

## The Tale of Two Newspapers: Perceptions and Representations of Iranian International Relations Discourse

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### Abstrak

Salah satu topik penelitian yang menggelitik para peneliti dalam bidang studi linguistik terapan, hubungan internasional dan politik adalah wacana politik dan bagaimana hal itu dirasakan dan direpresentasikan di media. Para peneliti telah menganalisis dan menafsirkan wacana hubungan politik dan internasional dari berbagai politisi dan diplomat di berbagai negara. Dengan cara yang sama, Iran, sebagai negara dengan pengaruh pada isu-isu politik Timur Tengah dan peran dalam dinamika dan tren internasional, telah mencurahkan sejumlah besar penelitian untuk dirinya sendiri di mana para peneliti telah memeriksa dan mengkritik kebijakan internasional dan luar negeri dari Iran dalam berbagai periode waktu, dalam kaitannya dengan berbagai negara dan sehubungan dengan berbagai peristiwa dan situasi politik dan internasional. Namun, pencarian yang dilakukan oleh peneliti saat ini menunjukkan bahwa tidak ada banyak publikasi tentang bagaimana media massa Inggris, surat kabar khususnya, memahami dan mewakili wacana hubungan internasional pemerintah Iran. Untuk mengatasi kekosongan ini, kumpulan berita dan laporan yang diekstraksi dari dua surat kabar terkenal Inggris, Guardian dan Daily Mail, dianalisis dengan mengadopsi pendekatan analisis konten hermeneutik ganda. Hasilnya menunjukkan bahwa kedua surat kabar tersebut, meskipun terkenal karena memiliki pandangan politik yang polar, tampaknya memiliki persepsi dan representasi yang serupa dari wacana di atas. Studi ini juga memberikan arahan untuk penelitian lebih lanjut dalam konteks lain.

**Kata kunci:** wacana media massa, wacana hubungan internasional, analisis konten, interpretivisme, bahasa dan politik

### Abstract

*One of the research topics which intrigues researchers in the subject areas of applied linguistics, international relations and politics is political discourse and the way it is perceived and represented in the media. Researchers have analysed and interpreted the political and international relations discourse of various politicians and diplomats in different countries. By the same token, Iran, as a country with an influence on the political issues of the Middle East and a role in international dynamics and trends, has devoted a plethora of research to itself where researchers have examined and critiqued the international and foreign policies of Iran in various periods of time, in relation to various countries and in connection with various political and international events and situations. However, a search carried out by the present researcher showed that there are not many publications on how the British mass media, newspapers in particular, perceive and represent the Iranian government's international relations discourse. To address this lacuna, a corpus of news stories and reports extracted from two renowned British newspapers, the Guardian and Daily Mail, was analysed by adopting a double hermeneutic content analysis approach. The results suggest that the two newspapers, in spite of being famous for having polar political views, seem to have similar perceptions and representations of the above discourse. The study also provides directions for further research in other context.*

**Keywords:** Mass media discourse, international relations discourse, content analysis; interpretivism, language and politics

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Reading through the wealth of materials on Iranian international relations and foreign policies after the Islamic Revolution in 1979, one could see that there has not been much written on the international relations discourse used by the Iranian government as perceived and represented by the British mass media since the Islamic Revolution. In general, researchers interested in Iranian foreign policies argue that the post-revolution era is marked by a revolutionary and ideological policy which influenced the international relations of Iran. For instance, Friedman (2010) describes Iran's foreign policy during the first decade after the Islamic Revolution as revolutionary. Soltani and Ekhtiari Amiri (2010, 199) argue that "Ideological approach was dominant from 1981 until 1989.... Idealists...of Iran believed that all decision-makers and politicians had to behave on the basis of ideological values.... Supporters of the idealist approach hoped that they would be able to expand assumptions of Islamic Revolution of Iran to other neighbours in the region." Soltani and Ekhtiari Amiri (2010) also believe that the foreign policies of the Islamic Republic of Iran have changed through time. They argue that in spite of the fact that the underlying principles have remained the same, the approaches taken to them and the way they have been presented to the world have been different in different periods of time from the Revolution to the present era. In this regard, one might think how the Iranian international relations discourse is reflected in the rhetoric of Iranian diplomats and politicians from the Revolution until now as represented in the media outside of Iran. To this end, it would be interesting and illuminating to explore and find out how this is reflected in the British mass media in particular, as Iran and Britain have had a long history of "a love-hate relationship" (BBC 29 September 2001). That was where the focalisation of the topic of the present research and the formulation of its research question started.

