Doing (in) Justice to Iran's Nuke Activities? A Critical Discourse Analysis of News Reports of Four Western Quality Newspapers

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Abstract   Adopting and adapting Theo van Leeuwen's system networks of the representation of social actors, this study explores the morpho-syntactic modes through which social actors implicated in Iran's nuclear activities discourse are represented in news reports of 4 Western quality papers all dealing, one way or another, with the issue of imposing or tightening sanctions on Iran, viz. *The Economist*, *Express*, *The Washington Post*, and *The New York Times*. Using the 5 sets of categories of inclusion/exclusion, activation/passivation, association/dissociation, individualisation/ assimilation, and personalisation/impersonalisation, we try to show the possible asymmetrical patterns in representing a variety of social actors involved, in particular the actors associated with the Western camp and the Iranian government on the issue of the sanctions. The findings have revealed systematic ideological bias in representing the Iranian side, thereby giving a differential treatment of Iran.

Keywords   Critical Discourse Analysis, Social Actors, Iran's Nuclear Discourse, Exclusion, Activation, Passivation, Association, Dissociation, Individualisation, Assimilation, Personalisation, Impersonalisation

1. Introduction

People in modern times are being exposed to news more than any other period in the history. It is true that news has been with man from the very origin of life on this planet. All the same, the modes through which it is transmitted and even commented on have been greatly enhanced. This is due to technological advances especially in the domain of communication systems and networks. Nowadays people from all walks of society are implicated in a mad give and take of news. What generally goes unnoticed, however, is the ideological load as well as meaning-making function of news. People especially those belonging to the less educated and less privileged strata of society are blind to the fact that news is a social, cultural, and ideological construction. As Caldas-Coulthard puts it.

News is not a natural phenomenon emerging from facts in real life, but socially and culturally determined. News producers are social agents in a network of social relations who reveal their own stance towards what is reported. News is not

the event, but the partial, ideologically framed *report* (italics in the original) of the event[1. p.274].

Given the large number of newspapers and magazines in the world, news, whatever its form - in black and white, on television, radio or the Internet – has a unique and sometimes prestigious place in the lives of millions of people across the world. These people are by and large passive receivers of news from media controllers. This latter group can consciously or unconsciously (re)shape people's conception of social and cultural phenomena without being overtly noticed or questioned themselves. Far from being a faithful account of people and their activities, the news items and stories are recontextualized accounts of reality through the eyes of different people. News stories "reflect the practices and interests of the individuals, or … the institutions, which produce them"[2. p. 36].

On account of the ideological import of the news, it has been one domain of inquiry within such socially committed research frameworks as Critical Discourse Analysis. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a branch of linguistics differs from (general) linguistics in that whereas the latter studies language for its own sake, CDA is committed to the task of laying bare how "language and discourse are used to achieve social goals and[effect] *social maintenance and change*"[italics added][3. p. 2]. Also following Foucault, CDA disciples, unlike general linguists, do not assign a

neutral and ideologically innocent role to discourse. Instead, they opt to approach discourse as "symbolic human interaction"[3. p.1] loaded with ideological overtones and involved in power nexus.

CD analysts diverge on their methods and theoretical orientations. They follow quite different methodical tools and theories in uncovering the creeping ideologies and asymmetry in texts they wish to approach. "What unites critical discourse analysis is neither methodology nor theoretical orthodoxy, but a common goal: the critique of the hegemonic discourses and genres that effect inequities, injustices, and oppression in contemporary society"[4. p. 166]. Despite diversity in using methods and techniques, they stand by their common cause i.e., understanding and making understood to the public the plight "of those who suffer most from dominance and inequality" and targeting " the power elites that enact, sustain, legitimate, condone or ignore social inequality and injustice"[5. p.252]. One cannot help saying that for CDA scholars the end justifies the means. They also have concerns about the fact that "many social problems are from the injudicious use of language or other forms of communication"[3. p. 2].

