

Iranian Media Narrative Perspectives on the US and Global Competition

A Media Ecology & Strategic Analysis (MESA) Group Report

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Iranian Media Narrative Highlights in Global Competition

The following highlights Iranian perspectives on: geopolitical dynamics in the Middle East, the US, the global order, and the role of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the region coming from Iranian news media intended for domestic audiences. The study analyzed 134 Iranian news articles across four native Iranian news media publications from 2014 to present.

Key Points from Iranian Media

- Iran is a regional power, center of the axis of resistance in the Shia Crescent, and a legitimate center of Islamic authority. Iran, and the regional power bloc it represents, is battle-tested against the US.
 - Iranian rhetoric forcefully commits to the protection of its borders and airspace, its regional interests, and the Shia Crescent in general; claims the nation does not seek escalation and is a victim of US-backed hostilities.
 - Iran, as a pillar of the axis of resistance against the US, is being isolated due to an attempted systematic destruction of the Shia Crescent across the Middle East.
 - The strength and unity of the Shia Crescent, the ability to demonstrate the injustices of the Western-led order, and showcasing Iran as an exemplar in Qur'anic modernity are critical to successful global competition and creating a balanced multi-polar world order.
- Presenting the US as anti-Iranian, untrustworthy, and self-interested to the point of recklessness to international community is the principle strategy Iranian media conveys to its population in order to delegitimize US claims against Iran as an aggressive international actor.
 - The US is shown as attempting to destroy the Shia Crescent and Iranian regional influence through: wars in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen, disingenuous monetary deals offered to Palestinians in exchange for the suppression of their political will, US-led militarization of Arab states, strategic backing of Arab-Israeli alliances against Iranian interests, suppression of the political will of Bahrainis, and the demonization of Hezbollah.
 - The US government is shown as accelerating conflict potentials; hawkish officials are shown as attempting to drive the US toward conflict in order to salvage victory amid failed US policies in the region.
 - The US is shown as in violation of international law and flaunting international consensus via a number of positions taken by the US government relating to: actions in Syria, the Paris climate agreement, Israeli settlements in the Golan Heights, the US embassy in Jerusalem, the treatment of Canada and Mexico concerning NAFTA, the economic trade war with China, and the Iranian nuclear deal.
 - Iran is shown as a source of political convenience for the US and Israel; a supposed enemy to be victimized at any time in order to further their own political agendas and fracture any possibility of regional unity.
- Iran media shows the US as determined to coalesce together an international faction against Iran substantial enough to force a negotiation of arms reduction and regional influence capabilities in deterioration of the Shia Crescent.
 - This is seen as a non-negotiable position from the Iranian perspective, particularly given the violations of the US government over the past years.
 - There is hope that significant numbers of states within the international community will side with Iran in the face of US aggression, and thus render US unilateral actions tolerable.

- Iran sees itself as capable of withstanding conflict with the US.
 - US pressures will rally Iranian people in support of the regime as it has for the past 40 years.
 - US lacks the political will and ability to absorb the financial burden that war with Iran would entail. Syria provides evidence of the resistance's ability to defeat US coalitions.
 - Regional destruction caused to US allies and assets, as well as global escalation potential, make war illogical.

Theoretical and Methodological Approach

Theory

Media perceptions of the global order inform domestic populaces on what issues are most important and what their roles are in the international order. Analysis of domestic media reveals how a political community comes to see themselves and others. News media functions as a ritualistic (re)construction of interests, identities, and future aspirations of the state for domestic audiences; this is because media contain narratives that serve to form and combine actors, agents, scenes, and plotlines to make the actions and goods pursued by the state intelligible to its population. Identification of narrative themes and perspectives of the world offered within domestic media reporting can unveil the enduring stories a political community comes to hold and those public goods considered virtuous and aspirational. With this identification, one can see how perspectives form, are ingrained in the public mindset, and shift over time. Strategic narrative assessment allows for an examination of the interests and expectations of target nations in relation to the US and the future global order. Such knowledge allows US policy makers to take actions in light of mutual understanding and mutual positions and/or meaningfully contest and counter narratives in ways conducive to US interests.