As far as the present researcher's library and Internet search shows, there has not been any research on the representation of the Iranian government's international relations discourse in the British media. Also, given that media, including mass media, play a role in shaping the public perceptions and interpretations of the world political affairs (Happer and Philo 2013), it will be informative and instructive to explore these perceptions and representations. The present study, then, intends to address this lacuna in literature on political discourse analysis. As Tanksalvala (2014) puts it,

because so much of the information we consume is through the media, studying media is a valuable – and fascinating – way to gain understanding of the lenses through which we view various topics and issues.... Understanding how a left-wing paper and a right-wing paper treat an event differently can inform us about differences in how the two groups not only vote, but how they see the world. (Tanksalvala 2014)

To research the above, the focus revolved around two renowned British newspapers, namely the Guardian and Daily Mail, which are famous for having polar outlooks on news and different tendencies in representing them (Smith 2017). Furthermore, the lens of the researcher zoomed in news stories about interrelated international issues concerning Iran: Iran's nuclear programme/deal, Iran's role in the region (particularly in Syria) and Iran-America relations from 2006 onwards. The reason for the cut-off point (i.e. 2006 onwards) was that the present researcher could not find corresponding like-to-like news stories in the digital archives of the two papers dated before 2006. Hence, the research question was formulated as 'how is the international relations discourse of the Iranian government from 2006 onwards presented in the mainstream British newspapers, namely the Guardian and Daily Mail?'

## **METHOD**

Methodologically, this research is situated on the qualitative end of the qualitative-quantitative continuum. Since the objective of the research is to explore and describe the perceptions of the British newspapers and their representations of the Iranian international relations discourse without interfering with the natural setting, the data will be in the form of words rather than numbers (Punch and Oancea 2014: 3-4). This type of research method is in line with the interpretivist epistemology, as qualitative research entails collecting textual data and examining it using interpretive analyses (Heigham and Croker 2009: 5). Hence, generalisability is by no means the objective of the present study that, in Giddens's (1977) terms, has a double hermeneutic nature, interpreting the understanding of the British newspapers of the Iranian government's international relations discourse.

### ***Materials and procedures***

To collect data, the researcher decided to look into two well-established British newspapers with two polar outlooks, the Daily Mail and the Guardian. According to the yougov website (2017),

The Daily Mail is seen as Britain's most right-wing newspaper. Britain's most read newspaper is described by 44% of Brits as "very right-wing", far ahead of any other paper. In total, 81% considered the paper to be right-wing to one degree or another. At the other end of the spectrum the Guardian is seen as Britain's most left-wing newspaper. (Smith 2017)

Needless to mention that the political tendencies of these two newspapers might well influence the way they represent news, as newspapers indeed present 'news values' rather than 'plain facts' and in this way seek to 'shape public opinion' (Harrison 2001: 107). A convenience sampling method (Ritchie and Lewis 2003: 78 and 81) was adopted and the accessible material on the websites of these newspapers was explored, based on their shared characteristics, i.e. representing the international relations discourse of the Iranian government from 2006 onwards, which would enable the researcher to explore and understand the matter that he wished to study (Ritchie and Lewis 2003: 78 and 81). In other words, the news about the same events from the two newspapers were looked at in order to make a comparison of the two possible. Where one newspaper reported a news story and the other ignored the event, as a comparison was not possible, that news story was excluded from the data corpus.

### ***Data analysis***

To analyse the newspaper excerpts, qualitative content analysis was adopted. According to Burnham et al. (2008),

Whenever somebody reads, or listens to, the content of a body of communication and then summarises and interprets what is there, then content analysis can be said to have taken place. There are two main methods by which this can be done: first by qualitative methods of analysis, whereby the importance of the content is determined by the researcher's judgement. ...it is the researcher who...selects a sample of texts to investigate and analyse. (Burnham et al. 2008)

Burnham et al. (2008) argue that one of the advantages of content analysis is that a large amount of material can be analysed systematically. Moreover, if Internet materials are used to analyse, the issue of access and consent can be dispensed with.

To carry out content analysis, the following 'recording units' in the newspaper items will be looked at: single words, single sentences, single paragraphs and whole texts (Halperin and Heath 2012). The researcher will group these units to analyse and interpret them (Halperin and Heath 2012).