CDA is further informed by interdisciplinairty. In its mission of demythologizing hidden ideologies, it draws heavily on techniques and tools of neighboring disciplines such as social semiotics, stylistics, critical theory, film theory, etc. For the very reason mentioned above, currently it tends to incorporate teamwork performed by scholars of different fields and sometimes tastes. It is not only becoming more and more a joint undertaking but also it is gaining prominence as an "international project with contributions both to theory and practice from many countries and many cultures"[3. p. 7]. Thus it is as yet difficult to delineate the boundaries of CDA as a discipline.

To repeat the important point mentioned earlier, some CDA scholars are working, inter alia, in the domain of media discourse to show the myriad ways in which news (re)shape people's understanding of state of affairs and how it imbues people with attitudinal views toward people and their practices not belonging to the mainstream course of thought/action and finally how news fulfils the purpose of legitimatizing or delegitimizing certain social practices. In line with what was said, the present study aims at critically examining the ways media controllers in the West give a positive self-representation and negative other-representation in the case of Iranian nuke program. Iran's nuclear undertaking, which has almost for a decade been the subject of much heated discussion especially in media news, has been given highlighted representation by the elite Western media. The news coming from Western sources often tend to foreground Iran's nuclear activities at the expense of backgrounding other atomic players (the West's allies).

In the present study, Theo van Leeuwen's framework of the representation of social actors, as one powerful tool of enquiry within CDA, was adopted and adapted to analyzing data gleaned from four Western quality papers. What follows is a description of an adaptation of six categories of van Leeuwen's model of critical linguistics.

2. Van Leeuwen's Morpho-Syntactic Inventory of Representational Choices

It was mentioned earlier that CDA benefits from a variety of tools and techniques in its pursuit of goals it tries to achieve. Different scholars approach the felt social difficulties besetting them differently. This paper, in dealing with the discourse of nuclear activities, capitalizes on a mainly linguistically-oriented conceptual framework proposed by Theo van Leeuwen. All the same, the difference between his proposed framework with those of some linguistically-oriented CD analysts (for instance Hodge and Kress's model, 1996) is that his "operationalization of analytical categories on 'in' and 'out' groups prioritizes the *socio-semantic*[italics in the original] aspects over linguistic realization"[6. p. 58]. In the words of van Leeuwen[7.],

There is no neat fit between sociological and linguistic categories, and if Critical Discourse Analysis, in investigating for instance the representation of agency, ties itself in too closely to specific linguistic operations or categories, many relevant instances of agency might be overlooked (p. 33).

In his seminal article on the representation of social actors, van Leeuwen[7.] introduces "a *sociosemantic*[italics in the original] inventory of the ways in which social actors can be represented" (p. 32). His model allows the critical enquirer to "bring to light … systematic *omissions and distortions*[italics added] in representations"[8. p. 194]. To this end, six morpho-syntactic categories of his inventory were used in this study to highlight bias in representing the Iranian side in its struggle with the West over pursuing its nuclear goals. Those six categories will be briefly explained below.

Van Leeuwen starts with a discussion of dichotomy of inclusion/exclusion. Exclusion, "an important aspect of Critical Discourse Analysis"[7. p. 38] is divided into two subcategories: total and partial exclusion (or to use van Leeuwen's tentative terms, *radical* vs. *less radical exclusion*). The first subcategory "leave[s] no traces in the representation, excluding both the social actors and their activities"[7. P. 39]. Thus, it is appropriate for a comparison of different renderings of the same event within different sources. Partial exclusion falls further into two subclasses: *suppression* in which "there is no reference to the social actor(s) in question anywhere in the text"[7.], and *backgrounding* in which the excluded social actors in a specific activity pop up later in another part of the clause, sentence or text. Here the text defers mentioning the social actor(s) responsible for a specific activity and the social actors in question "are not so much excluded as de-emphasized, pushed into the background"[7.]. Suppression can be realized in different ways e.g. through agentless passive voice, non-finite clauses (e. g., infinitival clauses), nominalizations and process nouns, and

finally via certain adjectives. Examples of the four ways of realizing suppression are given below respectively:

Two people were killed in the unrest in the capital.