Methodology

This report on Iranian media narratives derives from the ongoing MESA (Media Ecology and Strategic Assessment) Group project on Global Competition and Conflict for the Strategic Multilayer Assessment (SMA) and is part four in a release of reports by MESA related to perspectives on unfolding global competition (Russia, China, and Venezuela). The findings here represent a mixed methodological approach of quantitative content analysis using the DIME (diplomatic, informational, military and economic) framework in relation to global competition, as well as a qualitative narrative analysis examining act, scene, agent, instrument, and purpose of the stories told within Iranian news media. A total of 134 Iranian news articles have been examined across four native Iranian news media publications (See Appendix A). These articles were specifically sampled from news articles related to global competition, and the current escalations between the US and Iran, using a series of keywords (See Appendix B) in order to harvest relevant articles over the past 5 years. Researchers utilized the Factiva platform, which aggregates and stores international news media, to conduct this analysis.

Detailed Findings on Global Competition

Key Vulnerabilities

The DIME framework was used to assess Iranian perspectives on key vulnerabilities as reported in Iranian media. Overall, diplomatic vulnerabilities are cited most often in Iranian media, followed by informational, economic and military vulnerabilities; Iranian media has a willingness to discuss diplomatic and informational vulnerabilities far more often than military and economic vulnerabilities for reasons to be discussed subsequently (See Table 1).

Table 1. DIME Vulnerabilities.

	Articles Mentioning Key Vulnerabilities
Diplomatic vulnerabilities	N=27 (20%)
Informational vulnerabilities	N=17 (12.7%)
Military vulnerabilities	N=7 (5.2%)
Economic vulnerabilities	N=8 (6%)

Diplomatic and informational vulnerabilities are presented as US led attempts to isolate Iran and disrupt any potential for Muslim unity. Iran is particularly cognizant of the weaponization of rhetoric by the US and Israel to sow internal and external divisions among Iranians and the larger Muslim community. Internal vulnerabilities include Western-led stoking of internal political disputes via information campaigns and online social networks,

“when the legitimate demands turn into masks to disrupt security and order and to attack public and private freedoms and property. The suspicions and misgivings surrounding the movement become more acute when Iran’s enemies, and the enemies of the Iranian people, grab this popular movement and incite more of it and develop it into violence.”ⁱ

The US and Israel are often accused of running global media campaigns against Iran to discredit the Iranian regime in the eyes of its own people and the rest of the world.

External vulnerabilities are linked to US and Israel promotion of takfiri¹ and financial bribery among Muslim communities as part of a divide and conquer strategy, *“one of the goals of terrorist acts in Islamic countries in Asia and Africa is to discredit Iran in the international system.”ⁱⁱ* A particularly strong argument is made against the alliance of Gulf Arab states with the US and Israel as one of economic convenience that corrupts Islamic unity in exchange for money and power in partnerships with untrustworthy enemies. The militarization of Gulf Arab regimes and the destruction of those forces aligned against American interests, Syria, Iraq, Algeria, Yemen, and Sudan, are seen as mechanisms of design and control from an American hegemonic order. The role of alliances and media are discussed in relation to this broader narrative, *“Gulf media played a dirty role in diluting the Arab identity and creating a culture of religious and sectarian antagonism and flattening the Arab dream with illusion.”ⁱⁱⁱ*

¹ A Muslim who accuses another Muslim of apostasy.

The broader discussion of diplomatic vulnerabilities is that Iran, as a pillar of the axis of resistance against the US, is being isolated in an attempted systematic destruction of the Shia Crescent across the Middle East,

“[the] Arab world is no longer as everyone knew in the past as a result of an accelerated series of crises and breakdowns, years of destruction, fragmentation and migration, destruction of administrative and economic structures, erosion and political collapse, which have come to more than one country in our region.^{iv}”

Military and economic vulnerabilities are rarely mentioned, largely because the conversation on vulnerabilities are rarely shown in the context of just the Iranian state. Rather, vulnerability is seen within a larger regional context that focuses on political and religious unity and identity.