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

In the following section, a corpus of the news representing Iranian government's international foreign policy discourse on its nuclear programme/deal, its role in the region (particularly in Syria) and Iran-America relations since 2006 extracted from the two newspapers will be analysed and interpreted to explore how the rhetoric of the Iranian government is perceived and represented by these two mainstream British mass media.

In a story on Trump administration putting Iran on notice for their missile tests, the Guardian reports the Iranians' reaction as follows:

Iran reacted defiantly on Thursday, saying it would continue its "self-defence activities". Ali Akbar Velayati, the senior foreign policy adviser to the country's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, said Tehran would not seek permission from any country to defend itself.

"It is not the first time that an inexperienced person in the US has threatened us," he said, referring to Trump during a meeting in Tehran.

"Trump would realise over the time that such hollow bragging would only discredit him in the eyes of the general public," Velayati added. "The US was defeated even in countries less powerful than us."

Iran's president, Hassan Rouhani, called Trump a political novice and said it "will cost the US a lot" while it waits for its president to "learn what is happening in the world". (Flynn 2017)

The way the above reportage has linked together the speeches of two different Iranian officials talking on two different occasions in which words and phrases such as 'self-defence', 'not seeking permission', 'inexperienced person', 'hollow bragging', 'discredit him', 'defeated' and 'a political novice' come one after another seems to suggest that Iran administration's international relations discourse is two-fold: On the one hand, the Iranian government is of the opinion that they have rights in testing missiles to defend themselves; on the other hand, they contend that they do not value Trump and his administration as such. In both cases, the use of the word 'defiantly' by the Guardian also seems to suggest that the Iranian government refuses to obey international laws, sometimes even aggressively.

In a similar story reported by the Daily Mail, this newspaper starts the news subheading in the following way: "Iranian President Hassan Rouhani threatened to bolster his nuclear programme. He vowed a 'stronger than you think' response if U.S. reinstated sanctions." Then the story starts with "Donald Trump will regret pulling out of the nuclear deal with Iran 'within a week', the country's president warned" (White 2018). The subheading foregrounds a sort of coarse discourse by the use of terms such as 'threatened, to bolster his nuclear programme, and stronger than you think response'. As the quotations cited from the Iranian president are patchy and out of context, it is not really clear whether the Iranian president was 'warning' or 'threatening' the US. It might be quite deliberate by the news writer to apply and foreground such connotatively laden words, while the word 'warned' could have been foregrounded rather than being put in the content of the story. Comparing the above report with what President Rouhani said in one of his speeches seems to justify the above interpretation: "We seek a win-win game and this is possible... We are prepared to enter serious and meaningful negotiations with determination and without wasting time, and if our opposing party is equally ready, I am confident that the concerns of both sides will be allayed through dialogue" Hadžikadunić (2015). Obviously, the moderate discourse used by Rouhani, e.g. using the words and phrases such 'win-win game', 'meaningful negotiations' and 'through dialogue', contradicts the way his remarks are tailored by the Daily Mail. Hadžikadunić (2014), drawing on Rouhani's article in Iranian Foreign Policy Journal, endorses that President Rouhani is asking to build friendly relations with the international community. Hadžikadunić (2014) also shows that President

Rouhani's international relations discourse is of dialogue, compromise and cordial relations with the West.

Quoting Ali Akbar Velayati, "a top foreign policy aide to Ayatollah Ali Khamenei", the Guardian writes:

Velayati met Assad in a show of defiance in the face of possible western retaliation for the attack. "Like before, Iran will stand by Syria under any circumstances," he said, according to Iran's state Irna news agency.

"For seven years, an all-out war has been waged against the Syrian nation and its government led directly by the US. Syria is not weaker than seven years ago, nor is America any stronger," he said, according to separate quotes carried by the semi-official Fars news agency, which is affiliated to the Iranian Revolutionary Guards. (Dehghan 2018)

It is clear from the above excerpt that several quotations have been chosen and sewn together which could inculcate in the reader the idea that the Iranian foreign policy is defiant, aggressive and belligerent. Whether this is really the case or not is out of the scope of this article; however, the matter under investigation is the way the Iranian foreign discourse is represented in the British mass media. Contrasting the way the above excerpt is tailored with the following quotation from one of the recent speeches of President Rouhani at a military parade in Tehran makes the point clearer:

Tehran (AFP) - President Hassan Rouhani said Wednesday that Iran "does not intend any aggression" against its neighbours but will continue to produce all the weapons it needs for its defence. ...