To hammer home an argument is difficult.

Financial support came to us (here *support* is a nominalised form excluding the doer of the activity).

They were deprived of their legitimate rights (in this instance, the adjective *legitimate* does not include the doer of the action i.e., the person(s)/institutions who legitimize the rights).

It is important to notice that the vested interested in the media determine who/what to be included and who/what to be suppressed or backgrounded to suit their ideological purposes.

Van Leeuwen's inventory, following systemic functional linguistics, further takes account of role allocation i.e. semantic roles allocated to different participants within a sentence, for instance agent, patient, beneficiary, … and also *activation*/*passivation* dichotomy. In *activation*, "social actors are represented as the active, dynamic forces in an activity"[7. p. 43]. *Passivation* happens when social actors are shown as undergoing an activity. Passivation entails another distinction: *subjection* and *beneficialisation*. "Subjected social actors are treated as objects in the representation"[7. p. 44], whereas beneficialised social actors are other people or parties who benefit from an activity. Below are examples of activated, subjected, and beneficialised individual or entities, respectively.

Iran backed out of the deal.

Germany is bringing in new Turkish workers.

The Turkish workers arrived, bringing cheap labor force to the factories of Cologne.

Social actors can also be referred to as individuals (*individualization*) or as groups (*assimilation*). Assimilation itself is of two types, *aggregation* and *collectivisation*. "The former quantifies groups of participants, treating them as 'statistics', the latter does not"[7. p.49]. Below you can find examples of individualised, aggregated, and collectivised participants, respectively.

President Ahmadinejad vowed to wipe Israel off the face of the earth.

Two out of five members of the Security Council voted against the proposal.

The West is worried about Iran's nuclear activities.

The next pair which is treated in the sociosemantic features list includes *association*/*dissociation*. *Association* "refers to groups formed by social actors and/or groups of social actors"[7. p. 50]) as juxtaposed against another group. Groups may be formed or unformed (*dissociated*) in a text or body of texts.

The last categories covered in the present study are *personalisation*/*impersonalisation* i.e., whether a given social actor is represented as a human being or not. Impersonalisation further falls into two categories: *abstraction* and *objectivation*. "Abstraction occurs when social actors are represented by means of a quality assigned to them by the representation … Objectivation occurs when social actors are

represented by means of reference to a place or thing closely associated either with their person or with the activity they are represented as being engaged in"[7. p.59]. Objectiviation divides into four subcategories: *spatialisation*, *utterance autonomisation*, *instrumentalisation*, and *somatisation*. Spatialisation has to do with the place with which social actors are closely related:

Iran backed out of the deal.

Instrumentalisation has to do with the instrument with which social actors are represented as being engaged in an activity. In utterance autonomisation, social actors are represented by means of reference to their utterance. Finally, somatisation "is a form of objectivation in which social actors are represented by means of reference to a part of their body"[7. p.60].

3. Related Studies

As editors of *Applied Linguistics Methods: A Reader*, Coffin, Lillis and O'Halloran, in justifying why they opted to incorporate CDA as a significant method of applied linguistics, contend that it "engages with language-related real-world problems …[and] investigates how language use reproduces the perspectives, values and ways of talking of the powerful, which may not be in the interests of the less powerful"[9. pp. 3-4]. CDA has thus been a fruitful area of enquiry to researchers especially in social sciences. Wherever scholars have felt a real problem arising 'from the injudicious use of language', they have attempted to raise people's consciousness to face and even challenge it.

Among the areas they have worked on one can mention discourses of sexism, racism, migration, and the like. News has also been probed into by enquirers as one potential powerful site of shaping people's views on certain issues of interest to their controllers. In particular, one of the most controversial and much-covered newsworthy areas has been Iran's nuclear undertaking. However, it has received little critical exploration by CD analysts. Few critical discourse studies focusing on the representation of Iran's nuclear activities have been conducted and the few which have been done on the issue have been conducted by Iranians not the Western scholars. It may well be due to the marginalizing effect of the news discourse of the West. Also, in the eyes of the Westerns, a country whose current President Ahmadinejad threatens to 'wipe Israel off the face of the earth' may well deserve any treatment, be it real or symbolic. Facts about the Iranian regime speak for themselves. Nothing is odd or unnatural about the way it is represented in the Western media. There is a widespread suspicion of Iran's nuclear purposes even among Iran's most notable business and nuclear partners. This study does not intend to discuss whether the above-mentioned suspicion is well-grounded or not. Rather, it tries to convey the ways the media discourse strives to inculcate xenophobia in their audiences.

