and media institutions likely consider their position to be neutral already, but the results of this study suggest otherwise. Further, this study has yielded examples of WJ that are not extreme cases (one point on which the PJ/WJ model has been criticized), and illustrated how such editorials may nonetheless serve as war-fueling. Further studies are needed to disperse such criticism however. On the topic of Iran's nuclear program, it may be of interest to study the prevalence of PJ and WJ in a sample of newspapers drawn from countries that are presumed to have less direct interest in the conflict.

At present, a full-blown practice of PJ within all major media institutions might seem like an ambitious goal, but its concepts and ideals could still function as a valuable guideline for journalists. A first priority, however, should be an effort to revert the trend of WJ.

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115 Galtung, Johan (2007) p. 8
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