Necessary Capabilities

Among necessary capabilities for future competition in the global order, diplomatic necessities are cited most often in Iranian media, an additional category of cultural capabilities was examined due to frequency of its mention. In contrast to the necessities of diplomatic relations and cultural unity, information, military, and economic capabilities are far less prevalent in Iranian media (See Table 2).

Table 2. DIME Necessary Capabilities.

	Articles Mentioning Necessary Capabilities
<i>Diplomatic capabilities</i>	N=52 (38.8%)
<i>Informational capabilities</i>	N=13 (9.7%)
<i>Military capabilities</i>	N=11 (8.2%)
<i>Economic capabilities</i>	N=8 (6%)
<i>Cultural capabilities*</i>	N=37 (27.6%)

* added to DIME framework for this study

The necessary capabilities described in Iranian media for successful global competition are directly related to the aforementioned vulnerabilities in political and economic unity regionally. From the Iranian perspective, the foundational commonality of Islam can be harnessed to address the failures of the region,

“Unfortunately, the Islamic world today suffers from weakness, poverty, internal conflicts and conflicts resulting from the pressure of ignorant regimes, and the only way to confront these pressures is to implement the Qur’anic teachings and resolve to move towards achieving its lofty goals.^v”

The Iranian regime itself, as will be discussed in greater detail in a subsequent section, is shown as capable of closing ranks with its people when under external pressures, as they have done successfully for the past 40 years,

“the most important achievement of the Islamic Republic of Iran over forty years is the ability and dignity as it, by relying on the energies of the great Iranian people, was able to withstand all the persistent conspiracies of the [Western] hegemony, especially America.^{vi}”

The ability to withstand American, Israeli and Saudi pressures is presented as a motivational call to the region and, particularly in the context of the Iranian nuclear deal, the larger international community to forge a viable multi-polar world order that is fair and resistant to the demands of American influence,

“Despite all these conspiracies, the Islamic Republic of Iran has managed to preserve its independence and identity, and the Iranian people have proved their existence and have become role models for the whole world.”^{vii}

The withdraw of the US from the nuclear agreement, and more recent actions of maximum pressure, are shown as designed to cripple any resistance to US domination of the global order and are used to argue the necessity for stronger Muslim and international communities. The need for diplomacy is presented as wake-up call to the international community,

“In order to preserve the international order and its stability, we demand that everyone declare a unified position on policies that threaten the interests of the peoples of the region...[and to]reject the policy of imposing the status quo by force on others; solving outstanding problems between countries in wise, realistic and productive way in accordance with international resolutions, not by force and siege and starvation and intimidation from any party.”^{viii}

International alliances such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization are seen as creating viable challenges to the US-led global order and allow ways for states such as Iran to compete globally against that order.

The strength and unity of the Shia Crescent, the ability to demonstrate the injustices of the US-led global order, and showcasing Iran as an exemplar in Qur’anic modernity are critical to successful global competition and creating a balanced multi-polar world order. Iran’s views on necessary capabilities can best be summed,

“as long as we are vigilant in foreign policy and avoid provocative and extremist behavior, the attempts of extremist forces calling for war in America and the Zionist entity against the Islamic Republic of Iran are doomed to failure and that the world will stand by us in front of these forces calling for war.”^{ix}

State of the Global Order

Perspectives on Global Order

Iranian media perspectives on the global order are surprisingly consistent over the course of the five years examined given the turbulence of the regime’s relationship with the United States. The overall presentation of the global order is slightly negative (see Table 3). The tensions between that order and Iran are always being squarely related to the actions of the US. Of particular disdain in the global order are the self-serving policies of the US and its Israeli and Saudi allies, seen as warmongers and bullies; though evidently vincible. What is critical to note is that even the Iran nuclear agreement was not seen as a friendly gesture from a benevolent US administration, but rather as contrition by a defeated enemy seeking to preserve its own standing as a dwindling global power. The Iran nuclear deal was seen as a recognition by the West that Iran, as a legitimate regional power representing Qur’anic values, simply could not be contained,

“This lofty view is the secret of the Islamic Republic of Iran’s movement in the region and the international order over the years following the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran. Western strategists admit that they cannot contain Iran’s rapid and growing movement in the international

order, even after decades of conflict with the people and regime in Iran, due to strong and legitimate religious and intellectual principles [of Iran].^{xv}

Table 3. Perspectives on Global Order.