One of the studies carried out on the representation of social actors in the US newspapers in the case of Iran's nuclear

program has been done by Izadi and Saghaye-Biria. Based on their analysis of three elite American newspaper editorials in *The New York Times, The Washington Post,* and *The Wall Street Journal*, the authors found that these "editorials selectively framed the issues surrounding the Iranian nuclear dispute by employing linguistic, stylistic, and argumentative maneuvers"[10. p. 161].

In the same vein, in another study done by Atai and Rezaie Adriani on the issue, the researchers found "penetration of bias in the representation of a discursive vent, in this case the journalistic debate over Iran's nuclear issues"[11. p. 21].

All in all, the few number of studies done in this area of discourse study attests to the as yet less-explored domain of news discourse on Iranian nuke debate. The present research aims at shedding new light on the issue especially since the issue has been one of the most newsworthy in the last decade or so.

4. Objectives/Significance of the Study

This paper looks critically at the textual modes through which the West imposes its own values and ideologies in its news system – in this particular regard the news focusing on Iran's hot issue of nuclear activities. Using van Leeuwen's terminology, it strives to show how the Western newspapers include and foreground Iran's nuclear undertaking at the expense of the exclusion of other atomic actors in the world supported by the West. The study thus purports to show the selective mechanisms through which the news from the Western sources gives a falsified and biased view of Iran's nuclear job at hand or uses it as a cover-up for its own nuclear activities for better or worse.

Based on the above objectives, the following research questions were advanced to be answered later in the study:

1. Is Iran's nuclear undertaking given a differential representation compared to that of other Western or West-backed countries in the Western media?

2. If so, what are the morpho-syntactic mechanisms employed by the Western media to represent Iran's nuclear undertaking as unwanted?

On general plains, the present study is important in that it makes an endeavor, not to eradicate, but to lessen to a certain degree, the xenophobic conception of Iran. It is helpful since it tries to raise people's awareness of the creeping nature of ideology and how it works to build a discourse suited to its own purposes of domination and manipulation. This task finds considerable significance if we put Iran's nuclear controversy in the context of Post-September-eleventh events and the anti-Islamic sentiments that followed those events. Caldas-Coulthard, writing of those days, remarks:

four days after the 11 September terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, reports of the events are being broadcast continuously. People from the four corners of the earth are glued to their television sets or radios following the development of events that surprised us all. Each new hour brings a new state of affairs. The *many voices we hear*, the *many perspectives on the events*[italics added], will construe different state of affairs[1. p. 272].

The study is also pedagogically of import to teachers and curriculum developers, among others, in that journals and newspapers texts occupy a unique place in textbooks as well as such approaches as critical pedagogy. Nowadays every atom of a pedagogical setting is seen as bearing an ideological mark to be recognized and worked on.

5. Procedures for Data Collection/Analysis

The materials used for analysis in this study include four news reports and stories taken from two famous US online newspapers i.e., *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times* and two elite British online papers i.e., *The Economist* and *Express*. The texts were chosen from a body of journalistic corpus (2009-2010) all dealing, one way or another, with the power clash between the Iranian side and the Western camp over 'Iran's contentious nuclear program'. However, since Iran, at the time of writing, is facing one of the most severe sanctions ever experienced by a nation and nearly every day minutes and consequences of the sanctions are being published or broadcast, the data were purposively sampled from among those bringing up the issue of sanctions against Iran. The West is currently set against not allowing to Iran 'develop atomic bombs' and although it sees 'military attack' as yet another 'option' to be used against Iran, it is literally at war with Iran. Speaking of the West's probable confrontation with Iran, Congressman Ron Paul (in a speech delivered April 5, 2006) asserted that "[S]anctions are an act of war"[12]. For these reasons, four news stories discussing the West's embargos against Iran were decided on by the researcher.

