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Media Bias in English language newspapers about Iran's nuclear program in 2021: A comparative case study between American and British newspapers

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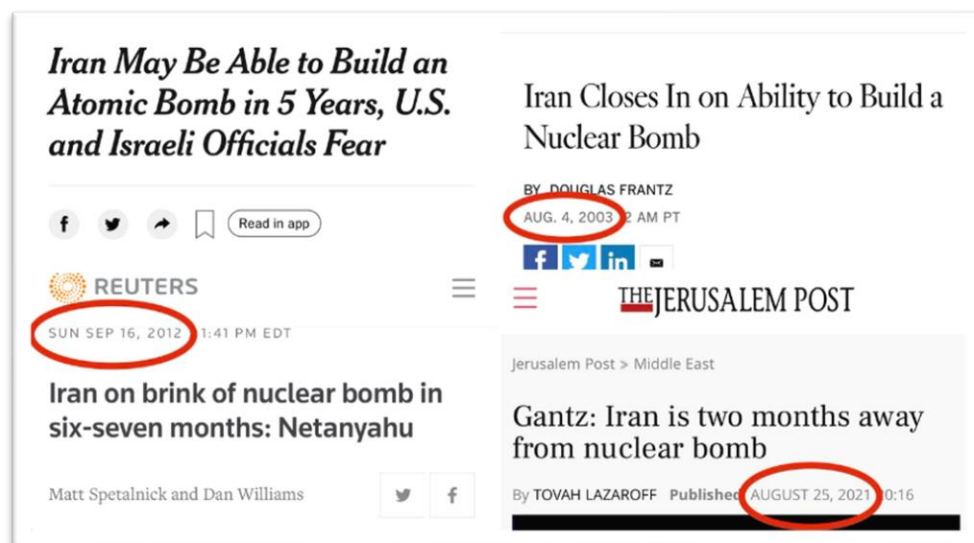


Universiteit
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Master thesis 2022

Media Bias in English language newspapers about Iran's nuclear program in 2021

A comparative case study between American and British newspapers



Master Middle Eastern Studies

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Chapter 1. Introduction

This thesis sets out to research if there is a bias in English language media, specifically newspapers, when reporting on Iran's nuclear program. Every month articles come out reporting on Iran and their nuclear program. Just recently Iran's uranium enrichment and nuclear program made headlines. The Wall Street Journal headlined on May 25, 2022: "*Iran used secret U.N. records to evade nuclear probes*".¹ And on June 9, 2022 they also headlined: "*The Iranian nuclear deal dream never dies*".² The New York Times headlined on June 8, 2022: "*Iran turns off U.N. surveillance cameras at nuclear site*".³ The Guardian headlined on June 9, 2022: "*Removal of cameras at Iran nuclear sites 'fatal blow' to talks, warns UN watchdog*".⁴ This shows that newspaper are writing about Iran's nuclear program and it is very much a recent topic.

Newspaper reporting on Iran's nuclear program is not unique or just from this year. This could be seen in a tweet that sparked the idea for this research. The tweet in question is from Assal Rad.⁵ She holds a Ph.D. in Middle Eastern History from the University of California and is a researcher of Modern Iran. The tweet, written on November 29, 2021, said: "As nuclear negotiations with Iran resume this week, remember that we've been told Iran is an imminent threat & on the verge of a bomb for nearly *3 decades*". She displayed four pictures showing headlines reporting on Iran building a nuclear bomb. The first headline was on January 5, 1995 from The New York Times. The second headline was on August 4, 2003 from the Los Angeles Times. The third headline was from Reuters on September 16, 2012. The last headline was from the Jerusalem Post on August 25, 2021. This demonstrates that English language media have been preoccupied with an imminent nuclear threat from Iran ever since the 1990s and have not stopped reporting on this topic.

¹ Laurence Norman and Sune Engel Rasmussen, "Iran Used Secret U.N. Records to Evade Nuclear Probes," *Wall Street Journal*, May 25, 2022, sec. World, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/iran-used-secret-u-n-records-to-evade-nuclear-probes-11653473247>.

² The Wall Street Journal, "The Iranian Nuclear Deal Dream Never Dies," *Wall Street Journal*, June 9, 2022, sec. Opinion, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-iranian-nuclear-dream-never-dies-international-atomic-energy-agency-tehran-iran-nuclear-deal-censure-11654809654>.

³ Isabella Kwai, "Iran Turns off U.N. Surveillance Cameras at Nuclear Site," *The New York Times*, June 8, 2022, sec. World, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/08/world/middleeast/iran-nuclear-iaea-cameras.html>.

⁴ Martin Chulov, "Removal of Cameras at Iran Nuclear Sites 'Fatal Blow' to Talks, Warns UN Watchdog," *the Guardian*, June 9, 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jun/09/removal-of-cameras-at-iran-nuclear-sites-may-be-fatal-blow-warns-un-watchdog>.

⁵ Twitter, "https://twitter.com/Assalrad/Status/1465207240768425984," Twitter, November 29, 2021, <https://twitter.com/assalrad/status/1465207240768425984>.

Prior research on this topic has already been done to various degrees. There is an article written by Peterson providing a timeline which shows that Iran has been a nuclear threat ever since 1979.⁶ Peterson describes that the “earliest headlines talking about Iran as a nuclear threat start even before the 1979 Islamic Revolution”.⁷ Another flare-up of headlines came in “1984, when West German engineers” visited Iran and said that Iran's bomb production was entering its final stages.⁸ The article then moves to 1992. When Netanyahu told his colleagues that “Iran was about three to five years away from being able to manufacture a nuclear weapon”.⁹ Also in 1992, Shimon Peres said that it was possible that “Iran could possess nuclear weapons as early as 1999”.¹⁰ From 1992 until 1997, the US warned about how close Iran was to producing nuclear weapons and that by then “it would take Iran around five years to produce a nuclear bomb”.¹¹ From 1998 to 2002, the rhetoric escalated against the 'axis of evil' as a result of “Iran launching medium-range missiles, which was seen by a US spy satellite”.¹² From 2002 to 2005, there were revelations from inside Iran about them producing a nuclear weapon. In 2005, the “US presented a document stating that Iran was testing high-explosives and a nuclear-capable missile warhead”.¹³ By 2007 president Bush gave of a warning that if “Iran was to arm itself with nuclear weapons this could eventually lead to ‘World War III’ ”.¹⁴ However, this rhetoric changed in 2009 when a report from a “committee of the US government stated that there is no indication that Iran was producing a nuclear bomb at the time”.¹⁵ From 2010 to 2011, when Peterson his work ends, he writes that “according to Israeli and US officials Iran will always want to possess nuclear weapons sooner rather than later”.¹⁶

This thesis intends to research if there is a media bias present in English language newspapers, specifically in American and British newspapers. Four newspapers have been

⁶ Scott Peterson, “Imminent Iran Nuclear Threat? A Timeline of Warnings since 1979,” Christian Science Monitor, November 8, 2011, <https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2011/1108/Imminent-Iran-nuclear-threat-A-timeline-of-warnings-since-1979/Earliest-warnings-1979-84>. 1.

⁷ Peterson, "Imminent," 1.

⁸ Peterson, "Imminent," 1.

⁹ Peterson, "Imminent," 2.

¹⁰ Peterson, "Imminent," 2.

¹¹ Peterson, "Imminent," 2.

¹² Peterson, "Imminent," 3.

¹³ Peterson, "Imminent," 4.

¹⁴ Peterson, "Imminent," 4.

¹⁵ Peterson, "Imminent," 4.

¹⁶ Peterson, "Imminent," 5.

selected to be part of this research. It concerns the following papers: The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, The Guardian and The Times (UK). The first reason why these newspapers have been chosen is based on their target audience and their format. All the newspapers are broadsheet and their target audience/readers are often the people in power – politicians, lawmakers etc. The second reason was that these newspapers were written in English. This is a language I can read and make sense of the underlying tones that might be present in the articles. The third, and last reason, why these newspapers have been chosen is based on Assal Rad's tweet. The tweet shows headlines from English language newspapers and I wanted to know if it was truly the case that English language newspapers have written about Iran being a nuclear threat for over three decades. From all four newspapers only the year 2021 is researched in this thesis, due to time and word limitations. However, because 2021 was only last year, an assumption can be made that if there is a media bias present in 2021 that there is an ever-present bias throughout all the earlier years as well. This research will fall into the research field of media bias and media framing. The central research question that this thesis hopes to answer is:

'Is there a media bias present in English language newspapers, specifically in American and British newspapers, when reporting on Iran's nuclear program in 2021?'

The central hypothesis in this thesis is “if there is a media bias present in a newspaper, then we will observe high scores in criticism (negativity) on Iran's nuclear program.”. Based on the known information beforehand it is expected that all four newspapers will be critical, and therefore have a bias, toward Iran's nuclear program in 2021. It also expected that the conservative newspapers have a bigger degree of bias than the liberal newspapers. This thesis sets out three different reasons as to why a bias might be present in the media. In their book “*Media Effects and Society*” Perse and Lambe set out five different effects the media intends to have: “(1) the effects of advertising on purchasing, (2) the effects of political campaigns on voting, (3) the effects of public service announcements (PSAs) on personal behavior and social improvement, (4) the effects of propaganda on ideology, and (5) the effects of media ritual on social control”.¹⁷ This research will dive deeper into the first, third and a little of the second effect.

¹⁷ Elizabeth M. Perse and Jennifer Lambe, *Media Effects and Society* (Second edition. | New York : Routledge, 2017. | Series: Routledge, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203854693>. 1.

The first effect sets out the effect of advertising on purchasing. This thesis links this effect to the idea that the media often is in the hands of corporations that want to maximize profits – advertisement bias. Newspapers are often in the hands of corporations who may or may not have a background in media. However, since the main aims of newspapers is to “inform the public, and offer a reputable source of information” there is some value in owning or at least influencing newspapers.¹⁸ The goal of corporations is to “maximize profits and this can be realized by means of speedy coverage - getting the “scoop” – of world events”.¹⁹ In return the funding of newspapers comes from the corporations that own them, so they also need corporations to survive. News agencies have to please these corporations in order for money to come in. This means that there is likely not as much freedom when printing a story as journalists would like to have, since the media organizations are always looking to please someone.

The second effect is about political campaigns on voting. This is closely linked to news media shaping the public opinion. Most individuals “learn about politics, determine what is happening in the world , and conclude which perspectives are supported by the majority through the media” to shape their own opinion.²⁰ However, some studies have shown that people do not always thoughtfully come to their opinions on politics.²¹ The “political elites in society often have a well-informed public opinion, while the political non elites are the ones who often have a ‘pseudo’ public opinion”.²² According to Perse and Lambe “a ‘pseudo’ public opinion is a short-term response to political issues, politicians and candidates that is not based on prior knowledge”.²³ Elites often see the media as one of the many sources that they gather data from. Research shows that reading a newspaper is the preferred source of information for politically active people.²⁴ Because newspapers give more in-depth information, and details of a story than television reports do.²⁵ Elites are influenced by what the media writes and in turn they can also influence the media. For example when it comes to offering expert opinions on certain issues. Political parties or politicians can also have a stronghold on the media, leaving news agencies with little real freedom to express and honest opinion. Resulting in a bias.

¹⁸ Perse and Lambe, *Media Effects and Society*, 68.

¹⁹ Perse and Lambe, *Media Effects and Society*, 68.

²⁰ Perse and Lambe, *Media Effects and Society*, 84.

²¹ Perse and Lambe, *Media Effects and Society*, 84.

²² Perse and Lambe, *Media Effects and Society*, 93.

²³ Perse and Lambe, *Media Effects and Society*, 84.

²⁴ Perse and Lambe, *Media Effects and Society*, 94.

²⁵ Perse and Lambe, *Media Effects and Society*, 95.

The third, and last, effect is the “public service announcements (PSAs) on personal behavior and social improvement”.²⁶ This thesis links this effect to the idea that journalists have personal views and opinions that may result in writing about certain issues in a biased way. When journalists have a prejudice about a certain topic, they are often hired by a newspaper that export these very same views to the general public. When these views are ever present in a newspaper, the readers will only read these biased stories and believe them to be true. When readers do not do any outside research or read other newspapers, this can result in feeding people ‘fake news’ or mis inform the general public. It gives them a distorted version of the truth, but one that is believable since they read it in the newspaper. A newspaper has credibility, because one of the goals is to provide an official channel for information. Another aspect of personal bias from journalists, with regards to reporting on a nuclear Iran, could be based on Islamophobia. A more detailed explanation of Islamophobia in the media will be set out in the literature review, which is in the next chapter. All in all, there are a few different causes that can explain media bias in newspapers. These reasons are used in the analysis of this thesis to explain why it could be that The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, The Guardian or The Times (UK) may or may not have a media bias present when reporting on Iran’s nuclear program.