"But at the same time we announce to our neighbouring countries in the region... we do not intend any aggression against you." (AFP 2018)

There does not seem to be any signs of aggression and/or belligerence in the above speech. On the contrary, it seems that the use of the phrases such as 'Iran does not intend any aggression against its neighbours' and 'we announce to our neighbouring countries in the region... we do not intend any aggression against you' is reassuring indeed. It might be argued that the foreign international policy of the Iranian conservatives and reformists are different and that is why we see the above narratives so differently. While this might be well the case, as was already pointed out, the focus of the present research is to explore how the Iranian international relations discourse is represented in the British mass media rather than looking into the similarities/differences of the discourses applied by the Iranian conservatives and reformists. To attest to the above, Dehghani Firoozabadi (2017) analysing the foreign policy principles and priorities of the Iranian government, points out that Iran's foreign policy is determined by certain general principles including anti-arrogance policies, negation of domination, peaceful coexistence, anti-colonialism, mutual respect and commitment to and compliance with international obligations, treaties and laws. Likewise, Mohammad Nia (2012: 44), drawing on various examples, shows that "since the Islamic Revolution, Iran has always avoided entering seriously into international disputes and conflicts in order to preserve its survival and vital interests." Brining the above policies and principles into the equation, one could argue that the Iranian international relations discourse as signified by the British mass media, i.e. bellicosity and animosity, is not exactly what the Iranian foreign policy makers are after. In a similar vein, Behnam and Moshtaghi Zenouz (2008) look at the representations of the Iranian government's politics in the Guardian which, according to the authors, magnifies America and the EU's repetitive assertions to consolidate that Iran is a country

which seeks to secretly refine uranium and develop an atomic bomb. It does not want a resolution, does not agree to visits to nuclear sites, it faces being taken to the Security Council, receiving penalties and experiencing intensive pressure. All the phenomena construct an image of a socially deviant

participant. We are forced to perceive Iran and its activities as being different from the us group and consequently to de-legitimize them. The US as a Senser appears with contrastive motivations; it wants a diplomatic solution, yet at the same time it is not interested in resolving the crisis. The Guardian is able to set up a smokescreen that successfully covers these realities. (Behnam and Moshtaghi Zenouz 2008: 209)

In a story on the reaction of Iran to the remarks made by President Trump to tear up the nuclear deal with Iran and the trip of France's Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian to Iran on this issue, the Daily Mail (5 March 2018) starts by captioning a photo of the Iranian Foreign Minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif, in the following way: "Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif hit out at the "error" by European nations including France and Britain of backing Saudi Arabia as it heads a coalition fighting rebels in Yemen." Then the paper adds: "Iran's foreign minister slammed the European Union for "extremism" in relationship to Tehran in an interview published Monday ahead of a meeting with his French counterpart." Further down the line, the Daily Mail continues: "But France's top diplomat has said that without an end to ballistic missile tests by Iran, it will "always be suspected, with reason, of wanting to develop nuclear weapons" (<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/afp/article-5462635/Iran-foreign-minister-criticises-EU-extremism-Tehran.html>). The use of words and phrases such as 'hit out' and 'slammed the European Union' seems to suggest that the Iranian Foreign Minister's rhetoric is forceful and confrontational, whereas in actual fact the story is a combination of quotations from the Iranian Foreign Minister and the words and phrases chosen by the journalist. However, the leverage exerted by this combination on readers and their interpretations can be dramatic and out of proportion.

On a trip made by ex-President of Iran to Zimbabwe, the Daily Mail (23 April 2010) titles its report "When (short) tyrants meet: Mugabe welcomes Ahmadinejad to Zimbabwe." The Daily Mail continues, "They are two diminutive men, short in stature but long on anti-Western rhetoric" (<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1268115/When-tyrants-meet-Mugabe-welcomes-Ahmadinejad-Zimbabwe.html>). In another article on Ahmadinejad's trip to the UN, the Daily Mail titles its article "What a clown! U.S. delegation walks out of UN speech by Iranian president Ahmadinejad as he comes to NY and calls 9/11 'a mystery'." The paper then writes:

Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has outraged the UN by calling the 9/11 attack on the U.S. 'a mystery'... In a speech full of questions which were no more than thinly veiled attacks on the U.S. he asked the UN who had used the "mysterious September 11 incident" as a precursor to war and to dominate the Middle East?... No stranger to outrageous comments, Ahmadinejad began his speech by highlighting the plight of the world's poorest nations, but included the U.S. in that by saying the country suffered from 'inequality'. Ahmadinejad then cryptically said this year he planned 'to analyse the current [global] situation from a different angle'. (Milligan 2011)