As for the above-mentioned newspapers, the reason for the choice of them is that because of their vast number of readers all over the world, they are highly influential in the lives and understanding of millions of people and even provide the local networks or small networks across the globe with ostensible 'objective' reports and stories. The reports, stories, and editorials in these newspapers are cited or translated or commented upon far more than any other papers. Further, because of the political clashes between the Iranian, on the one hand, and the British and US governments, on the other, the newspapers coming out in these countries are more liable to be ideologically loaded.

The data collected then were analyzed using Theo van Leeuwen's ground-breaking socio-semantic categories of the representation of social actors to see, in particular, how the Iranian side of the clash is being represented in the foregoing texts. Also, since van Leeuwen's framework, in its entirety, can be applied only to a huge corpus dealing with diverse issues and social groups, as he himself does in his 1996 article, on reviewing the selected texts, only five sets of categories were found to be of relevance to analyzing them. Those categories, most often used by enquirers, according to

KhosraviNik[6.], include inclusion/exclusion, activation/passivation, and association/dissociation.

Furthermore, on analysis, the main social actors in the clash were identified by the researcher. Those actors included Iran (Iranian government and the individual/entities related to it), the West (the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, their partners, and the individuals/entities linked to or supporting them in any way), China/Russia, the mediating countries (Brazil/Turkey), neutral countries (some rotating members of the UN Security Council), Israel, the Iranian people, and other Middle East nuclear high-fliers (the Middle East countries following the example of and inspired by Iran's nuclear goals in their nuclear pursuits). Some overlap between the groupings of social actors was found to be unavoidable, for instance, the case of Turkey as a mediating country and a Security Council member.

6. Findings

Inclusion/Exclusion Pattern

On close analysis, the underlying inclusion/exclusion pattern within the examined data yielded some intriguing results. The pattern is summarized in table 1.

A first glance at Table 1 shows that some actors are nearly totally excluded from the texts at hand. The Iranian people, the main target of the sanctions, and Israel, the West's number one ally and the country deemed to be threatened by Iran's ever developing nuclear activities, have been almost radically and unsuspiciously excluded from all the discussions. From the very inception of sanctions, some criticism has been voiced against them on the grounds that they target the Iranian people rather than 'bring to heel' the 'hard-line' regime, as the *Express* article puts it. Moreover, logic tells us that at least some part of the Iranian population stand by the government's wish to pursue the country's nuclear program. In practice, representing these voices does not seem to be in the interests of the Western media which strive to give an image of Iran as an isolated island in the contemporary world of diplomacy. Thus the Iranian people, at large, are nearly totally excluded from the texts under analysis to render them either as indifferent to the 'regime's nuke ambition' or as taking a stance on the country's nuclear issue that is distant from and unlike that of the Iranian government.

Israel, which has threatened to launch 'air strikes' against Iran's nuclear sites, has been adroitly suppressed to show its aloof position with regards to the clash – as if it has nothing to do with the West's contention with Iran. After all, Iran is a threat to the 'world security and peace'. Its ideological war with Israel is nothing to be rated.

It is also radically excluded from a list of the Middle East countries trying to reach *civilian* nuclear technology, thereby implying that it is not after developing its 'civilian' nuclear activities let alone achieving atomic bombs:

Extract 1

He said 13 states in the Middle East, including Turkey, Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria and Libya were trying to keep pace with Iran by developing their own civilian nuclear programmes.

Israel is only twice included. In one instance, it is included in relation to an option i.e., air strikes against Iran's nuclear facilities. Elsewhere, it plays the not so active role of a distant commentator skeptical of Iran cooperating well with the mediating countries to remove suspicions of its nuclear program:

Extract 2

it is a matter of "months and years" before US or Israeli air strikes against Iran's nuclear installations are no longer an option.