The chapters and sections that are present in this thesis are structured in the following way. The next, and second, chapter is the literature review. The literature review sets out what a media bias entails according to academic literature. This is followed by a section on how Islam and islamophobia are presented in the media. Ending with a section on international relations and nuclear Iran. The third chapter sets out the methodology. The methodology describes what type of research is used, how the research was conducted and the methods of data collection. This chapter sets up the ground work for the chapter four, which is the analysis, or the results of the research. The most relevant results are set out in the analysis, this includes tables to help understand the results. The last chapter, chapter five, is the conclusion and discussion. In this chapter the central research question is answered, an interpretation of the results is given, as well as the implication and limitations of this research. This chapter also includes recommendations for future research.

²⁶ Perse and Lambe, *Media Effects and Society*, 1.

Chapter 2. Literature review

This chapter is made up of three different sections. The first section is on media bias in newspapers according to academic literature. The second section is about the representation of Islam in newspapers and islamophobia. Lastly, the third section discusses international relation regarding a nuclear Iran. The focus in this section is on the foreign policy of Europe and the United States with regards to Iran's nuclear program.

Media bias (in newspapers)

Iran's nuclear program has been widely written about in the media from 1979 onwards. However, there has been little research done about a possible media bias by English language newspaper on Iran's nuclear program. There are some studies here and there, like Koosha and Shams (2005)²⁷ researching discourse analysis on "*Iran's nuclear Issue in the British Newspapers*" and Izadi and Saghaye-Biria (2007) researching "*discourse analysis of Iran's nuclear program in (elite) American newspapers*".²⁸ But there have not been very many other studies done that research a possible media bias in both British and American newspapers together with a focus on Iran's nuclear program.

There are "two different forms of media bias" according to Mullainathan and Shleifer.²⁹ The first bias is the "ideology bias".³⁰ Ideology is about how media outlets (subtly) want to "nudge their readers' opinion to be in line with the newspapers' opinion".³¹ The second bias is known as the "spin bias, and represents an outlet's attempt to create a story that people will remember once they are done reading".³² According to Mullainathan and Shleifer, both "the media industry and journalism textbooks acknowledge that media outlets publish along ideological lines and do not merely publish facts".³³ Meaning that different newspapers report the same story in a different way, based on their own ideology.

²⁷ Mansoor Koosha and Mohammad Reza Shams, "A Critical Study of News Discourse: Iran's Nuclear Issue in the British Newspapers," *Iranian Journal of Applied Linguistics (IJAL)* 8, no. 2 (2005): 107–33.

²⁸ Foad Izadi and Hakimeh Saghaye-Biria, "A Discourse Analysis of Elite American Newspaper Editorials: The Case of Iran's Nuclear Program," *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 31, no. 2 (April 2007): 140–65, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0196859906298073>.

²⁹ Sendhil Mullainathan and Andrei Shleifer, "Media Bias," *National Bureau of Economic Research* 9295 (October 2002): 1–26.

³⁰ Mullainathan and Shleifer, "Media Bias," 1.

³¹ Mullainathan and Shleifer, "Media Bias," 1.

³² Mullainathan and Shleifer, "Media Bias," 1.

³³ Mullainathan and Shleifer, "Media Bias," 2.

The theory of Mullainathan and Shleifer falls between two extremes. The first being the traditional view. The traditional view describes how “readers want unbiased news reports on various topics such as politics or economics, to improve their own consumer and electoral choice”.³⁴ The contradictory view, the non-traditionalist view, states that the “media is purely for entertainment purposes only and has no clear connection to reality”.³⁵ In this view the media provides neither pure information nor pure entertainment, but is a mixture of both. It is also possible that media outlets “bias their information to be in line with their readers views or their owners views”.³⁶ Mullainathan and Shleifer conclude that “media bias is most severe in reports where there is hardly any ideological diversity” present.³⁷ With reports that have “a great deal of ideology, for example reports on presidential elections, the media outlets are likely to construct stories with little bias”.³⁸ When it comes to reports that have “no or little ideological dimension, the spin bias prevails”. For such stories the “media bias is not erased by competition, and more likely than not there is no accurate description of facts in these stories”.³⁹ Therefore, Mullainathan and Shleifer see (extreme) ideological diversity as the best hope/safeguard against the spin bias.⁴⁰

The media is a good and essential tool in passing on information to the general public.⁴¹ However, the media is often perceived as biased by that very same public.⁴² A survey from the American Society of Newspaper Editors revealed that “78% of the Americans think that the reporting of news is biased”.⁴³ According to research it can be presumed that “a person will sooner observe media bias in the news when the report is further from their own ideological stance or world view”.⁴⁴ According to Baron media biases can result from a variety of actions. First, a bias could result from a news organisation “giving more attention to one issue in a story and not about the other sides of that issue, resulting in a disbalance in reporting”.⁴⁵ Second, a bias can also have an “ideological nature”.⁴⁶ This can occur when the

³⁴ Mullainathan and Shleifer, “Media Bias,” 3.

³⁵ Mullainathan and Shleifer, “Media Bias,” 3.

³⁶ Mullainathan and Shleifer, “Media Bias,” 4.

³⁷ Mullainathan and Shleifer, “Media Bias,” 4.

³⁸ Mullainathan and Shleifer, “Media Bias,” 21.

³⁹ Mullainathan and Shleifer, “Media Bias,” 21.

⁴⁰ Mullainathan and Shleifer, “Media Bias,” 14.

⁴¹ David P. Baron, “Persistent Media Bias,” *Journal of Public Economics* 90, no. 1 (January 1, 2006): 1–36, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubeco.2004.10.006>.

⁴² Baron, “Persistent Media Bias,” 2.

⁴³ Baron, “Persistent Media Bias,” 2.

⁴⁴ James Hamilton, *All the News That's Fit to Sell : How the Market Transforms Information into News* (Princeton, N.J. ; Woodstock: Princeton University Press, 2006). 73.

⁴⁵ Baron, “Persistent Media Bias,” 4.

⁴⁶ Baron, “Persistent Media Bias,” 4.

“owners of a news organisation, or the editors or journalists only write reports that are in line with their own ideological stance”.⁴⁷ This was also one of Mullainathan and Shleifer types of media bias. Third, a “media bias could also be partisan”.⁴⁸ This occurs when the “news organisation only report stories that are line with the policies from their affiliated political parties or interest groups”.⁴⁹ Fourth, and last, media bias can occur when information in a report is “made up, disguised or distorted by sources or due to the journalists’ own ideological preferences”.⁵⁰

Groseclose and Milyo (2005) describe how a journalist can create a bias by “including quotes from certain advocates or particular perspectives in their reports and fail to include other perspectives or advocates”. Journalists aim to be objective when reporting issues. If journalists favour one group or one particular stance, this results in a bias and goes against that very same journalistic objectiveness.⁵¹ Groseclose and Milyo highlight in their article “that news outlets are far from balanced”, especially in the United States.⁵² They found that there is a significant “liberal bias in the US media”, this also rings true for The New York Times.⁵³ Groseclose and Milyo state that this does not mean that The New York Times is “inaccurate or dishonest”.⁵⁴

Matthes (2011) wrote an article on why it is that the media presents political problems differently.⁵⁵ Matthes argues that it is because of media frames. According to Matthes “media frames are socially shared organizing principles that structure the social world meaningfully”.⁵⁶ The audience’s “understanding of events and concerns in the world can be influenced by these frames”.⁵⁷ Media frames are carefully “chosen and altered by journalists, due to the fact that they select them based on their own experiences, ideologies and world views”.⁵⁸ To make sense of the big amount of data that is present, journalists use frames to

⁴⁷ Baron, “Persistent Media Bias,” 4.

⁴⁸ Baron, “Persistent Media Bias,” 4.

⁴⁹ Baron, “Persistent Media Bias,” 4.

⁵⁰ Baron, “Persistent Media Bias,” 4.

⁵¹ T. Groseclose and J. Milyo, “A Measure of Media Bias,” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 120, no. 4 (November 1, 2005): 1191–1237, <https://doi.org/10.1162/003355305775097542>. 1204.

⁵² Baron, “Persistent Media Bias,” 8.

⁵³ Groseclose and Milyo, “A Measure of Media Bias,” 1204.

⁵⁴ Groseclose and Milyo, “A Measure of Media Bias,” 1204.

⁵⁵ Jörg Matthes, “Framing Politics,” *American Behavioral Scientist* 56, no. 3 (December 15, 2011): 247–59, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764211426324>, 250.

⁵⁶ Matthes, “Framing Politics,” 248.

⁵⁷ Matthes, “Framing Politics,” 250.

⁵⁸ Matthes, “Framing Politics,” 249.

help them make sense of the world.⁵⁹ Matthes found that eventually, this results in media organisations presenting political problems in different ways.

The media, specifically mass media, can be seen as “an institution that controls and creates opinions about events that are in line with the public opinion”.⁶⁰ The media plays “a large role in selecting the way people perceive (world) events and think about a variety of issues”.⁶¹ When reporting, the media makes a choice “which stories to cover, what information to use and more importantly what information is left out”.⁶² The facts that are intentionally or unintentionally left out of the frame create a distorted picture of the truth. As a result, news reports are framed and thus biased. An important aspect in framing is the “placement a report receives in a newspaper or television broadcast”.⁶³ The placement determines whether the public perceives an event as positive or negative. Since the public, and “policy makers, rely mostly on the media as their source of information, it is important to recognize and understand media frames in order to understand public opinion on (world) events”.⁶⁴

The working definition of bias in this thesis is about how critical The New York Times, The Guardian, The Wall Street Journal and The Times are about Iran’s nuclear program. The thesis does not argue if the articles on nuclear Iran are inaccurate or dishonest. To argue dishonesty or inaccuracy would mean I have to have extensive knowledge on the history of nuclear Iran, which I do not possess. A second remark is that because the numbers of newspapers in this thesis is limited, there can be no conclusions drawn about if the newspapers omit information that other newspapers included. I can only compare The New York Times, The Guardian, The Wall Street Journal and The Times and conclude whether there is a bias present based on how critical they write about Iran’s nuclear program throughout 2021.

⁵⁹Matthes, "Framing Politics," 250.

⁶⁰ Gianpietro Mazzoleni and Winfried Schulz, "'Mediatization' of Politics: A Challenge for Democracy?," *Political Communication* 16, no. 3 (July 1999): 247–61, <https://doi.org/10.1080/105846099198613>. 252

⁶¹ Gianpietro Mazzoleni and Winfried Schulz, "'Mediatization' of Politics," 251.

⁶² Matt Evans, "Framing International Conflicts: Media Coverage of Fighting in the Middle East," *International Journal of Media & Cultural Politics* 6, no. 2 (September 1, 2010): 209–33, https://doi.org/10.1386/mcp.6.2.209_1. 210.

⁶³ Evans, "Framing", 210.

⁶⁴ Evans, "Framing", 210.

Representation of Islam in newspapers and Islamophobia

A major turning point in how the world, mostly Western countries, perceive Muslims changed after September 11, 2001.⁶⁵ A research by Trevino et al., compared three American newspapers and how these newspapers wrote about “Muslims a year before and a year after 9/11”.⁶⁶ They concluded “that all three newspapers portrayed Muslims more negatively after 9/11 then they did before 9/11”.⁶⁷ In 2011 Gallup conducted surveys in the United States, Great Britain, France and Germany to “understand anti-Muslim sentiment in the West”.⁶⁸ These surveys showed that 52% of the Americans and 38% of Brits believe “Western countries do not respect Muslim societies” and 40% of the Americans and 47% of Brits do not respect Muslims.⁶⁹ In 2015 Gallup conducted a different survey in the US to understand the “perceptions of Muslims in the United States”.⁷⁰ This survey showed that four in ten Americans “self-reported to have some degree of prejudice towards Muslims”.⁷¹ Those surveyed say that the reason for tensions between Muslims and the West is mainly the difference in political interests and religion.⁷² This perceived difference can be a result of Islamophobia. Islamophobia is often “warranted due to alleged intolerance of Islam” by the West.⁷³ Although there are “relatively fewer Muslims in the US than in Europe, Islamophobia is just as much present in the US as it is in Europe”.⁷⁴

Many blame the American media for the problem of Islamophobia. When the American media reports about Muslims, the repertoire in these reports is largely based on Samul Huntington’s *Clash of Civilizations* - that culture is the main cause for global conflict.⁷⁵ American journalists have faced criticism throughout the years for not “presenting news

⁶⁵ Christine Ogan et al., “The Rise of Anti-Muslim Prejudice,” *International Communication Gazette* 76, no. 1 (October 10, 2013): 27–46, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048513504048>.28.