As the above quotation shows, the Iranian ex-President has adopted the rhetoric of describing, problematising, analysing and engaging in discussing world affairs, which makes sense when a politician would like to open up a dialogue. However, his sense-making approach is marred by the rhetoric and representation of the Daily Mail. Describing Ahmadinejad as 'tyrant' and 'clown' and representing his rhetoric as 'outrageous', 'attacking' and 'cryptically speaking' overshadow the gist and nature of Ahmadinejad's political discourse and seem to deprive the reader of reflecting on the content and substance of Ahmadinejad's speech. Likewise, the Guardian reports Ahmadinejad's speech at the UN in the following way:

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the Iranian president, has launched a stinging attack at the United Nations on the US and other major powers as militarist, imperialist and unfit to dominate global governance.

Ahmadinejad's verbal assault on the west and Israel promoted walkouts by diplomatic delegations. US diplomats were the first to leave, when Ahmadinejad referred to the "mysterious September 11 incident" as a pretext to attack Afghanistan and Iraq.

Later, he criticised the US for killing Osama bin Laden and burying his body at sea, saying the al-Qaida leader should have been brought to trial.

Other delegations, including those from the UK and France, walked out later when the Iranian leader said that if European countries were still paying a "fine or ransom to the Zionists" because of the Holocaust, they should also pay reparations for slavery.

In other parts of his speech he spoke of Zionists being responsible for "mass murder and terror against the Palestinians", and said the US and west "view Zionism as a sacred notion and ideology". (McGreal 2011)

It would have made more sense and seemed fairer if the report quoted Ahmadinejad in one section and analysed and interpreted his speech in another. This way his speech would not have been decontextualised and patchy or presented atomistically. Then the reader could have seen the speech holistically and would be in a better position to compare it with the analysis and interpretation of the journalist. The use of phrases such as 'launched a stinging attack' and 'verbal assault' could affect the underlying message of Ahmadinejad's speech and influence the reader's interpretation of his speech. If one rewrites the above report and separates the journalist's discourse from Ahmadinejad's, the reader of the report will be in a better position to compare and evaluate. In fact, the difference of the detachment of the journalist's analysis and interpretation from the Iranian ex-President's pure speech could have made a significant difference in the way the reader is positioned to read and evaluate. In other words, the way the mass media influence shaping the public perceptions and interpretations could not be ignored (Happer and Philo 2013). It would be very interesting to find out how the British public would react to the above separation. It is out of the scope of this article; otherwise, an experimental study on the above text excluding the directing discourse of the journalist and then including that discourse could have produced interesting outcomes. On 29 June 2006, the Guardian writes:

Iran's leaders paraded their influence with Iraq's dominant Shia community during a high-profile visit to Tehran last week by Abdul-Aziz Hakim, leader of the Supreme Council of Islamic Revolution in Iraq, an organisation with roots in Iran that runs the powerful Badr brigades militia. Mr Ahmadinejad urged deeper political, economic and cultural collaboration. That may only underscore the concerns of Iraq's Sunni minority about Iran's cloying embrace.

The supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, used Mr Hakim's visit to reiterate Iran's call for "foreign occupation forces" to leave Iraq. Withdrawal was a "prerequisite" for Iraq's national security and Iran's, too, he implied. As part of its bid for regional leadership, Iran will host a ministerial summit of all Iraq's neighbours plus Egypt on July 8.

Officials flatly reject British assertions that Iran has assisted Iraqi insurgent attacks, saying violence does not serve Iran's interest. But it has withheld border security cooperation with British forces in Basra, a western diplomat confirmed. (Tisdall 2006)

While ex-President Ahmadinejad's rhetoric is of 'deeper political, economic and cultural collaboration' with neighbouring countries, namely Iraq, and whereas the Iranian Supreme Leader reminds the international community that withdrawal of foreign forces is a prerequisite for Iraq's security and stability, the Guardian journalist seems to try to undermine the

reasonable rhetoric of the Iranian president and Supreme Leader by using coarse rhetoric. The representation of the Iranian's rhetoric by the use of phrases such as '[Iran] paraded their influence', 'Iran's cloying embrace' and 'but it [Iran] has withheld border security cooperation', which do not seem to be chosen carelessly, randomly or unintentionally, seems not to match or reiterate what the intension of the Iranian's rhetoric is.