Extract 3

Israel has already said that Brazil, inexperienced in Middle East diplomacy, may have been manipulated, and more scepticism is certain in the days to come.

Also, Table 1 tells us that Iran i.e., the Iranian government is the only social actor that is more backgrounded than included. Thus it is de-emphasized in the reports:

Table 1. Inclusion/exclusion in the news reports of 4 Western quality papers

	Included	Backgrounded	Suppressed
Iran (N=263)	43.25 % (N=114)	54.5 % (N=143)	2.25 % (N=6)
The West (N=231)	51.5 % (N=119)	44.5 % (N=103)	4 % (N=9)
Iranian people (N=1)	- (N=1)	-	-
Israel (N=6)	- (N=2)	-	- (N=4)
Mediating countries (N=32)	68.75 % (N=22)	18.75 % (N=6)	12.5 % (N=4)
Neutral countries (N=20)	80 % (N=16)	15 % (N=3)	5 % (N=1)
Other Middle East nuclear high-fliers (N=8)	- (N=3)	- (N=4)	- (N=1)

Extract 4

Iran backed out of the deal, demanding higher-enriched uranium immediately, and insisting the swap take place in Iran.

Another conspicuous exclusion in the texts at hand happens in case of public opinion – be it that of the people of the Western countries or, as it was mentioned, that of the Iranian people. It is meant to hammer home the idea that Iran nuclear activities is a case of power struggle between the Western governments and the Iranian authorities. No reference, whatsoever, is made to survey of public opinions – a phenomenon not uncommon in the Western journalistic texts.

Role Allocation (Activation/Passivation Pattern)

Table 2 shows how the four texts allocate roles to the main social actors implicated in Iran's nuclear controversy:

The activation/passivation pattern, likewise, tells the reader that, among the most commonly represented social actors, Iran is more passivated than activated. It is passivated with regard to sanctions and pressures, thus giving force to the effectiveness of sanctions against Iran and 'bringing it to heel' and also in relation to any compromise – be it a deal with the Western countries (permanent members of the UN Security Council) or one with the countries it has a more amicable relationship with (e.g., Turkey). :

Extract 5

The European Union is considering tough new sanctions against Iran to protest its nuclear program, including banning investment in the oil and gas sector and tightening restrictions on shipping and finance.

Extract 6

The Obama administration failed to win approval for key proposals it had sought, including restrictions on Iran's lu-crative oil trade, a comprehensive ban on financial dealings with the Guard Corps and a U.S.-backed proposal to halt new investment in the Iranian energy sector.

Wherever it is activated (41% of the cases), it is activated mostly in relation to two activities i.e., enriching uranium and going further ahead in its nuclear development thereby implying that is after getting mass-destructive weapons and not complying with the 'world community':

Extract 7

But because Iran has carried on enriching uranium since it turned down the October deal, it has quite a lot more of the low-enriched stuff sitting around than it would send to Turkey under the new deal … .

Extract 8

while the negotiations with the West dragged on, the regime was buying time to enrich enough uranium for its chilling ambitions and was shoring up its defences around its 'civil' nuclear sites.

The Western camp is, for the most part, represented as activated in relation to two activities: imposing 'crippling' sanctions on Iran and offering negotiations to 'reluctant' Iran::

Extract 9

While trying to tighten the economic screw, the bloc's foreign policy chief, Catherine Ashton, has made it clear she is ready for talks with Iran's chief negotiator, Saeed Jalili.

Extract 10

The resolution would establish an embargo on large weapons systems such as battle tanks, combat aircraft and missiles … . Iran could continue to buy light weapons.