⁶⁶ Melina Trevino, Ali M Kanso, and Richard Alan Nelson, “Islam through Editorial Lenses: How American Elite Newspapers Portrayed Muslims before and after September 11, 2001,” *Journal of Arab & Muslim Media Research* 3, no. 1 (November 1, 2010): 3–17, https://doi.org/10.1386/jammr.3.1-2.3_1. 4.

⁶⁷ Trevino, Kanso, and Nelson, “Islam through Editorial Lenses,” 4.

⁶⁸ Gallup, “Islamophobia: Understanding Anti-Muslim Sentiment in the West,” Gallup.com, December 31, 2000, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/157082/islamophobia-understanding-anti-muslim-sentiment-west.aspx>.

⁶⁹ Gallup, “Islamophobia: Understanding Anti-Muslim Sentiment in the West,” Gallup.com, December 31, 2000, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/157082/islamophobia-understanding-anti-muslim-sentiment-west.aspx>.

⁷⁰ Mohamed Younis, “Perceptions of Muslims in the United States: A Review,” Gallup.com (Gallup, December 11, 2015), <https://news.gallup.com/opinion/gallup/187664/perceptions-muslims-united-states-review.aspx>.

⁷¹ Mohamed Younis, “Perceptions of Muslims in the United States: A Review,” Gallup.com (Gallup, December 11, 2015), <https://news.gallup.com/opinion/gallup/187664/perceptions-muslims-united-states-review.aspx>.

⁷² Gallup, “Islamophobia: Understanding Anti-Muslim Sentiment in the West,” Gallup.com, December 31, 2000, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/157082/islamophobia-understanding-anti-muslim-sentiment-west.aspx>.

⁷³ Ogan et al., “The Rise of Anti-Muslim Prejudice,” 28.

⁷⁴ Ogan et al., “The Rise of Anti-Muslim Prejudice,” 28.

⁷⁵ Ogan et al., “The Rise of Anti-Muslim Prejudice,” 29.

reports in an unbiased way”.⁷⁶ Journalists especially struggle to “maintain objective and unbiased when covering events from the Middle East in the media”.⁷⁷ Since journalists are seen as “gatekeepers it is important that they know how to give an unbiased report” and they need to learn how to keep their “personal beliefs separate from their professional values”.⁷⁸ Another player that contributes to Islamophobia in the US is the government. The US government provides information for the media to use, and in return, the media often helps them with their campaigns.⁷⁹ An example is the way the “US government presented the ‘War on Terror’ as a one-sided perspective and offered the media little alternative viewpoints to write stories about”.⁸⁰ Because of this, and other, issues, many American newspapers fail to portray Islam in an accurate way. This way Islamophobia can seep through and mischaracterize certain characteristics about Islam to a wide public. For example, that Islam is “associated with fundamentalism and terrorism and is a threat to Western security”.⁸¹ Due to the media’s “misrepresentation and a lack of understanding of the true Islam, there are numerous misconceptions about Islam as a religion and the people that follow it” in the United States.⁸²

In Europe the “Muslim population has been steadily increasing in the last forty years, due to migration and family reunification”.⁸³ This has created tensions between different societal groups and an increase in Islamophobia.⁸⁴ Prior research in Great Britain has shown that a negative bias exists in media representation of Islam.⁸⁵ According to an article from Baker (2010) this is because “British newspapers do not claim to be balanced or neutral”.⁸⁶ The way Muslims are characterized in British newspapers is crucial to understand the public opinion on issues surrounding Muslims or Islam, such as terrorists attacks or stories about asylum seekers.⁸⁷ British newspapers often have an Orientalist approach and portrays a caricature of Islam what is otherwise known as a rich culture and religion.⁸⁸ In a study by Moore et al.

⁷⁶ Trevino, Kalso, and Nelson, “Islam through Editorial Lenses,” 4.

⁷⁷ Trevino, Kalso, and Nelson, “Islam through Editorial Lenses,” 4.

⁷⁸ Trevino, Kalso, and Nelson, “Islam through Editorial Lenses,” 5.

⁷⁹ Trevino, Kalso, and Nelson, “Islam through Editorial Lenses,” 5.

⁸⁰ Trevino, Kalso, and Nelson, “Islam through Editorial Lenses,” 5.

⁸¹ Paul Baker, “Representations of Islam in British Broadsheet and Tabloid Newspapers 1999–2005,” *Journal of Language and Politics* 9, no. 2 (July 15, 2010): 310–38, <https://doi.org/10.1075/jlp.9.2.07bak>. 312.

⁸² Trevino, Kalso, and Nelson, “Islam through Editorial Lenses,” 3.

⁸³ Ogan et al., “The Rise of Anti-Muslim Prejudice,” 30.

⁸⁴ Ogan et al., “The Rise of Anti-Muslim Prejudice,” 30.

⁸⁵ Baker, “Representations of Islam in British Broadsheet,” 311.

⁸⁶ Baker, “Representations of Islam in British Broadsheet,” 315.

⁸⁷ Baker, “Representations of Islam in British Broadsheet,” 311.

⁸⁸ Baker, “Representations of Islam in British Broadsheet,” 313.

(2008) where 1000 stories from British newspapers were analysed, it was concluded that “two-thirds of all the articles were centred around Muslims either as being a threat (in relation to terrorism), or as a problem (in terms of differences in values), or they were depicted as both (Muslims extremism in general)”.⁸⁹ This study also found that from 2002 onwards stories of such nature only increased in British newspapers.⁹⁰

International relations regarding a nuclear Iran

The EU3 (France, Germany and the UK) started negotiations with Iran around 2003 in the aftermath of the occupation of Iraq.⁹¹ The EU3 reached out to Iran in an attempt to get guarantees that its nuclear programme was of a peaceful nature.⁹² The European countries turned to diplomacy to avoid another war in the region. However, the European countries were restrained by the United States who disregarded diplomacy.⁹³ From 2003-2005 Europe’s negotiations with Iran were largely successful. The concessions Iran did towards Europe “included the voluntary implementation of the Additional Protocol, which increased the inspection authority of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and halting most of the enrichment of uranium”.⁹⁴ Both parties agreed that for about two years Iran would freeze the enrichment of Uranium. In today’s context that could be interpreted as a remarkable achievement. After 2004 the efforts from Europe in Iran were supported by the United States. This support however came with a price. The Bush administration would not accept an EU-Iran agreement unless it was included that Iran would give up the enrichment of uranium permanently.⁹⁵ By 2005 Iran did not agree with the US to “stop the enrichment of uranium indefinitely and afraid of losing US as an ally Europe also committed to a “zero enrichment” policy”.⁹⁶ However, Europe did hope with an incentive plan the coax Iran to accept the “zero enrichment” policy. Europe proposed a package of “economic and political incentives and offered of a state-of-the-art light water nuclear reactor”.⁹⁷ The problem with this plan was that the reactor would have been delivered by a French company. The United States proclaimed

⁸⁹ Ogan et al., “The Rise of Anti-Muslim Prejudice,” 31.

⁹⁰ Ogan et al., “The Rise of Anti-Muslim Prejudice,” 31.

⁹¹ Sverre Lodgaard, “Nuclear Diplomacy: The Case of Iran,” in *Dialogue and Conflict Resolution : Potential and Limits* (Taylor & Francis Group, 2015).

⁹² Riccardo Alcaro, “The Transatlantic Dimension of Europe’s Nuclear Diplomacy with Iran: 2003–21,” IAI Istituto Affari Internazionali, May 12, 2021, <https://www.iai.it/en/pubblicazioni/transatlantic-dimension-europes-nuclear-diplomacy-iran-2003-21>. 3.

⁹³ Lodgaard, “Nuclear Diplomacy: The Case of Iran,” 93.

⁹⁴ Alcaro, “The Transatlantic Dimension,” 5.

⁹⁵ Alcaro, “The Transatlantic Dimension,” 6.

⁹⁶ Alcaro, “The Transatlantic Dimension,” 6.

⁹⁷ Alcaro, “The Transatlantic Dimension,” 6.

that US-based interests of the that French company would be negatively affected if they were to deliver to Iran.⁹⁸ This in turn made Europe forgo their plan for Iran to accept the “zero enrichment” policy and Europe turned to the Security Council for all matters on nuclear Iran. As a result, the talks between Europe and Iran broke down. Up until 2005 it was seen as the first phase of “Europe getting involved in Iran’s nuclear issue”.⁹⁹

The second phase started in 2006 and lasted until 2008 when Obama became president of the United States. During those two years, Europe worked towards establishing better (diplomatic) relations with Iran.¹⁰⁰ The United States however saw “Iran as part of the Axis of Evil”.¹⁰¹ Rather than negotiating with Iran, they wanted to take action against it.¹⁰² This made the Europeans hardened their position toward Iran. During these two years Europe showed the United States that they were able and willing to sanction Iran.¹⁰³ In hopes to compete with the United States, Europe transitioned from a more dialogue-based approach to one combining diplomacy with coercion. Between 2006 and 2009 none of the parties – EU, US, Iran - made concessions and diplomacy was strictly limited to governmental diplomacy.¹⁰⁴

When Obama took office, Europe and the United States grew closer on how they wanted to tackle the ‘Iran issue’.¹⁰⁵ Under Obama, the United States wanted to give diplomacy another chance.¹⁰⁶ Just like Europe had always wanted. Obama separated the nuclear issue from all the other issues, such as Iran’s growing influence in Iraq and Lebanon, in order for talks on the nuclear issue to resume.¹⁰⁷ Together, Europe and the United States delayed the adoption of major sanctions on Iran by the “US Congress until the UN Security Council had also adopted sanctions on the very same matter”.¹⁰⁸ This meant that from June to July in 2010 Iran, almost all at once, was hit with sanctions from the United Nations, the United States and Europe. These sanctions lasted well into 2012 and restrained Iran’s energy, shipping and banking sectors.¹⁰⁹

⁹⁸ Alcaro, “The Transatlantic Dimension,” 6.

⁹⁹ Alcaro, “The Transatlantic Dimension,” 4.

¹⁰⁰ Alcaro, “The Transatlantic Dimension,” 4.

¹⁰¹ Lodgaard, “Nuclear Diplomacy: The Case of Iran,” 93.

¹⁰² Lodgaard, “Nuclear Diplomacy: The Case of Iran,” 93.

¹⁰³ Alcaro, “The Transatlantic Dimension,” 4.

¹⁰⁴ Lodgaard, “Nuclear Diplomacy: The Case of Iran,” 93.

¹⁰⁵ Alcaro, “The Transatlantic Dimension,” 7.

¹⁰⁶ Lodgaard, “Nuclear Diplomacy: The Case of Iran,” 93.

¹⁰⁷ Alcaro, “The Transatlantic Dimension,” 9.

¹⁰⁸ Alcaro, “The Transatlantic Dimension,” 9.

¹⁰⁹ Alcaro, “The Transatlantic Dimension,” 10.

During Obama's second reign, in 2012, a US-Iranian back channel was established. When Rouhani became president of Iran in 2013 relations between the United States and Iran strengthened again. What brought Iran and the US together this time was their overlapping national interests in the Middle East.¹¹⁰ However, to realize those interests both parties had to get the nuclear issue out of the way. It was partly due to developments in international affairs "in the Middle East that changed the interests of the US and Iran" in significant ways.¹¹¹ The election of Rouhani and secret bilateral talks between Obama and Rouhani resulted in what eventually would be "known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan Of Action (JCPOA)"¹¹² The JCPOA met most of the European concerns, because the plan imposed great limitations on Iran's nuclear programme and "introduced a 25-year IAEA inspection protocol that was more invasive than Europe's Additional Protocol ever was".¹¹³ The JCPOA was a step in the direction of limiting Iran's nuclear program. Despite the strengthened relation between Iran and the US and the JCPOA, Iran continued to enhance its nuclear programme over the next couple years.¹¹⁴

When Trump took office US relations with Iran shifted drastically and the once celebrated achievement known as the JCPOA quickly disintegrated. The Trump Administration resumed a demonising rhetoric against Iran, like "Bush had done during his reign".¹¹⁵ Trump saw the JCPOA as flawed agreement and in 2018 the United States single-handedly terminated compliance with the JCPOA. As a result that all prior sanctions, that were shelved due to the JCPOA, from the US against Iran were being put back into place.¹¹⁶ Trump wanted Iran to make greater concession and issued a "maximum pressure" policy, while Europe wanted to secure interests in non-proliferation and regional security in Iran.¹¹⁷ Europe knew that pursuing the "JCPOA was the best choice to safeguard their interests in Iran" and Europe made saving this agreement their priority.¹¹⁸ Europe wanted to prevent the United States from leaving, because Europe never shared the view with the United States that the JCPOA was a flawed agreement. It is standard that arms control agreements are of a temporary nature. Europe believed that the "JCPOA's restrictions on Iran enriching uranium would hold for a

¹¹⁰ Lodgaard, "Nuclear Diplomacy: The Case of Iran," 94.