	Article Mentions	Valence (1=positive, -1=negative)
<i>Perspectives of global order</i>	N= 99 (74%)	Mean = -.24
<i>Iran's Role in global order</i>	N=67 (50%)	Mean = .60

There is a moral component to the failures of the US-led global order that is particularly noteworthy,

“These apparatuses [Western states] behave in the same way as the old ignorance of the practices of injustice and discrimination, the destruction of human dignity, the promotion of women's arrogance, corruption and moral decay in their corrupt culture.^{xvi}”

This moral failure and biasing of the US-led faction of the global order is used yet again to draw attention to the importance of regional power balances in the world order,

“We (Muslim world) have to agree between each other and understand that Iran is an essential part and the Arab world, as it is an essential part of the region. Without these two wings, this great bird cannot fly... the Arab-Islamic Phoenix has two wings and must be consistent so that we proceed, adding that colonialism will continue to try to sow division among us and we must not drift with this propaganda.^{xvii}”

The continual attempted destruction of the Shia Crescent by the US-led faction of the global order is a particular point of emphasis; arguing that Iran is being presented as an enemy and used as an American pawn to unite Arab leaders in recognition of Israel. However, the presentation of Iran as determined to preserve the Shia Crescent cannot be overstated; the victories of Shia Muslims are shown as a “*new dimension of the resistance movement against occupation and American influence in the region and against the Israeli occupation of Arab lands.^{xviii}”* The Shia Crescent is seen as a vital power bloc needed to legitimately challenge US domination.

Iranian media presents its representatives as making appeals to the international order on behalf of the Palestinian people, the people of Yemen, and the people of Bahrain as they face off against, and are repressed with violence by, US-led factions. The violation of international law and flaunting of international consensus by the US is of particular concern and is highlighted over and over again regarding positions taken by the US government relating to: actions in Syria, the Paris climate agreement, Israeli settlements in the Golan Heights, the US embassy in Jerusalem, the treatment of Canada and Mexico concerning NAFTA, the economic trade war with China, and the Iranian nuclear deal. Iranian media show the nation's leaders as presenting the US and its allies to the international community in ways that demonstrate,

“the world is clearly witnessing the logic and rationality of the Islamic Republic of Iran, its calls for peace, its commitment to its commitments, and the ruthless and belittling extremism of the ugly triangle of America, Israel and some Arab governments.^{xiv}”

Iranian media depicts an international community left inept by American self-interests, and repeatedly points out the inconsistencies of the international community in their claimed support of human rights, while allowing for savage attacks on Shia Muslim populations by US-led

factions of the global order. The unintelligibility of US foreign policy positions and the utter disregard for international rules is something the Iranian media highlights as a possible breaking point for the world order as currently configured; warning that disaster awaits those who continue to follow a politically and morally bankrupt US, “*that America by weakening the international system, it harms itself and each party. In fact, the hour of payment is coming.*”^{xv}

Iranian media argues there is a shift in global power balances to that of a multi-polar order with several actors attempting to challenge US hegemony; including Iran in its regional power bid. However, there is absolutely no question that the US will be the leader in the global community for the near-term, foreseeable future, in large part because no other actor has the types of truly global requirements of dominance that the US has taken upon itself,

“A multi-polar world is the reality of the continent today, as forces like China and India have steadily increased their strength and the European Union is stronger than the past under the leadership of Germany and France. However, any country other than America will not have the willingness to lead the international order.”^{xvi}