Table 2.   Role allocation in the news reports of 4 Western quality papers

	Activated	Subjected	Beneficialised
Iran (N=305)	41 % (N=125)	58 % (N=177)	1 % (N=3)
The West (N=291)	88.75 % (N=258)	11 % (N=32)	.25 % (N=1)
Iranian people (N=-)	-	-	-
Israel (N=-)	-	-	-
Mediating countries (N=35)	63 % (N=22)	34.25 % (N=12)	2.75 % (N=1)
Neutral countries (N=13)	77 % (N=10)	15.25 % (N=2)	7.75 % (N=1)
Other Middle East nuclear high-fliers (N=7)	100 % (N=7)	-	-

Table 3.   Individualization/assimilation in the news reports of 4 Western quality papers

	Individualised	Aggregated	Collectivised
Iran (N=102)	9 % (N=9)	3 % (N=3)	88 % (N=90)
The West (N=96)	20 % (N=19)	1 % (N=1)	79 % (N=76)

Table 4.   Association/dissociation in the reports of 4 Western quality papers

	Associated	Dissociated
Iran (N=7)	(N=6)	(N=1)
The West (N=8)	(N=8)	-
Russia (N=8)	(N=5)	(N=3)
China (N=5)	(N=3)	(N=2)
Turkey (N=7)	(N=4)	(N=3)
Brazil (N=6)	(N=3)	(N=3)

Individualisation/Assimilation Pattern

Table 3 gives the reader a hint of how the main social actors (i.e., Iran and the West) are represented with regard to individualisation/assimilation dichotomy:

Here what is remarkable about the pattern of representation is that both the Iranian government and the Western countries are collectivised in the majority of cases. It gives an image of the West as a 'homogeneous, consensual group', totally set on tougher penalties on Iran:

Extract 11

Countries in the bloc (i.e., EU) would stop "all cargo flights operated by Iranian carriers or originating from Iran with the exception of mixed passenger and cargo flights."

Extract 12

Leaders in other Western capitals are unlikely to see things that way.

Extract 13

the West had entered a 'new ball-game' and a 'newly dangerous pgase' with Tehran … .

It is mostly individualised (20 percent of the cases) either in the person of experts 'warning' of Iran's nuclear 'ambition' or in the person of elite American politicians (for instance, president Obama and Hillary Clinton):

Extract 14

Lawrence Hass, former spokesman for US presidential candidate AL Gore, told a London conference last week: "When an administration says it wants to talk to this regime it is … ."

The Iranian government is most often collectivised as 'Iran', 'Tehran', and 'the regime'. Only twice is it cited as 'the Islamic Republic'. The reason for avoiding such a collectivised term may well be that it conjures up the ideological war between the Crusaders and Mohammedans:

Extract 15

while negotiations with the West dragged on, the regime was buying time to enrich enough uranium for its chilling ambitions … .

It is, by and large, individulised in the person of the 'hard-line' Iranian president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad or military commanders. Only once is it individualised in the person of a negotiator – an individual passivated in relation to nuclear talks.

Extract 16

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was still years away from having the capability of using the country's uranium to make a nuclear bomb.

Here Iran is individualised with regard to a president who is after making nuclear bombs, but at the same time is collectivised in relation to having a 'stockpile' of apparently harmless uranium!

It is also aggregated in case of the exact number of banks and companies subject to the West restrictions. The West is aggregated only once implying that it is a unanimous entity.

Association/Dissociation Pattern

Table 4 shows the association (the formation of groups in relation to a specific activity, whether of a static nature or of a less stable one) and dissociation (how groups are unformed):

What is noticeable about Table 3 is the rather more stable and enduring nature of the Iranian government and The West's formation of groups i.e., how they are associated. They are, unlike time-serving Russians and Chinese, are represented more as associated than dissociated. In the texts under analysis, the lines between the two sides and their allies are sharply drawn.

Association in case of Iran occurs mostly when individuals or entities subjected to tough sanctions are enumerated:

Extract 17

The measures … include a list of senior officials who would be barred from entering the European Union, including Ali Akbar Ahmadian, chief of the Revolutionary Guards joint staff; Morteza Safari, commander of the navy; and Hosein Salimi, commander of the air force.

Extract 18

Companies and entities regarded as close to the government or controlled by it would be frozen. These include First East Export Bank, Bank Sepah and Bank Sepah International.