¹¹¹ Lodgaard, "Nuclear Diplomacy: The Case of Iran," 94.

¹¹² Alcaro, "The Transatlantic Dimension," 11.

¹¹³ Alcaro, "The Transatlantic Dimension," 12.

¹¹⁴ Lodgaard, "Nuclear Diplomacy: The Case of Iran," 94.

¹¹⁵ Alcaro, "The Transatlantic Dimension," 13.

¹¹⁶ Alcaro, "The Transatlantic Dimension," 13.

¹¹⁷ Alcaro, "The Transatlantic Dimension," 13.

¹¹⁸ Alcaro, "The Transatlantic Dimension," 13-14.

sufficient period of time, at least to delay a “nuclear-capable Iran” until 2025 or 2030”.¹¹⁹ After the United States left the JCPOA, Europe “promised that they would stay devoted to the agreed trade and investment relations with Iran”.¹²⁰ Europe believed that if the JCPOA was kept alive, president Trump would see that “diplomacy was the best way of putting pressure on Iran”.¹²¹ It turned out that this was wishful thinking from Europe, because by 2019 Iran started to enrich uranium far “exceeding the agreed levels set out by the JCPOA”.¹²² Europe could do nothing more but “control the damage while trying to create room for diplomacy”.¹²³ By 2020 Europe “enforced the special clause of the agreement to try to keep Iran’s enrichment levels within tolerable limits” and at the same time “opposing an extension of an UN arms embargo on Iran”.¹²⁴ All this was set in action to prevent the JCPOA from collapsing. Europe feared that if the embargo was extended, Iran would fully side line the JCPOA. During Trump’s presidency the United States and Iran repeatedly clashed and Europe was unable to prevent the JCPOA from deteriorating or create ‘peace’ between Iran and the US.¹²⁵

From 2021 until now, with president Biden heading the United States, there is greater support for the JCPOA from all parties. Biden wants to go on the diplomatic route rather than putting maximum pressure on Iran like Trump had done. However, Biden does not want to rush back into the JCPOA.¹²⁶ His reasons being that the “conditions on both nuclear and regional fronts have changed for the worse when compared to 2015 and even 2018”.¹²⁷ To this day, the United States has not joined JCPOA again and talks resume in Vienna to get Iran to comply again to the 2015 JCPOA agreement.

¹¹⁹ Alcaro, “The Transatlantic Dimension,” 14.

¹²⁰ Alcaro, “The Transatlantic Dimension,” 14.

¹²¹ Alcaro, “The Transatlantic Dimension,” 14-15.

¹²² Alcaro, “The Transatlantic Dimension,” 15.

¹²³ Alcaro, “The Transatlantic Dimension,” 12.

¹²⁴ Alcaro, “The Transatlantic Dimension,” 15.

¹²⁵ Alcaro, “The Transatlantic Dimension,” 16.

¹²⁶ Alcaro, “The Transatlantic Dimension,” 17.

¹²⁷ Alcaro, “The Transatlantic Dimension,” 17.

Chapter 3. Methodology

This chapter sets out the methods and the methodology of this thesis. Methods are techniques and procedures followed by researchers when gathering and analyzing data. The methodology is the justification of the used methods. The method used in this thesis is the sampling of articles from four newspapers. The methodology used in this thesis is content analysis, both qualitative and quantitative. This chapter aims to operationalize the theoretical framework in order to answer the central research question. The chosen research design is a comparative case study between English language media. To specify, a comparative case study between two newspapers from the United States and two newspapers from the United Kingdom. Analyzing the articles, or content, from the newspapers is done with the help of keywords. This design comes from the work of Segev and Miesch.¹²⁸

3.1 Research design

The chosen research design is a comparative case study. A comparative case study can be used as a methodology to compare two or more cases.¹²⁹ This paper will compare four cases. Two newspapers from the United States - The New York Times and The Wall Street Journal - and two newspapers from the United Kingdom - The Guardian and The Times (UK). A comparative case study is used to understand the mechanism of the extent of a possible media bias towards Iran's nuclear program in these English language newspapers. A case study is suited for "analyzing commonalities and differences across cases and to build a deep within-case understanding".¹³⁰ The case selection for a comparative case study is either a " 'Most Similar Systems Design' (MSSD) or a 'Most Different Systems Design' (MDSD)".¹³¹ Within MSSD the cases researched are as similar as possible to "try to keep the variables as constant as possible".¹³² Cases are used where "all but one of the independent variables are the same, and the dependent variable varies".¹³³ The other variant is MDSD and here cases are chosen which "are as different as possible".¹³⁴ Here cases are used where "all but one (or two) of the

¹²⁸ Elad Segev and Regula Miesch, "A Systematic Procedure for Detecting News Biases: The Case of Israel in European News Sites," *International Journal of Communication* 5 (2011): 1947–1966.

¹²⁹ Juliet Kaarbo and Ryan K. Beasley, "A Practical Guide to the Comparative Case Study Method in Political Psychology," *Political Psychology* 20, no. 2 (June 1999): 369–91, <https://doi.org/10.1111/0162-895x.00149>. 372.

¹³⁰ Kimberly Sheridan et al., "Learning in the Making: A Comparative Case Study of Three Makerspaces," *Harvard Educational Review* 84, no. 4 (December 2014): 505–31, <https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.84.4.brr34733723j648u>. 509.

¹³¹ Carsten Ankar, "On the Applicability of the Most Similar Systems Design and the Most Different Systems Design in Comparative Research," *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 11, no. 5 (December 2008): 389–401, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645570701401552>. 389.

¹³² Ankar, "On the Applicability," 389.

¹³³ Ankar, "On the Applicability," 389.

¹³⁴ Ankar, "On the Applicability," 390.

independent variables are different, and the dependent variable is similar”.¹³⁵ In this thesis, a Most Similar Systems Design (MSSD) is present. The dependent variable – the possible degree of media bias in the newspapers – is expected to vary. While all the independent variables are the same, expect for two. The first overlapping variable is that all four cases are newspapers. The second is that all newspapers are written in English. The third similarity is that all four newspapers have a broadsheet format. The fourth overlapping variable is that the readership of all four newspapers is made up of mostly learned older white men in a position of power. The two different independent variables are first, that the newspapers have different political orientations. The New York Times and The Guardian are considered to be centrist-left, while The Wall Street Journal and The Times are considered centrist-right. Therefore, a comparison can be made between the two right wing and the two left wing leaning newspapers from both countries. The New York Times and The Guardian tend to be more liberal in their position. The Wall Street Journal and The Times tend to be more conservative in their position. The second different variable is that the newspapers are circulated in different countries. The New York Times and The Wall Street Journal circulate in the United States while The Guardian and The Times are circulated in the United Kingdom.

3.2 Method of data collection

The method of data collection are documents, or in this case newspaper articles. This thesis is set to research 40 articles from four different newspapers. The selection of these 40 articles is not random. The articles had to be chosen carefully in order for the analysis, and in the end the results, to be comparable. Ten articles from each of the four newspapers were chosen for content analysis. There is one article for each month of 2021, except for the months July and August. There reason these months are omitted in the analysis is because The Guardian did not write any articles on Iran’s nuclear program in those months. Therefore these months could not be researched for all the other newspapers as well in order for the analysis to be valid.

There were three requirements for articles to be selected into the analysis. The first requirement was the subject. All four articles needed to be on the same subject so a valid comparison could be made between the newspapers. The second requirement was that all articles had to be written on the same date or be written around the same date. This ensured that the chosen articles contained the same topic or at least be partially on the same topic. Third, the articles had to contain the keywords ‘nuclear’ and ‘Iran’ in order to be considered

¹³⁵ Anckar, “On the Applicability,” 389.

for analysis. To ensure that the articles were not about any other topic than Iran's nuclear program or nuclear activities.

3.3 Methodology approach

The methodological approach this thesis adopts is content analysis. Content analysis can give a lot of information about one topic, without having to do field work or leave the desk. Desk research is critical for this thesis since I cannot go to Iran to do my research, nor is it necessary for this study. I can get the information that I need from conducting content analysis. Content analysis is a "research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data".¹³⁶ Content is often classified and established in a codebook in order to better conclude the, often, "big data" sets. Over the last two decades with the introduction of more "technology in our day to day lives has changed the way we communicate with each other".¹³⁷ As a result, with the coming of age of the internet and social media we have entered "the era of "big data".¹³⁸ This means that the technique of content analysis has changed in order to keep up".¹³⁹ Content analysis now includes data sources such as social media (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram), "audio data (such as YouTube), next to the already existing news articles, academic literature, official government reports etc.". ¹⁴⁰

3.4 Content analysis

In this thesis the content analysis will be based on a method from Segev and Miesch. Segev and Miesch proposed a new structured procedure in their article to examine the direction of bias in news content.¹⁴¹ Their aim is to unveil biases in news content as a way to understand and mediate the different international views and interests.¹⁴²

Segev and Miesch define seven stages of research. *Stage 1* is obtaining lists of positive and negative keywords from each of the articles.¹⁴³ In this thesis the lists of keywords is made by searching the words 'Iran' and 'nuclear' in the newspaper articles. The next step is to analyze all sentences that contain these words and see if the sentences say something positive or negative about Iran's and its nuclear program. If a sentence is positive it is given the quantitative number 1 and if the sentence has as negative connotation it is given the

¹³⁶ Klaus Krippendorff, "Content Analysis," 1989, https://repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1232&context=asc_papers. 403.

¹³⁷ Steven E. Stemler, "Content Analysis," *Emerging Trends in the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 2015, 1–14. 1.

¹³⁸ Stemler, "Content Analysis," 1.

¹³⁹ Stemler, "Content Analysis," 1.

¹⁴⁰ Krippendorff, "Content Analysis," 403.

¹⁴¹ Segev and Miesch, "A Systematic Procedure," 1948.

¹⁴² Segev and Miesch, "A Systematic Procedure," 1948.

¹⁴³ Segev and Miesch, "A Systematic Procedure," 1948.

quantitative number of -1. Segev and Miesch acknowledge that every word is used in a specific context and they only coded keywords as positive or negative if they constantly appeared in an either negative or positive context.¹⁴⁴ *Stage 2* is grouping all the keywords from stage 1 into categories.¹⁴⁵ After all the relevant keywords are coded as positive or negative, keywords with similar meanings are put into the same group and these groups will eventually make up categories.¹⁴⁶ The amount of categories and their names vary based on the research. Segev and Miesch gave an outline of their research, but this outline can be altered to fit almost every analysis. *Stage 3* is finding opinion antonyms.¹⁴⁷ Opinion antonyms are “terms that incorporate an opposite opinion toward the target”.¹⁴⁸ *Stage 4* is adding missing keywords in all languages.¹⁴⁹ This stage will not be included in this analysis, since this research only deals with one language this stage is skipped. *Stage 5* is frequency of use of keywords.¹⁵⁰ This stage will compare the frequency of use of keywords in one language to another. This stage is also skipped in this research. *Stage 6* is validating the system.¹⁵¹ Segev and Miesch randomly chose 100 sentences from their sample, 50 positive and 50 negative keywords. They employed two coders to assess whether each sentence embodies negative or positive sentiments.¹⁵² They compared both coders’ evaluations and conducted an inter-coder reliability test. This stage is also skipped in this research. The last stage, *stage 7* is rating the news sites sentiments.¹⁵³ Segev and Miesch extracted all sentences that mentioned the word ‘Israel’ during their time span and rated the level of positive and negative sentiments of each news site. This stage will also not be included in this analysis, because there is limited time to research every article in 2021 on the newspapers’ site.

Once all the articles were selected the analysis could start. The first step was selecting one article for each month of 2021, except for July and August. The selection was done by browsing the sites of all the newspapers and searching for articles on nuclear Iran in 2021. Some sites made it easy and already had sections available that contained all articles on nuclear Iran, like The Guardian. But The Times did not have a section on their site designated to nuclear Iran, but it did have the option to select ‘Iran’ as a search term. From there I

¹⁴⁴ Segev and Miesch, “A Systematic Procedure,” 1953.