Thus, presenting the US as anti-Iranian, untrustworthy, and self-interested to the point of recklessness to international community is the principle strategy Iranian media conveys to its population in order to delegitimize US claims against Iran as an aggressive international actor. There is also a recognition that the Middle East will be, and currently is, one of the primary arenas in which the battles for a more multi-polar world order will be waged; the US government is seen as accelerating conflict potentials in the region intentionally, “*the world must prepare for a ‘turbulent era,’ ...as in every transition period, ‘there are points of ambiguity...but in this era of new systemic chaos, it goes even further’.*”^{xvii}

Iran’s Role in Global Order

First and foremost, Iran is shown as a regional power, maintaining the axis of resistance in the Shia Crescent, and propagating its legitimacy as a center of Islamic authority. These are vital aspects of its self-presentation. Iran is shown as a mature, sophisticated international actor; defiant of world super powers and able to successfully forge a theocratic regime as a modern state,

“the world is passing a historic turning point towards a new civilization to a world based on justice and not discrimination...The Islamic Republic has proved by its experience that it is possible to withstand the regime of hegemony and to resist it, to triumph over it and to achieve development.”^{xviii}

Iranian media presents the role of Iran in the global order as a positive role model for countries attempting to displace the yoke of Western rule toward a more equitable, regionally-focused, theocratic system of leadership and control.

The notion of resistance and the importance of Iran as a genuine challenger to US authority, that has been victimized by US policies for decades, are clear drivers of self-identification,

“resistance is the only way to confront the unjust and arrogant practices of the world domination system, especially the United States...It can be said firmly that we live in one of the most political and challenging regions of the world as developments in the region have a direct impact on the balance of power at the global level and the international system.”^{xix}

“The role of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the global system and its presence as a major player in the region cannot be ignored...the schemes of the former enemies have been thwarted so far.”^{xx}”

“Iran and its efforts to bring peace and security in the region and the world, and the appeal of the surrounding countries and the regional and international circles communicating with them, are witnesses with the world where today stands the White House with its racist policies and its unjust boycotts of Iran and its great people.”

In sum, Iran shows itself, and the regional power bloc it claims to represent, as battle-tested against the US. Iranian media claim Iran as the first real regional power to emerge with autonomy during the Cold War; stating frankly that Iran is both a fair international actor committed to peace and absolutely unwilling to compromise its regional power status no matter the pressures applied from the US,

“Political observers note that Iran's thesis on security and peace in the region and the world is no different from what is being discussed at the 18th Doha Forum, and that Tehran was the first to call for it.”^{xxi}”

“The withdrawal of the US or its stay in the nuclear agreement will not be important for the 12th government. We are an independent people and we have great capabilities and competencies. We have managed the country for the last 40 years despite all the problems, including the war, the embargo and the sanctions imposed on us... We never trust America and the Iranian people have the experience and the willingness to run the country along with the leadership and all the authorities in the country under any circumstances and we will not face any problem.”^{xxii}”

Iranian media claim the state to be, *“the most powerful force among the Islamic countries in the world”^{xxiii}* and that,

“The start of the Islamic revolution in Iran was seen as the beginning of the collapse of the world's bi-polarism and the emergence of regional players... The Islamic Republic of Iran has played a very prominent role in the fight against terrorism, violence and extremism, so that there is no serious change in our region without taking into account the position, role, and place of our country.”^{xxiv}”

“[Iran is] the first modern religious state based on the principle of combining and mixing studies and being well-versed between the doctrine and determination, science and reason.”^{xxv}”

Managing Global Competition

Alliances and Competitors

The US, Israel (Zionist entity), and Saudi Arabia are the most often mentioned competitors, along with states seen as under direct influence and/or pressures of those three; such as the UAE and the UK (See Table 4). The US is shown as attempting to destroy the Shia Crescent and Iranian regional influence through: wars in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen, disingenuous monetary deals offered to Palestinians in exchange for the suppression of their political will, US-led militarization of Arab states, strategic backing of Arab-Israeli alliances against Iranian interests, suppression of the political will of Bahrainis, and the demonization of Hezbollah. Overall, Iran is seen as a source of political convenience for the US and Israel; a supposed enemy to be

victimized at any time in order to further their own political agendas and fracture any possibility of regional unity,