The formation of in-group (membership) and out-group (non-membership) in the form of the categories association/dissociation is very conspicuous in case of Russia and China – countries deemed as 'partners' at times and at other times as 'veto-wielders' against the sanctions, thus at odds with the West over Iran's nuclear program. In the data, wherever these two countries comply with the wishes of the West (in particular in case of agreeing with sanctions against Iran), they are represented as quite separate countries associated with the West. However, when they challenge those wishes and stand by their economic preferences in dealing with Iran, they are represented as dissociated countries with the West and associated with each other as a group with common goals. The pattern of association/dissociation, thus, gives them the status of traitors or at the very least time-servers:

Extract 19

Russia has joined America in sending a stronger signal that Iran must stop enrichment.

Extract 20

Diplomats said that some of sanctions were proposed with the full knowledge they would be removed by the Russians and Chinese.

Turkey and Brazil follow nearly the same pattern as China and Russia. Every now and then, they form a united front and oppose the West and at other times they are shown as rotating members of the UN Security Council 'without no votes' and in tune with the permanent members.

Personalisation/Impersonalisation Pattern

Table 5 reveals the extent to which the leading social actors in the four newspaper reports i.e., the Iranian govern-

ment and the West are represented as having the features[+ human] or[- human].

As Table 5 indicates the Iranian government is represented as impersonalised (88.5 %) more than the Western authorities (66 %). According to van Leeuwen (1996), impersonalisation serves different purposes in discourse: "it can background the identity and/or role of social actors; it can lend impersonal authority or force to an activity or quality of a social actor; and it can add positive or negative connotations to an activity or utterance of a social actor"[7.]. In the case of Iran, impersonalisation serves the purpose of removing it from the ordinary world of the (Western) reader and thus attributes to it the quality of being a cryptic and mysterious entity – an entity which is unknown and unknowable. Mystery is one major source of fear. The representational category of impersonalisation creates a discourse of Iran's Nuclear activity which is founded on fear. If fear is aroused in the public, it pushes it towards anchoring a xenophobic feeling of Iran.

Abstractions, according to van Leeuwen, "add connotative meanings; the qualities abstracted from their bearers serve, in part, to interpret and evaluate them"[7.]. Although abstractions, on analysis, were found not to be statistically significant, they were, in the case of the Iranian government, totally connotative in a negative sense:

Extract 21

Iran Nuclear 'Mightmare' Months Away

The West is personalised more than Iran in the person of especially American top authorities issuing new restrictions on Iran. It thus adds to the force of the sanctions against Iran.

Further, to legitimise the sanctions, the four newspaper reports avail themselves of utterance autonomisation in the form of 'leaked reports' and drafts issued. In such cases, it is not evident who is responsible for leaking the reports or issuing tough drafts on Iran:

Extract 22

A draft of the proposed new measures names 41 Iranian people, 57 companies or other entities, 15 additional companies thought to be controlled by the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps and three deemed to be under the control of the Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines.

Table 5.   Personalisation/Impersonalisation in the reports of 4 Western quality papers

	Personalised	Impersonalised				
		Abstracted	Utterance Autonomised	Spatialised	Somatised	Instrumentalised
Iran (N=126)	17.5 % (N=22)	5.5 % (N=7)	.75 % (N=1)	64.25 % (N=81)	2.5 % (N=3)	9.5% (N=12)
the West (N=126)	34 % (N=43)	.75 % (N=1)	15 % (N=19)	47 % (N=59)	.75 % (N=1)	2.5 % (N=3)

7. Conclusions

The present study tried to track down the ideological values and attitudes the Western news controllers attach to the Iranian side in its attempt to further its nuclear capabilities. Van Leeuwen's model provided the enquirer with a good framework for analyzing the data. All in all, the patterns emerging from the five sets of categories of van Leeuwen's model seem to point out that the Western news reports analyzed are replete with instances of ideological bias towards the Iranian side or the countries turning a deaf ear to the West's wishes and challenging the world's status quo. Experiments with more data which allow the use of more relevant morpho-syntatctic categories will be bound to shed new light on the differential representation of the social actors not complying with the Western world in case of Iran's nuke activities.

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