¹⁴⁵ Segev and Miesch, “A Systematic Procedure,” 1953.

¹⁴⁶ Segev and Miesch, “A Systematic Procedure,” 1953.

¹⁴⁷ Segev and Miesch, “A Systematic Procedure,” 1953.

¹⁴⁸ Segev and Miesch, “A Systematic Procedure,” 1954.

¹⁴⁹ Segev and Miesch, “A Systematic Procedure,” 1954.

¹⁵⁰ Segev and Miesch, “A Systematic Procedure,” 1954.

¹⁵¹ Segev and Miesch, “A Systematic Procedure,” 1954.

¹⁵² Segev and Miesch, “A Systematic Procedure,” 1954.

¹⁵³ Segev and Miesch, “A Systematic Procedure,” 1955.

manually searched through this selection to get the articles that I needed for the specific dates and topic. The Wall Street Journal and The New York Times were a little different. Both had advanced search engines on their sites which I could use to search the year 2021 month by month for the terms ‘nuclear’ and ‘Iran’. By comparing the topics from each month a selection of 40 articles was made. The second step was collecting all paragraphs or sentences containing the keywords ‘nuclear’ and ‘Iran’ from the selected 40 articles. This selection was done by accessing each article and using ‘control + F’ to search all the paragraphs or sentences containing these specific keywords. All the paragraphs or sentences containing one or both keywords were placed in an excel document. From there all the sentences were grouped in tables per month they appeared in the newspaper. I ended up with four different tabs, one for each newspaper, containing ten tables in each tab with brackets that had all the sentences written in that month on Iran’s nuclear program. In a later stadium all these brackets containing the paragraphs or sentences were given a score. The number 1 was given for writing positive about Iran’s nuclear program. Or the number -1 was given for writing negative about Iran’s nuclear program. All the scores were tallied and put into a separate table. These tables are used in this paper (see tables 3,7, 11 and 15 in chapter 4). The next step was to make the categories. The categories were derived from all the actors and their corresponding actions that were mentioned throughout the 40 articles. The categories ended up being the following: *Iranian actors, Iranian actions, US actors, US actions, EU actors, EU actions, UN/IAEA actors, UN/IAEA actions, Israeli actors and Israeli actions*. When the categories were known I went back into the excel document and looked at all the sentences again. This time I was looking what categories were mentioned and if they were mentioned in a positive or negative way. I linguistically looked for certain words, searched for the message in the sentences or the underlying tones to see if the categories were mentioned in a positive or negative way. This will also be set out in more detail in the following chapter.

Chapter 4. Analysis

This chapter sets out the empirical results of the content analysis. The chapter is divided into four different sections. Section A will describe the results of the analysis of The New York Times. Section B sets out the results of the analysis of The Guardian. Section C sets out the results of The Wall Street Journal. The last section, section D, sets out the results of The Times (UK). Within each of the sections, the first part sets out how linguistically each of the newspapers report on a nuclear Iran. This section goes into detail about what words the newspapers use to describe Iran's nuclear program. Not all months are going to be set out in this section, only the months April and November will be highlighted. These months are chosen because in June 2021 a new Iranian president was elected, Mr. Raisi. He is a hard-liner and doesn't trust the United States, but he does want go back to the JCPOA. Another reason is that both of these month's articles wrote about Iran resuming nuclear talks again. It can be interesting it find out if there is a difference between these two months, with the presidential change, in the newspapers reporting about nuclear Iran. A third reason is that because of the length of this thesis a selection had to be made on which articles to focus in this chapter. Therefore, only two months out of the ten are set out in order to show how each newspaper linguistically wrote about Iran in 2021. The second part of all the sections provides the quantitative analysis. Through the use of tables the results of the content analysis are schematically shown. These tables will show how critical all 40 articles are toward Iran's nuclear program throughout 2021. Each section ends with a conclusion on whether a media bias is present in that newspaper and what the reason(s) for this bias could be.

Section A. The New York Times

In April The New York Times wrote that "Iran will resume with nuclear talks despite the sabotage that happened at their nuclear site Natanz".¹⁵⁴ Throughout the article most of the sentences include 'sayers' – those are the people or the entities who say something about Iran's actions or intentions. Most sayers are not referred to individually or by name, except for some quotes from Mr. Khamenei and Kazem Gharibabadi:

*"The declaration by Ayatollah Ali Khamenei appeared to put to rest any speculation that Iran would boycott or quit the Vienna talks aimed at saving the nuclear deal."*¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁴ Farnaz Fassihi and Megan Specia, "Iran's Top Leader Signals That Nuclear Talks Will Resume despite Natanz Sabotage," *The New York Times*, April 14, 2021, sec. World, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/14/world/middleeast/iran-nuclear-talks-to-resume.html>.

¹⁵⁵ Fassihi and Specia, "Iran's Top Leader Signals That Nuclear Talks Will Resume despite Natanz Sabotage," *The New York Times*.

“Kazem Gharibabadi, Iran’s ambassador to the International Atomic Energy Agency, the Vienna-based nuclear-monitoring arm of the United Nations, said on Twitter that process could begin soon.”¹⁵⁶

In all the other sentences that sayers were referred to as an entity such as ‘Iran’, ‘Israel’ or ‘Washington’:

“Iran has said that all of its departures from compliance with the nuclear agreement could be easily and quickly reversed if the United States rescinds its sanctions.”¹⁵⁷

“Israel, which regards Iran as an existential threat, supported Mr. Trump’s decision and has expressed anger at the Biden administration’s intent to revive the agreement(..).”¹⁵⁸

“Although American and Israeli governments have collaborated before to counter what they see as Iran’s militaristic nuclear ambitions, Washington denied any role in Sunday’s blackout.”¹⁵⁹

The most found verbs describing Iran were “boycott”, “quit” and “departure”. These verbs were used to describe that Iran was squashing speculations that it would boycott or quit participating in the nuclear talks in Vienna aimed at saving the nuclear deal.¹⁶⁰ Departure was used in relation to compliance and commitment from Iran to the nuclear deal; specifically about the limitations on uranium enrichment levels. Some verbs accompanied with the United States were about their sanctions on Iran, Trump renouncing American participation in the deal and the US denial in the Natanz blackout. But the US appears to have contrasting motivations, because on the one hand it wants a diplomatic solution – “Biden administration wants to revive the agreement” – and at the same time it does not nothing to resolve the crisis.¹⁶¹ The US does not give Iran any certainty of staying in the agreement if/when the US returns to the JCPOA. This is a certainty that Iran wants to have before returning to the agreement.

¹⁵⁶ Fassihi and Specia, “Iran’s Top Leader Signals That Nuclear Talks Will Resume despite Natanz Sabotage,” *The New York Times*.

¹⁵⁷ Fassihi and Specia, “Iran’s Top Leader Signals That Nuclear Talks Will Resume despite Natanz Sabotage,” *The New York Times*.

¹⁵⁸ Fassihi and Specia, “Iran’s Top Leader Signals That Nuclear Talks Will Resume despite Natanz Sabotage,” *The New York Times*.

¹⁵⁹ Fassihi and Specia, “Iran’s Top Leader Signals That Nuclear Talks Will Resume despite Natanz Sabotage,” *The New York Times*.

¹⁶⁰ Fassihi and Specia, “Iran’s Top Leader Signals That Nuclear Talks Will Resume despite Natanz Sabotage,” *The New York Times*.

¹⁶¹ Fassihi and Specia, “Iran’s Top Leader Signals That Nuclear Talks Will Resume despite Natanz Sabotage,” *The New York Times*.

In November The New York Times wrote that “Iran insisted on the immediate lifting of sanctions as nuclear talks resume”.¹⁶² Just like in April most of the sentences in this article include sayers. However, most sayers are not referred to individually or by name, except for the quotes from Mr. Mora, Trump and Mr. Kani:

“Mr. Mora said the nuclear working group would meet on Wednesday. “There is a sense of urgency” to restore the nuclear deal, he said, but “there is no fixed timeline in my mind.”¹⁶³

“The Biden administration has said it wants to return to the original nuclear deal with Iran (..).”¹⁶⁴

“The new Iranian government seems to believe the same, with Mr. Bagheri Kani repeating in an opinion article in the Financial Times his view that the very term “nuclear negotiations” is itself “rife with error.”¹⁶⁵

In all the other sentences the sayer is referred to as an entity such as ‘Iran negotiator’ or ‘Israel’:

“According to a senior European official, who requested anonymity, the Iranian negotiator also said during meetings that Iran would further escalate its nuclear program if those demands were not met.”¹⁶⁶

“(..). Israel says it will continue to try to sabotage, delay or destroy Iran’s nuclear program, even as American officials believe that such efforts are ultimately counterproductive.”¹⁶⁷

Most of the verbs in the article related to Iran are “restore” and “revive”. Restoring in this case means two things. First, restoring the nuclear agreement (JCPOA). The second thing is restoring the agreement with the IAEA to get them “access to inspect Iranian nuclear sites and recover recordings from those sites”.¹⁶⁸ The US and its actions were described a fairly neutral way by The New York Times in November. The New York Times places more emphasis on the IAEA than they did in April. But at the same time the newspaper is also very critical on the IAEA by stating that “the agency will soon be blind to what Iran is actually doing in its

¹⁶² Steven Erlanger, “Iran Insists on Immediate Lifting of Sanctions as Nuclear Talks Resume,” *The New York Times*, November 29, 2021, sec. World, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/29/world/europe/iran-sanctions-nuclear-talks.html>.

¹⁶³ Erlanger, “Iran Insists on Immediate Lifting of Sanctions as Nuclear Talks Resume,” *The New York Times*.

¹⁶⁴ Erlanger, “Iran Insists on Immediate Lifting of Sanctions as Nuclear Talks Resume,” *The New York Times*.

¹⁶⁵ Erlanger, “Iran Insists on Immediate Lifting of Sanctions as Nuclear Talks Resume,” *The New York Times*.

¹⁶⁶ Erlanger, “Iran Insists on Immediate Lifting of Sanctions as Nuclear Talks Resume,” *The New York Times*.

¹⁶⁷ Erlanger, “Iran Insists on Immediate Lifting of Sanctions as Nuclear Talks Resume,” *The New York Times*.

¹⁶⁸ Erlanger, “Iran Insists on Immediate Lifting of Sanctions as Nuclear Talks Resume,” *The New York Times*.

nuclear program”.¹⁶⁹ Israel is also mentioned in a critical way by The New York Times. The paper describe Israel as being “fiercely opposed to the 2015 deal” and that Israel will “sabotage, delay or destroy Iran’s nuclear program, even as American officials believe such efforts are counterproductive”.¹⁷⁰

All in all there is not much difference from The New York Times in the way they report on Iran’s nuclear program. The only difference is that in April the paper was more critical about the US than it was in November. Overall the New York Times is predominantly positive about the EU and the UN/IAEA and negative about Israel.

The next part of this section sets out the quantitative analysis. Table 1 shows the number of positive and negative sentences written in each month’s report in The New York Times on Iran’s nuclear program in 2021. These numbers were derived from the content analysis. All the paragraph from each of the ten articles were given either a positive or negative number, based on how these paragraphs portrayed Iran’s nuclear program. This was based on what words they used and what the underlying meaning of the sentences were.

Table 1. Number of positive and negative sentences for each month in the New York Times in 2021

	<i>Jan.</i>	<i>Feb.</i>	<i>Mar.</i>	<i>Apr.</i>	<i>May</i>	<i>Jun.</i>	<i>Sep.</i>	<i>Oct.</i>	<i>Nov.</i>	<i>Dec.</i>	Total:
<i>Positive</i>	5	2	2	5	5	3	2	3	2	1	30
<i>Negative</i>	7	4	9	7	8	6	11	3	6	8	69
Total:	12	6	11	12	13	9	13	6	8	9	99

Table 2 shows the percentage of positive and negative sentences in each month in the New York Times. Table 2 shows that overall, except for October where it is 50/50, the number of negative sentences about Iran’s nuclear program is higher. Meaning that The New York Times wrote very critically about Iran’s nuclear program throughout the whole year.