“We need unity among Islamic countries and peoples more than ever because they are a necessity that cannot be ignored... Westerners are the terrorists and promote violence and raise differences in Muslim societies, which are suffering from problems today, there is no doubt that the youth in the Islamic nation must be at the forefront to confront these conspiracies.”^{xxvi}

The Shia Crescent and the greater Muslim community are depicted as the allies of the Iranian regime. Iranian media makes a point to speak of alliances in terms of an Iranian regional area protectorate rather than making claims of alignment or alliance with more traditional world powers.

Table 4. Alliances and Competitors.

	Frequency	Examples
<i>Mentioned Competitors</i>	N=80 (60%)	US, Israel, Saudi Arabia, UAE, UK, Turkey
<i>Mentioned Alliances</i>	N=43 (32%)	Shia Crescent, Palestinians, Yemen Houthi, Syrian regime, Lebanese and Hezbollah, greater global Muslim community, Shanghai Cooperation Organization

Conflict Management

Conflict management is mentioned frequently, particularly in light of recent escalations with the US (See Table 5). In general, Iranian rhetoric forcefully commits itself to the protection of itself and its regional interests. However, Iranian media virtually always put forward that the nation does not seek escalation and that it is a victim of US-backed hostilities. Appeals to the international community for rational evaluation of the escalations and demonization of Iran by the US are frequently made, and detailing the violations of international norms by the US are presented as potential wedge issues,

“the military escalation in the region and the drums of war and the waving of the confrontation accompanied by the imposition of unilateral economic sanctions by the United States against the Islamic Republic neighbor are contrary to international laws and customs.”^{xxvii}

“the positions of the Islamic Republic of Iran with regard to the embargo are clear and transparent, that these sanctions are illegitimate and oppose the nuclear agreement as well as the Security Council resolution and the decision of the International Court of Justice.”^{xxviii}

“Rouhani said the US exit from the nuclear deal with Iran was another example of the escalation of relations between Europe and America and said the nuclear deal was the result of two years of intensive talks between Iran and six other countries, half of which are European.”^{xxix}

“As long as Iran is vigilant in foreign policy and avoids provocative and extremist behavior, the attempts of the extremist forces in America and the Zionist entity calling for war will fail and the world will stand by us in front of these forces.”^{xxx}

Table 5. Conflict Management.

	Frequency
<i>Conflict/Escalation Management</i>	N=47 (35%)
<i>Legitimate Deterrence</i>	N=23 (17%)
<i>Redlines to Action</i>	N=14 (10%)

Redlines to Action

Iranian media offer a number of scenarios considered absolute redlines for the Iranian regime. The violation of Iranian territory by enemy spy craft being chief among them given the recent actions taken by the regime, “We don't seek war, but will zealously defend our skies, land & waters.”^{xxxii}

An important note in relation to redlines is that Iran presents the defense of the Shia Crescent as an obligatory commitment of the state and very clearly articulates what a war with the US would entail; a long drawn out conflict in which Iran would ultimately emerge as victorious due to costs and lack of political will for conflict in the US. The preservation of the Assad regime is a significant point of emphasis and shown as a clear victory for the resistance,

“The goal of the resistance forces in preventing the overthrow of the government in Syria is achieved, and the goal of these forces in the siege of hostile groups is achieved day after day, while the goal of opening a large gap along the border with Iraq has entered the implementation phase; the forces of the resistance are not expected to retreat, but rather to expand, install and protect no matter what.”^{xxxiii}

“Tehran has time and again noted that it stands ready to defend its interests in the region in the wake of US aggression”^{xxxiii}

“[Quoting Bernie Sanders on possible war between the US and Iran] this will be an asymmetrical war...it will be a never-ending war in the Middle East. It will make the war in Iraq look like a cakewalk”^{xxxiv}