Table 2. Percentage of positive and negative sentences for each month in the New York Times in 2021

	<i>Jan.</i>	<i>Feb.</i>	<i>Mar.</i>	<i>April</i>	<i>May</i>	<i>Jun.</i>	<i>Sep.</i>	<i>Oct.</i>	<i>Nov.</i>	<i>Dec.</i>
Pos.	41,67%	33,33%	18,18%	41,67%	38,46%	33,33%	15,38%	50%	25%	11,11%
Neg	58,33%	66,66%	81,82%	58,33%	61,54%	66,66%	84,62%	50%	75%	88,89%

¹⁶⁹ Erlanger, “Iran Insists on Immediate Lifting of Sanctions as Nuclear Talks Resume,” *The New York Times*.

¹⁷⁰ Erlanger, “Iran Insists on Immediate Lifting of Sanctions as Nuclear Talks Resume,” *The New York Times*.

Table 3 shows the total percentage of positive and negative sentences in The New York Times in 2021. These numbers are derived from table 1. It can be seen that the number of sentences criticizing Iran's nuclear program in 2021 is more than twice as high as the number of positive, or non-critical, sentences on Iran's nuclear program.

Table 3. Total percentage of positive and negative sentences in the New York Times in 2021

	Total:
<i>Positive</i>	30,30%
<i>Negative</i>	69,70%

These three tables show that overall The New York Times wrote very critically about Iran's nuclear program throughout 2021. With the number of critical sentences, or negative, being more than twice as high as the number of sentences speaking positively about Iran's nuclear program in 2021.

Apart from the sentences being given a positive or negative number, all the actors and their respective actions that are mentioned in each of the sentences have also been analyzed. All the actors and their actions found in each paragraph were put into categories. Which resulted in the following ten categories: *Iranian actors*, *Iranian actions*, *US actors*, *US actions*, *EU actors*, *EU actions*, *UN/IAEA actors*, *UN/IAEA actions*, *Israeli actors* and *Israeli actions*. These actors and actions were present in the articles about Iran's nuclear program and their actions also shape the way Iran reacts or is portrayed in The New York Times. In some sentences Iran is portrayed a certain way through these international actors' eyes.

Table 4 shows the division of positive and negative sentences in each of the categories. Sometimes the number is higher for the categories in which the actors are named compared to the categories about their actions. This is due to the fact that in some sentences actors were mentioned, but not in relations to an action on their part. Another thing to know is that the IAEA is put in the same bracket as the UN, because the IAEA is part of the UN and has to report to the UN.

Table 4. Total number of positive and negative sentences per category in The New York Times in 2021

Category	Positive	Negative
<i>Naming Iran</i>	49	73
<i>Naming Iranian actions</i>	36	72
<i>Naming US</i>	42	41
<i>Naming US actions</i>	28	38
<i>Naming EU</i>	12	5
<i>Naming EU actions</i>	10	5
<i>Naming UN/IAEA</i>	24	3
<i>Naming UN/IAEA actions</i>	18	2
<i>Naming Israel</i>	5	11
<i>Naming Israeli actions</i>	3	10

Some interesting findings from table 4 are that first, the sentences naming Iran and Iranian actions are substantially more negative than positive. Second, the sentences naming the EU and UN/IAEA are wat more positive than negative. Third, that the US is mentioned more in The New York Times in relation to Iran's nuclear program than the EU, UN/IAEA and Israel. Fourth, that The New York Times overall writes about the US both in a critical and non-critical way, almost in a neutral way. Fifth, The New York Times overall seems to be very critical on Israel and its actions relating to Iran's nuclear program.

In conclusion The New York Times is more critical (negative) towards Iran's nuclear program than non-critical (positive). Therefore it can be concluded that a bias is present in The New York Times when writing about Iran's nuclear program in 2021. A likely reason for this bias is that The New York Times is often read by the people in power. As written before, newspapers are the preferred source of information for politicians. This could explain why The New York Times writes very neutral about the US and their actions against Iran in relation to the nuclear issues. The New York Times needs access to politicians as much as the politicians need the newspaper. When The New York Times decides to be very critical about the US they may lose access to the people that negotiate with Iran and can get them (inside) information. But The New York Times can also not get away with not writing about the US when reporting on nuclear Iran. I believe that because of this The New York Times writes as positive as it does negative about the US in relation to nuclear Iran.

Section B. The Guardian

In April The Guardian wrote that “France, Germany and the UK raise their concerns over Iran’s nuclear plans”.¹⁷¹ Very few sentences in this article include sayers and none of the sayers were individuals. All of the sayers were entities such as the ‘US annual national intelligence assessment’ or ‘France, Germany and the UK’:

“France, Germany and the UK have warned that Iran took a dangerous step towards the production of a nuclear weapon by enriching uranium to levels for which there is no credible civilian need”.¹⁷²

“On Tuesday the US annual national intelligence assessment concluded: “We continue to assess that Iranians are not currently undertaking the key nuclear weapons-development activities that we judge would be necessary to produce a nuclear device.”¹⁷³

Throughout April most of the verbs related to Iran were “enrichment” and “production”. The verb production is used in relation to Iran “taking dangerous steps towards the production of a nuclear weapon”, in the eyes of France, Germany and the UK.¹⁷⁴ The verb enrichment was used when Iran announced that “it was boosting its levels of uranium enrichment to 60%, just short of weapons-grade purity”.¹⁷⁵ Verbs accompanied with the United States were about their “nuclear-related sanctions” on Iran, Trump imposing these sanctions in 2016 and the US stating that the “Iranians are currently not undertaking the key nuclear weapons-development activities to produce a nuclear device”.¹⁷⁶ In April The Guardian does not mention Israel at all and only mentions the UN/IAEA one time. And when The Guardian mentioned the EU that month it was only in a positive way.

In November The Guardian wrote that there is “progress in the nuclear talks as Tehran agrees to discuss compliance”.¹⁷⁷ November differs a little with April in the number of sayers. When in April there were no individual sayer, in November there is one individual sayers - Yair Lapid:

¹⁷¹ Patrick Wintour, “France, Germany and UK Raise Concern over Iran’s Nuclear Plans,” the Guardian, April 14, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/apr/14/france-germany-and-uk-raise-concern-over-iran-nuclear-plans>.

¹⁷² Wintour, “France, Germany and UK Raise Concern over Iran’s Nuclear Plans,” the Guardian.

¹⁷³ Wintour, “France, Germany and UK Raise Concern over Iran’s Nuclear Plans,” the Guardian.

¹⁷⁴ Wintour, “France, Germany and UK Raise Concern over Iran’s Nuclear Plans,” the Guardian.

¹⁷⁵ Wintour, “France, Germany and UK Raise Concern over Iran’s Nuclear Plans,” the Guardian.

¹⁷⁶ Wintour, “France, Germany and UK Raise Concern over Iran’s Nuclear Plans,” the Guardian.

¹⁷⁷ Patrick Wintour, “Progress in Iran Nuclear Talks as Tehran Agrees to Discuss Compliance,” the Guardian, November 29, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/nov/29/iran-hopes-to-covertly-advance-its-nuclear-programme-says-israel>.

“Speaking in London, Lapid suggested Iran’s nuclear ambitions could be halted with “tighter sanctions, tighter supervision and conducting talks from a position of strength”.”¹⁷⁸

There was also one sayer that represented an entity, namely Iran’s foreign ministry:

“Iran’s foreign ministry condemned the British decision to host the Israeli foreign minister on the day the talks started. It said: “The UK issues anti-Iran statements with the Israeli regime – a nuclear-holder and enemy of the 2015 nuclear agreement (..).”¹⁷⁹

One verb that was used to describe Iran was “compliance”. The Guardian talks about compliance in the way that “Tehran discusses steps to come back into compliance with the 2015 agreement” and “allow UN nuclear inspectors acceptable access to Iran’s nuclear sites”.¹⁸⁰ There are no other verbs found that appear two or more times in the November article in relation to Iran. Another difference between The Guardian and The New York Times’ article from November is that The New York Times focused on the IAEA in their article while The Guardian focused on Israel and the UK/EU. Lapid is mentioned in five out of eleven analyzed paragraphs and not a positive way. The Guardian wrote that Lapid said that Iran had ulterior motives for resuming with the nuclear talks and that is “to get sanctions lifted because it (Iran) needs money for its global terrorist network and their continued race towards a nuclear weapon”.¹⁸¹

Overall there is not much difference between the two months in The Guardian in the way the paper reported on Iran’s nuclear program. The only difference is that in November the paper was more critical about Israel than it was in April. Overall the Guardian is predominantly positive about the EU and the UN/IAEA and negative about Israel. Just like the New York Times The Guardian also portrays the US in a more neutral way.

The next part sets out the quantitative analysis of all the analyzed sentences in the Guardian for 2021. Table 5 shows the number of positive and negative sentences written in each month’s report in the Guardian on Iran’s nuclear program in 2021. These numbers were derived from the content analysis. All the paragraph from each of the ten articles were given a positive or negative number, based on how these paragraphs portrayed Iran’s nuclear

¹⁷⁸ Wintour, “Progress in Iran Nuclear Talks as Tehran Agrees to Discuss Compliance,” the Guardian.

¹⁷⁹ Wintour, “Progress in Iran Nuclear Talks as Tehran Agrees to Discuss Compliance,” the Guardian.

¹⁸⁰ Wintour, “Progress in Iran Nuclear Talks as Tehran Agrees to Discuss Compliance,” the Guardian.

¹⁸¹ Wintour, “Progress in Iran Nuclear Talks as Tehran Agrees to Discuss Compliance,” the Guardian.

program. This was based on what words they used and what the underlying meaning of the sentences were. These numbers were derived from the content analysis.

Table 5. Number of positive and negative sentences for each month in the Guardian in 2021

	<i>Jan.</i>	<i>Feb.</i>	<i>Mar.</i>	<i>Apr.</i>	<i>May</i>	<i>Jun.</i>	<i>Sep.</i>	<i>Oct.</i>	<i>Nov.</i>	<i>Dec.</i>	Total:
<i>Positive</i>	1	0	6	3	2	1	3	3	1	2	22
<i>Negative</i>	4	4	5	6	4	2	5	1	9	0	40
Total:	5	4	11	9	6	3	8	4	10	2	62

Table 6 shows the percentage of the number of positive and negative sentences in each month in the Guardian in 2021. Overall, except for March, October and December, the number of negative sentences about Iran's nuclear program is higher. Meaning that The Guardian was more critical towards Iran in those months. This differs from The New York Times. The New York Times for all months, except for October where it was 50/50, was critical on Iran's nuclear program. It can be concluded that in this research The Guardian, overall, was less critical on Iran's nuclear program when compared to The New York Times in 2021.

Table 6. Percentage of positive and negative sentences for each month in the Guardian in 2021

	<i>Jan.</i>	<i>Feb.</i>	<i>Mar.</i>	<i>April</i>	<i>May</i>	<i>Jun.</i>	<i>Sep.</i>	<i>Oct.</i>	<i>Nov.</i>	<i>Dec.</i>
Pos.	20%	0%	54,55%	33,33%	33,33%	33,33%	37,5%	75%	10%	100%
Neg	80%	100%	45,45%	66,67%	66,67%	66,67%	62,5%	25%	90%	0%

However, the previous conclusion does not mean that overall The Guardian is not critical towards a nuclear Iran. As table 7 shows, the number of sentences containing a critical analysis of Iran's nuclear program is a little less than twice as high as the number of sentences containing a positive or non-critical analysis of Iran's nuclear program. Just like The New York Times, The Guardian is also very critical of Iran's nuclear program; just in a slightly less extreme way.

Table 7. Total percentage of positive and negative sentences in the Guardian in 2021

	Total:
<i>Positive</i>	35,48%
<i>Negative</i>	64,52%

These three tables show that overall The Guardian wrote very critically about Iran's nuclear program throughout 2021. With the number of critical sentences, or negative, being a little more than twice as high as the number of sentences speaking positively about Iran's nuclear program in 2021.

Apart from the sentences being given a positive or negative number, all the actors and their respective actions that are mentioned in each of the sentences have also been analyzed. All the actors and their actions found in each paragraph were put into categories. Which resulted in the following ten categories: *Iranian actors, Iranian actions, US actors, US actions, EU actors, EU actions, UN/IAEA actors, UN/IAEA actions, Israeli actors and Israeli actions*. These actors and actions were present in the articles about Iran's nuclear program and their actions also shape the way Iran reacts or is portrayed in The Guardian. In some sentences Iran is portrayed a certain way through these international actors' eyes.

Table 8 shows the division of positive and negative sentences in each of the categories. Sometimes the number is higher for the categories in which the actors are named compared to the categories about their actions. This is due to the fact that in some sentences actors were mentioned, but not in relations to an action on their part.

Table 8. Total number of positive and negative sentences per category in The Guardian in 2021

Category	Positive	Negative
<i>Naming Iran</i>	25	58
<i>Naming Iranian actions</i>	25	57
<i>Naming US</i>	18	22
<i>Naming US actions</i>	17	22
<i>Naming EU</i>	14	7
<i>Naming EU actions</i>	14	6
<i>Naming UN/IAEA</i>	19	8
<i>Naming UN/IAEA actions</i>	19	4
<i>Naming Israel</i>	3	6
<i>Naming Israeli actions</i>	3	5

Some interesting findings based on table 8 is that first, the Guardian is substantially more critical Iran and Iranian actions. The number of negative sentences containing Iran actors or actions are more than twice as high as the number of positive sentences. Second, the US and its actions are mentioned as positively as the EU and UN/IAEA. Third, The Guardian does write more critically about the US and its actions than about the EU or UN/IAEA and their actions. Fourth, overall The Guardian seems to be very critical on Israel and its actions relating to Iran's nuclear program.

In conclusion The Guardian is more critical (negative) towards Iran's nuclear program than non-critical (positive). Therefore it can be concluded that a bias is present in The Guardian when writing about Iran's nuclear program in 2021. A reason for this bias could be Islamophobia and that "British newspapers do not claim to be balanced or neutral".¹⁸² From the literature review it is clear that Europe has had to deal with a growing Muslims population in the past four decades, while this growth was relatively small compared to that in the US. This resulted in tensions between societal groups and an increase in Islamophobia in Europe. British newspapers, from 2002 onwards, often have an orientalist approach to portray the Islam and describe "Muslims as a threat, a problem or both".¹⁸³ This could be a potential reason why The Guardian has a bias when reporting on Iran's nuclear program, since it may regard Iran as 'them' versus the 'we' in the United Kingdom.

Section C. The Wall Street Journal

In April The Wall Street Journal wrote that "Iran will enrich uranium to 60%, in an effort to strengthen their hand in the nuclear talks".¹⁸⁴ In their April article most of the sentences included sayers. Most sayers are not referred to individually or by name. However, in this article there is one individual sayer - Gary Samore:

*"The Iranians believe their nuclear activity provides leverage in the talks," said Gary Samore (..) ."*¹⁸⁵

In other sentences the sayer is referred to as an entity such as 'former US officials', 'the White House', 'the U.S.':

*"Former U.S. officials said that Iran's announcement appeared to be calculated to fortify Iran's negotiating hand (..) ."*¹⁸⁶

*"The White House has said the U.S. had no involvement in the Natanz attack."*¹⁸⁷

¹⁸² Baker, "Representations of Islam in British Broadsheet," 315.

¹⁸³ Ogan et al., "The Rise of Anti-Muslim Prejudice," 31.

¹⁸⁴ Michael R. Gordon and Sune Engel Rasmussen, "Iran Says It Will Enrich Uranium to 60%, in Effort to Strengthen Hand in Nuclear Talks," *Wall Street Journal*, April 13, 2021, sec. World, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/iran-nuclear-negotiator-says-tehran-will-increase-purity-of-uranium-to-60-11618326331>.

¹⁸⁵ Gordon and Rasmussen, "Iran Says It Will Enrich Uranium to 60%, in Effort to Strengthen Hand in Nuclear Talks," *Wall Street Journal*.

¹⁸⁶ Gordon and Rasmussen, "Iran Says It Will Enrich Uranium to 60%, in Effort to Strengthen Hand in Nuclear Talks," *Wall Street Journal*.

¹⁸⁷ Gordon and Rasmussen, "Iran Says It Will Enrich Uranium to 60%, in Effort to Strengthen Hand in Nuclear Talks," *Wall Street Journal*.

“On Tuesday, the U.S. said U.S. intelligence assessed Iran wasn’t currently undertaking “key nuclear-weapons-development activities” necessary to produce a nuclear weapon.”¹⁸⁸

From all of the sentences the verbs that are most used in relation to Iran are “enrichment” and “negotiating”. Enrichment is used in relation to Iran “reaching 60% enrichment uranium would be Iran’s most dramatic breach of the 2015 accord yet”.¹⁸⁹ This verb is not used in a very positive way to describe Iran and its actions surrounding the nuclear deal. The verb negotiating is used with the meaning that Iran wants to gain the upper hand in the new nuclear talks, but also that Iran is willing to negotiate the 2015 nuclear deal again. For the US the first notable findings is that, as in The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal is also denying any US involvement in the Natanz attack/blackout. Second, that the only expert who is quoted in the whole article is an American expert. No other quotes, or individual sayers, are used in the article giving a very one sided, and Western, expert opinion on Iran’s actions surrounding the nuclear deal. Just like in the two newspapers, The Wall Street Journal is also very critical on Israel and Israeli actions in relation to Iran’s nuclear program. They state that if Iran pushes its nuclear program, this “could spur Israel to undertake new operations to try to thwart Iran’s progress”.¹⁹⁰

In November the Wall Street Journal wrote that “Iran doubles down on demand as nuclear talks resume”.¹⁹¹ Most of the sentences in this article do not include any sayers, but the sentences give a description of events and information. There two individual sayers presented in the article are Enrique Mora and Robert Malley:

“Speaking after the first session, Enrique Mora, the European Union official who coordinates the discussions, said the Iranian team had agreed to discussions on its nuclear work on Wednesday, following discussions about sanctions on Tuesday.”¹⁹²

¹⁸⁸ Gordon and Rasmussen, “Iran Says It Will Enrich Uranium to 60%, in Effort to Strengthen Hand in Nuclear Talks,” *Wall Street Journal*.

¹⁸⁹ Gordon and Rasmussen, “Iran Says It Will Enrich Uranium to 60%, in Effort to Strengthen Hand in Nuclear Talks,” *Wall Street Journal*.

¹⁹⁰ Gordon and Rasmussen, “Iran Says It Will Enrich Uranium to 60%, in Effort to Strengthen Hand in Nuclear Talks,” *Wall Street Journal*.

¹⁹¹ Laurence Norman, “Iran Doubles down on Demands as Nuclear Talks Resume,” *Wall Street Journal*, November 29, 2021, sec. World, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/iran-doubles-down-on-demands-as-nuclear-talks-resume-11638207200>.

¹⁹² Norman, “Iran Doubles down on Demands as Nuclear Talks Resume,” *Wall Street Journal*.

“U.S. senior Iran envoy Robert Malley has said if Iran has demands that go beyond the 2015 deal, Washington will also seek deeper concessions from Iran on its nuclear program. Iran has repeatedly rejected that.”¹⁹³

Both of the individual sayers are not directly quoted and are from Western countries, from the US and the EU (Spain). There is one other sayers who is representing an entity, namely Western diplomats:

“Diplomats say Iran’s advances will soon make it impossible to resurrect a centerpiece of the nuclear deal keeping Tehran at least a year away from amassing enough nuclear fuel for a bomb.”¹⁹⁴

The verbs used to describe Iran in the article are “demands” and “sanctions”. The demands are about Iran resuming with the talks on 2015 nuclear deal, but not without making demands before the talks even begin. Later in the article it is written that these demands are “traced out for Washington” and that “Iran has demands that go beyond the 2015 deal”.¹⁹⁵ As seen above in the quote from Robert Malley. Sanctions refer to the “nuclear and nonnuclear sanctions imposed during the Trump administration” on Iran.¹⁹⁶ Interestingly enough the article does not mention the UN/IAEA in any sentences. It also only names Israel once, in a negative way, by stating that Israel “could take military action against Iran’s nuclear program if the talks don’t stop Iran’s advance”.¹⁹⁷ And The Wall Street Journal positively mentions the EU as much as the US in this article.

All in all there is not much difference between the two months in The Wall Street Journal in the way the paper reported on Iran’s nuclear program. The only difference is that The Wall Street Journal is substantially more critical on Iran and Iranian actions, then on the US and the actions from the US regarding Iran’s nuclear program. The Wall Street Journal is as positive about Iran and their actions as it is on the US and their action Overall The Wall Street Journal is predominantly positive about the EU and the UN/IAEA and negative about Israel

The next part sets out the quantitative analysis of all the analyzed sentences in The Wall Street Journal for 2021. Table 9 shows the number of positive and negative sentences written in each month’s report in The Wall Street Journal on Iran’s nuclear program in 2021.

¹⁹³ Norman, “Iran Doubles down on Demands as Nuclear Talks Resume,” *Wall Street Journal*.

¹⁹⁴ Norman, “Iran Doubles down on Demands as Nuclear Talks Resume,” *Wall Street Journal*.

¹⁹⁵ Norman, “Iran Doubles down on Demands as Nuclear Talks Resume,” *Wall Street Journal*.

¹⁹⁶ Norman, “Iran Doubles down on Demands as Nuclear Talks Resume,” *Wall Street Journal*.

¹⁹⁷ Norman, “Iran Doubles down on Demands as Nuclear Talks Resume,” *Wall Street Journal*.

Table 9. Number of positive and negative sentences for each month in The Wall Street Journal in 2021

	<i>Jan.</i>	<i>Feb.</i>	<i>Mar.</i>	<i>Apr.</i>	<i>May</i>	<i>Jun.</i>	<i>Sep.</i>	<i>Oct.</i>	<i>Nov.</i>	<i>Dec.</i>	Total:
<i>Positive</i>	2	2	2	2	1	1	6	5	3	2	26
<i>Negative</i>	12	10	6	9	8	2	8	10	8	5	78
Total:	14	12	8	11	9	3	14	15	11	7	104

Overall, as table 10 shows, the number of negative sentences about Iran's nuclear program is substantially higher than the number of positive sentences. In most months of 2021 the numbers of negative sentences more than twice as high as the number of positive sentences. This shows that The Wall Street Journal was very critical towards Iran's nuclear program in 2021. Surprisingly, this is in line with the findings from The New York Times its counterparts. Where in all months of 2021, except for October, The New York Times was also very critical on Iran's nuclear program. These results differ from The Guardian. In The Guardian three out of the ten months were positive toward Iran.

Table 10. Percentage of positive and negative sentences for each month in The Wall Street Journal in 2021

	<i>Jan.</i>	<i>Feb.</i>	<i>Mar.</i>	<i>April</i>	<i>May</i>	<i>Jun.</i>	<i>Sep.</i>	<i>Oct.</i>	<i>Nov.</i>	<i>Dec.</i>
Pos.	14,29%	16,67%	25%	18,18%	11,11%	33,33%	42,86%	33,33%	27,27%	28,57%
Neg	85,71%	83,33%	75%	81,82%	88,89%	66,67%	57,14%	66,67%	72,73%	71,43%

The previous finding is supported by table 11, These numbers are derived from table 9. It shows that the number of sentences containing a critical analysis on Iran's nuclear program is about three times as high as the number of sentences containing a positive or non-critical analysis of Iran's nuclear program. The findings for The Wall Street Journal are more extreme than the findings for The New York Times and The Guardian.

Table 11. Total percentage of positive and negative sentences in The Wall Street Journal in 2021

	Total:
<i>Positive</i>	25%
<i>Negative</i>	75%

Overall these three tables show that The Wall Street Journal wrote very critically about Iran's nuclear program throughout 2021. With the number of critical sentences, or negative, being more than twice as high as the number of sentences speaking positively about Iran's nuclear program in 2021.

Apart from the sentences being given a positive or negative number, all the actors and their respective actions that are mentioned in each of the sentences have also been analyzed. All the actors and their actions found in each paragraph were put into categories. Which resulted in the following ten categories: *Iranian actors, Iranian actions, US actors, US actions, EU actors, EU actions, UN/IAEA actors, UN/IAEA actions, Israeli actors and Israeli actions*. Table 12 shows the division of positive and negative sentences in each of the categories. Sometimes the number is higher for the categories in which the actors are named compared to the categories about their actions. This is due to the fact that in some sentences actors were mentioned, but not in relations to an action on their part.

Table 12. Total number of positive and negative sentences per category in The Wall Street Journal in 2021

Category	Positive	Negative
<i>Naming Iran</i>	52	121
<i>Naming Iranian actions</i>	52	121
<i>Naming US</i>	48	46
<i>Naming US actions</i>	39	44
<i>Naming EU</i>	30	9
<i>Naming EU actions</i>	27	8
<i>Naming UN/IAEA</i>	38	2
<i>Naming UN/IAEA actions</i>	32	2
<i>Naming Israel</i>	3	10
<i>Naming Israeli actions</i>	3	10

Some interesting findings based on table 14 is that first, The Wall Street Journal is more than twice as critical on Iran and its actions relating to the nuclear program than it is non-critical. Second, that the US as an actor is mentioned as positive as it is negative, it is almost 50/50. The Wall Street Journal, just as The New York Times, writes very neutral about the US. Third, when Israel is mentioned by The Wall Street Journal in relation to Iran's nuclear program the actor is likely to be critiqued. Fourth, The Wall Street Journal is not very critical on the UN/IAEA and the EU and their respective actions. This is also in line with what was found in The New York Times and The Guardian.