“half of the world's oil exports are at the mercy of Iran and its allies and missiles, and Iran threatens to close the sea straits if it is attacked or its oil exports.”^{xxxv}

Perspectives on the US

The presentation of the United States in Iranian media, for reasons described above, is exceedingly negative (See Table 6). The principle narrative offered is that the US despises Iran because Iranians dared to defy US colonial rule over 40 years ago. That act of defiance, one that the US has been unable to destroy, has revealed the genuinely dark character of the United States as head of the global order. Presentation of the US following the nuclear agreement showed a humbled world power; cowering amid its international failures,

“the master of this arrogant, arrogant, arrogant world finds himself obliged and forced to bow to the need to negotiate...acknowledging that Iran has escaped its siege, and that there is no escape from co-existence with us, even if it is reluctantly.”^{xxxvi}

Table 6. Perspectives on the US & Western Europe.

	Article Mentions	Valence (1=positive, -1=negative)
<i>Perspectives on the US</i>	N= 104 (77.6%)	Mean = -.74
<i>Perspectives on Western Europe</i>	N=44 (33%)	Mean = -.16

Through coverage of the current US administration, Iranian media mostly made mention of the US and its failed efforts in Syria; as well as actions like covert Blackwater mercenary units involved in conflicts in places such as Yemen and the general chaos US policies have left across the Middle East. The results of the 2016 US presidential election brought immediate concerns that Iran would again face pressures from the “Great Satan” based on rhetoric coming from US politicians, though Iranian media noted,

“We do not want to be pessimistic. We still have not reached the inauguration of the new president. We will judge the actions. We do not want to put barriers between us and anyone in the world. We are an open people. We want to deliver our message in a safe and reasonable manner. We want to apply the laws and we will judge the performance of this new president through his actions and not through his words.”^{xxxvii}

The resultant policies of the US government in respect to both Iran and the international order gave rise to a presentation of the United States as a reckless and dangerous actor with zero regard for the world order,

“He who simply withdraws from international organizations and violates the commitments of his country sends a message in cancellation of all the efforts since the establishment of the United Nations towards establishing global security.”^{xxxviii}

“the withdrawal of the United States from the joint comprehensive action plan as well as from UNESCO and the Paris Climate Treaty, are indicators of it pursuing policies based on unilateralism... the US president's unilateral policies expose pluralism policies of the international system to great danger, [we are] calling on the world's countries to save multilateralism in the international system.”^{xxxix}

“The first is that they cannot be trusted, and an agreement with the United States is only a proposition because you do not know when you sign an agreement with the United States when the President will try to find excuses to cancel it... lessons we learn from America's treatment of Canada is that no one can trust the United States, why tire yourself and hold trade deals with a country that is willing to impose sanctions on its best allies and lie at the same time about the reasons for the imposition of punishment?”^{xl}

“[US government] policies have corrupted the business process and undermined America's credibility.”^{xli}

The experiences of Iran with the US government in relation to the nuclear agreement and recent military escalation are viewed with little surprise by Iranian media. The expectation of conflict as a political convenience of the US is coupled with the perceived irrationality of the US government. The more hawkish US advisors are shown as attempting to manufacture some semblance of victory against Iran as they face the culmination of US failures in the Middle East

and around the globe. Whether the US will actually commit to war is an unknown, and recent Iranian media discussions on US policy attempt to separate the decisions of the President from the recommendations of advisors. These discussions are an attempt to display uncertainty in the decision-making process of the US administration and highlight certain US officials as set on a path to war with Iran.

Ultimately, Iran views the US as attempting to coalesce together an international faction against Iran substantial enough that it would be forced to negotiate a reduction of force and regional influence in deterioration of the Shia Crescent. This is seen as a non-negotiable position from the Iranian perspective, particularly given the violations of the US administration over the past years. There is hope that significant number of states within the international community will side with Iran in the face of US aggression, and thus render US unilateral actions as tolerable. If there is war, Iranian media has firmly laid a foundation that presents the US as the aggressor,

“what we see are unending and sustained US attempts to crank up political, psychological, economic and yes military pressure on Iran in quite a provocative way. Such actions cannot be assessed as anything but a conscious course to provoke war.”^{xlii}

Perspectives on Western Europe

For the most part, Western Europe is presented in a neutral manner (See Table 6). The exception being the United Kingdom, which is often shown as a warmonger and anti-Iranian, *“by attributing blame to Iran in respect of the suspicious attack on the tankers, and misrepresenting the facts in relation to the downed US drone, the British media runs the risk of fanning the flames of conflict and helping to produce a war by altering the perceptions of the protagonists and their constituencies.”^{xliii}*

Beyond the UK, however, Western Europe is largely shown as being appealed to in order to come to the defense of abused Muslims around the world and to call out the US administration for its misdeeds. The failure of the West to meaningfully challenge and stand up to the abuses of the international order by the US renders it inept as a willing multi-polar partner in Iranian media presentations.

Appendix A: List of Iranian Media Sources

Al Alam News
Alvefagh
Iran Daily
Mehr News Agency

Appendix B: Total Hits by Media Source

	Global Competition*	Global Order*	International Influence*	War**	Sovereignty**	
Media Source						
Al Alam News	17	169	8	87	51	
Alvefagh	0	5	0	50	17	
Iran Daily	8	12	8	62	3	
Mehr News Agency	13	25	8	61	4	
Total for each keyword	38	211	24	260	75	
Total hits						608
Total sample***						134
* Date range: Feb 1, 2014 - May 15, 2019						
** Date range: Jun 15, 2019- Jun 23, 2019 (of note, these terms were not subject to the same screening due to time restrictions and thus had considerable amounts of irrelevant data such as: conflicts occurring around the globe unrelated to Iran, specific articles on the Syrian war, and issues of sovereignty challenges in non-related domains. Efforts were made to sample only relevant articles via qualitative judgments made by the researcher)						
*** Sample represents 93% confidence interval with 7% margin of error						

ⁱ Al Alam News, 1/5/18
ⁱⁱ Al Alam News, 4/21/16
ⁱⁱⁱ Al Alam News, 2/19/16
^{iv} Al Alam News, 11/10/17
^v Al Alam News, 5/23/15
^{vi} Mehr News Agency, 2/13/19
^{vii} Mehr News Agency, 7/4/16
^{viii} Mehr News Agency, 5/11/19
^{ix} Al Alam News, 7/24/18
^x Mehr News Agency, 6/3/15
^{xi} Al Alam News, 5/27/14
^{xii} Mehr News Agency, 11/13/16
^{xiii} Al Alam News, 6/1/17
^{xiv} Al Alam News, 7/24/18
^{xv} Al Alam News, 3/16/19
^{xvi} Mehr News Agency, 8/29/17
^{xvii} Mehr News Agency, 1/22/17
^{xviii} Al Alam News, 9/30/14
^{xix} Mehr News 2/13/19
^{xx} Al Alam News, 2/16/19
^{xxi} Al Alam News, 12/15/18
^{xxii} Al Alam News, 5/7/18
^{xxiii} Al Alam News, 4/20/18
^{xxiv} Al Alam News, 1/28/18
^{xxv} Al Alam News, 2/9/15
^{xxvi} Al Alam News, 4/7/18
^{xxvii} Mehr News Agency, 5/11/19

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- xxviii Al Alam News, 11/3/18
xxix Mehr News Agency, 11/1/18
xxx Al Alam News, 7/24/18
xxxi Mehr News Agency, 6/21/19
xxxii Al Alam News, 6/1/17
xxxiii Iran Daily, 6/19/19
xxxiv Iran Daily, 6/19/19
xxxv Al Alam News, 8/1/18
xxxvi Al Alam News, 2/9/15
xxxvii Mehr News Agency, 11/13/16
xxxviii Al Alam News, 10/14/17
xxxix Mehr News Agency, 5/16/18
xl Al Alam News, 3/16/19
xli Al Alam News, 3/6/19
xlii Iran Daily, 6/18/19
xliii Iran Daily, 6/23/19