In conclusion The Wall Street Journal is more critical (negative) towards Iran's nuclear program than non-critical (positive). Therefore it can be concluded that a bias is present in The Wall Street Journal when writing about Iran's nuclear program in 2021. A possible reason for this bias could be the same as for The New York Times. The Wall Street Journal is often read by the people in power. This could explain why The Wall Street Journal writes more neutral about the US and far more critical about Iran. The Wall Street Journal writes along the lines of the US (international) political agenda. Since US policy on Iran tends to be very critical and does not critically reflect the US's own position, the newspaper could tend to write along the lines of what is deemed normal in US politics. When The Wall Street Journal decides to be very critical about the US they may lose to their readership. A second reason could be that if the Wall Street Journal tends to stray too far from the conventional US foreign policy on Iran, their newspaper will not sell. Their readers and target audience will not see what is happening in their surroundings displayed in the newspaper and will not buy the newspaper anymore. Their readers could regard their articles as 'fake news' or containing misinformation.

Section D. The Times (UK)

In April The Times wrote that "Iran is taking its biggest step to building an atomic bomb".¹⁹⁸ In this article there are no sayers, but just descriptions of events. Some verbs that are mentioned in relation to Iran are "accused" and "blamed". However, these verbs are used to describe how Iran reacts to Israel. The newspaper states that "Iran accused Israel of an act of terrorism" and that Iran blames Israel for an explosion at its most important nuclear facility.¹⁹⁹ Another finding is that Israel is mentioned more than Iran in the April article in The Times. Just like in all the other three newspapers when Israel is mentioned it is almost always mentioned in a critical way. The Times does not mention the UN/IAEA, and often mentions the US to reiterate that Trump abandoned the agreement three years ago. And lastly, The Times mentions The New York Times as a source of information in their April article:

"The New York Times, quoting unnamed US and Israeli intelligence officials, also said there had been an Israeli role in the attack, in which an explosion destroyed the power system that fed the plant's underground centrifuges".²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁸Catherine Philp, "Iran Takes Its Biggest Step to Building Atomic Bomb," *Www.thetimes.co.uk*, April 21, 2021, sec. world, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/iran-takes-its-biggest-step-to-building-atomic-bomb-rtt587wxf>.

¹⁹⁹ Philp, "Iran Takes Its Biggest Step to Building Atomic Bomb," *The Times*.

²⁰⁰ Philp, "Iran Takes Its Biggest Step to Building Atomic Bomb," *The Times*.

In November The Times wrote that “Iran is back in the nuclear talks in a last-ditch effort to salvage the 2015 treaty”.²⁰¹ In November there are also no individual sayers, just like in April. There is however one sayer representing an entity, that is ‘Washington’:

*“Washington has said that its patience is limited and that “every option is on the table”
(..).”*²⁰²

Some of the verbs mentioned in relation to Iran are “produce”, “develop” and “sanctions”. The verbs produce and develop are both about Iran producing and developing a nuclear weapon. The Times writes that “Iran’s real motive, the West believes, is to spin out the talks while it increases production of fissile material to produce a viable nuclear warhead”.²⁰³ There also is another sentence in the article: “But this has little appeal for Tehran”.²⁰⁴ This sentence and the sentence before indicate that The Times somehow knows what Tehran ‘wants’ or what Iran’s ‘real’ motives are. Linguistically these statements seem far-fetched, because The Times has no direct sources to back these statements made in these two sentences. Therefore, these sentences can only be diminished to guessing.

All in all there is a difference between the two months in The Times in reporting on Iran’s nuclear program. In November The Times was way more critical about Iran’s nuclear program than in April. And in April The Times was way more critical on Israel than in November. But overall The Times is predominantly positive about the EU and the UN/IAEA. An overall finding is there are only three individual sayer in all of the ten analyzed articles in The Times. This is a stark contrast with the other three newspaper in this research.

The next part sets out the quantitative analysis of all the analyzed sentences in The Times for 2021. Table 13 shows the number of positive and negative sentences written in the articles from each month in The Times on Iran’s nuclear program in 2021. These numbers were derived from the content analysis. All the paragraph from each of the ten articles were given either a positive or negative number, based on how these paragraphs portrayed Iran’s nuclear program. This was based on what words they used and what the underlying meaning of the sentences were.

²⁰¹ The Times, “The Times View on the Iran Nuclear Talks: The Last Ditch,” *Www.thetimes.co.uk*, November 29, 2021, sec. comment, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/the-times-view-on-the-iran-nuclear-talks-the-last-ditch-3pwfcv165>.

²⁰² The Times, “The Times View on the Iran Nuclear Talks: The Last Ditch,”.

²⁰³ The Times, “The Times View on the Iran Nuclear Talks: The Last Ditch,”.

²⁰⁴ The Times, “The Times View on the Iran Nuclear Talks: The Last Ditch,”.

Table 13. Number of positive and negative sentences for each month in The Times in 2021

	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Total:
Positive	1	1	3	0	5	2	1	4	0	2	19
Negative	1	4	1	3	1	0	5	1	4	4	24
Total:	2	5	4	3	6	2	6	5	4	6	43

Table 14 shows the percentage of the number of positive and negative sentences in each month on Iran's nuclear program in The Times in 2021. The results are surprising and differ from the other three newspapers. Where The Wall Street Journal, its equal, was very critical about Iran. The Times seems to be substantially less critical. Four out of the ten months are non-critical towards Iran and one month is split 50/50. That means that only half of the articles in 2021 in The Times were critical about Iran's nuclear program. This finding is very different from the other findings in this research.

Table 14. Percentage of positive and negative sentences for each month in The Times in 2021

	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	April	May	Jun.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
Pos.	50%	20%	75%	0%	83,33%	100%	16,67%	80%	0%	33,33%
Neg	50%	80%	25%	100%	16,67%	0%	83,33%	20%	100%	66,67%

The previous finding is supported by table 15. It shows that the number of sentences containing a critical analysis on Iran's nuclear program is only slightly higher than the number of sentences containing a positive or non-critical analysis of Iran's nuclear program. It is not exactly 50/50, but the numbers also do not lay very far from each other.

Table 15. Total percentage of positive and negative sentences in The Times in 2021

	Total:
Positive	44,19%
Negative	55,81%

Apart from the sentences being given a positive or negative number, all the actors and their respective actions that are mentioned in each of the sentences have also been analyzed. All the actors and their actions found in each paragraph were put into categories. Which resulted in the following ten categories: *Iranian actors, Iranian actions, US actors, US actions, EU actors, EU actions, UN/IAEA actors, UN/IAEA actions, Israeli actors and Israeli actions.* Table 16 shows the division of positive and negative sentences in each of the categories. Sometimes the number is higher for the categories in which the actors are named compared to the categories about their actions. This is due to the fact that in some sentences actors were mentioned, but not in relations to an action on their part.

Table 16. Total number of positive and negative sentences per category in *The Times* in 2021

Category	Positive	Negative
<i>Naming Iran</i>	26	34
<i>Naming Iranian actions</i>	24	33
<i>Naming US</i>	19	19
<i>Naming US actions</i>	15	19
<i>Naming EU</i>	14	0
<i>Naming EU actions</i>	14	0
<i>Naming UN/IAEA</i>	10	1
<i>Naming UN/IAEA actions</i>	8	1
<i>Naming Israel</i>	4	12
<i>Naming Israeli actions</i>	1	12

Table 16 shows that first, the US is mentioned as positively as it is negatively. This is in line with *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*, but not with *The Guardian* – the other British newspaper. Second, *The Times* is very critical when writing about Israel. This finding is in line with what is found in the other newspapers. Third, the EU, the UN/IAEA and the US are being mentioned in a positive way by *The Times*. And fourth, *The Times* never mentions the EU in a critical way. This may have got something to do with the fact that *The Times* affiliates themselves more with Europe than with the US. But then again Brexit happened, showing a very different rhetoric from the UK. Apparently this rhetoric does not apply to *The Times*, who might be more pro-EU than the overall demeanor of the Brits.

It can be concluded from this research that *The Times* is only slightly more critical (negative) about Iran's nuclear program than non-critical (positive). This is a surprising find, since all the other newspapers seem to have a bigger sway towards being on the critical side. A possible reason why *The Times* might not be as critical as *The Guardian* and the other two American newspapers, could be that the journalists from *The Times* are more inclined to support the nuclear talks with Iran. This thought is derived from the fact that *The Times* is not at all critical about the EU or its actions. Most of the EU actions in the articles were in relation to the Vienna conference and resuming the nuclear talks with Iran. Maybe *The Times* supports the EU and Iran in these talks and sees that a nuclear agreement between all parties is in everyone's best interest.

Chapter 5. Conclusion and discussion

This thesis aimed to answer the research question: *‘Is there a media bias present in English language newspapers, specifically in American and British newspapers, when reporting on Iran’s nuclear program in 2021?’*

Overall, it can be concluded that all four newspapers had a bias when reporting in Iran’s nuclear program in 2021. However, the extent of the bias – as far as this research can conclude – differs between each of the newspapers. The Wall Street Journal was the most critical, and according to this research, had the biggest bias when reporting in Iran’s nuclear program. Then came The New York Times. The New York Times definitely has a bias, since it is very critical on Iran’s nuclear program. However, it slightly less critical than The Wall Street Journal but there still is a bias present. Next is The Guardian. There is not much difference between The Guardian and The New York Times in terms of having a bias, but The Guardian is ever so slightly less biased compared to The New York Times. And lastly, the newspaper with the least amount of bias is The Times. This does not mean that The Times has no bias, it just means that out of all four newspapers The Times had the least amount of bias when reporting on Iran’s nuclear program in 2021.

The results of this research is mostly in line with the hypothesis before starting the analysis. However, there is one surprising result in The Times. The Wall Street Journal and The Times were chosen for the same reason in this research - both newspapers were to represent the center-right and the conservative side. But in this research The Wall Street Journal is on the other side of the spectrum than The Times, where The Wall Street Journal had the most bias and The Times the least. This was not expected prior to the analysis. The Times is almost as critical as it is non-critical when reporting on Iran’s nuclear program. Meaning that there is a bias present, but the bias does not take the overhand. The Wall Street Journal on the other hand could not have more critical on Iran’s nuclear program in 2021.

This result shows that perhaps the political position of a newspaper might not matter as much when it comes to having a bias present in their reporting of the news. But that a newspaper might have a lesser degree of bias when reporting on Iran the closer it is in proximity to Iran. The two American newspapers, The Wall Street Journal and The New York Times, are the two newspapers with the most bias towards nuclear Iran. These newspapers are also the ones who are furthest away in proximity to Iran. While the two British newspapers, The Guardian and The Times, have the least amount of bias out of all four of them. And these newspapers are the closest in proximity to Iran.

This finding could be an interesting subject for future research - does proximity to Iran matter in the degree of bias reported in (English language) newspapers. I am aware that there is existing academic literature on if there is a difference between newspapers writing about a conflict and their proximity to the conflict. But I am not aware if such research exists for media bias in newspapers.

As with most academic papers, this research also has some limitations. The first being the sample size. The sample size in this research consists of only four case studies. Within these four case studies only 40 articles have been analyzed. In the overall scope of how many articles newspapers write on the daily, this sample is very limited. Another limitation being the timeframe. This thesis only researched newspaper articles from 2021. Two months of this years were omitted in the research and from these ten months only one article per months was chosen to be analyzed. The result of this limited sample size and narrow timeframe is that the conclusion and findings from this research cannot be generalized. The conclusions reached in this thesis are limited to the researched newspapers for those specific months of 2021. No conclusions can be drawn regarding all the other English language media in the world or for the other years, and months, in those respective newspapers. The scope of this research is very limited, but does offer an opening for future research. By adding more newspaper form the same country or from different countries. Or by adding more years to the timeframe this research could be a starting point for more elaborate research in this very same topic.

This research has attributed to the existing research on media bias and to a media bias in English language media. The selection of these four specific newspapers and researching if there is an existing media bias when reporting on nuclear Iran has not been researched before in this very setting. The New York Times, The Guardian and also The Wall Street Journal have been the subject of many academic research papers; also on papers analyzing media bias. But the composition of all three together with The Times is something that has not been researched to my knowledge.

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