In a report made on the ex-President Ahmadinejad's interview with CNN's Piers Morgan in 2012, the Daily Mail (25 September 2012) starts reporting the interview in the following way: "In true Mahmoud Ahmadinejad fashion, the Iranian president dodged and danced around questions relating to Israel, homosexuality and the Holocaust during an interview coinciding with his visit to the UN General Assembly." After foregrounding this manipulative, sarcastic discourse by using words such as 'true fashion' and 'dodged and danced', the Daily Mail continues:

He told Morgan that terror leader Osama bin Laden should have been given a transparent trial, not death by the Navy SEAL raid authorised by President Obama.

When asked about the series of protests sparked by the film in the Muslim world, Ahmadinejad called the protests 'ugly,' but slammed the video itself as an 'abuse of freedom.'

He told Morgan: 'Fundamentally, first of all, any action that is provocative, offends the religious thoughts and feelings of any people, we condemn.'

Ahmadinejad added: 'Likewise, we condemn any type of extremism. Of course, what took place was ugly. Offending the Holy Prophet is quite ugly. This has very little or nothing to do with freedom and freedom of speech.

'This is the weakness of and the abuse of freedom, and in many places it is a crime. It shouldn't take place and I do hope the day will come in which politicians will not seek to offend those whom others hold holy,' said Ahmadinejad.

But Ahmadinejad's fiery remarks did not end with the CNN interview. (<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2208211/Mahmoud-Ahmadinejad-Iranian-president-talks-homosexuality-bin-Laden-Holocaust-interview.html>)

Further down the line, the Daily Mail writes: "It was Ahmadinejad's eighth visit to the UN gathering held each September, which he cited as proof that he is open to understanding other countries' views. In spite of his assertions on the importance of dialogue and respect for others, Ahmadinejad presented a hard line in many areas." Then, on the issue of Iran's nuclear programme, the Daily Mail quotes from Ahmadinejad's interview:

Ahmadinejad said the nuclear issue was one ultimately between the United States and Iran, and must be resolved with negotiations.

'The nuclear issue is not a problem. But the approach of the United States on Iran is important. We are ready for dialogue, for a fundamental resolution of the problems, but under conditions that are based on fairness and mutual respect,' he said.

'We are not expecting a 33-year-old problem between the United States and Iran to be resolved in a speedy fashion. But there is no other way besides dialogue.' (<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2208211/Mahmoud-Ahmadinejad-Iranian-president-talks-homosexuality-bin-Laden-Holocaust-interview.html>)

While Ahmadinejad has adopted a diplomatic discourse by using peaceful and reasonable rhetoric (i.e., using a language emphasizing 'transparent trial', 'condemning provocative actions',



'not seeking to offend', 'open to understanding other countries' views', 'the importance of dialogue and respect for others', 'to be resolved with negotiations', 'ready for dialogue' and 'fairness and mutual respect'), the representation of the Daily Mail of the above discourse seems to skirt and mar Ahmadinejad's rhetoric by describing it as 'dodged and danced' and by using words and phrases such as 'slammed', 'fiery remarks' and 'presented a hard line in many areas'. This representation and interpretation seem to be adopted to divert the attention of the reader away from the message that the politician tries to put across.

## **CONCLUSION**

The above section centred on analysing and interpreting a corpus of news data collected from the Guardian and Daily Mail as two renowned British newspapers. A double-hermeneutic approach was adopted in the content analysis of the data. On one level, the representations and interpretations of the remarks of the Iranian diplomats and politicians in the two newspapers were looked at and on another level the current researcher interpreted the way the two newspapers construed the remarks. It emerged that the representations of the two newspapers, in spite of being famous for having polar political views and tendencies, of the Iranian government's international relations discourse were not that different. Both were trying to show that this discourse was of the type of aggression, belligerence and arrogance. In spite of the fact that both newspapers were providing platforms to hear the voice of the Iranian government as far as its international and foreign policy are concerned, they also seemed to be misrepresenting the underlying messages of Iranian diplomats and politicians by interjecting their own remarks and interpretations. However, the deep analysis of the remarks made by the representatives of the Iranian government on various occasions showed an employment of the rhetoric of peace-seeking, anti-militarism, dialogue, negotiation, understanding, mutual respect, non-confrontation, independence and transparency. In this regard, Sarmadi and Badri (2017) point out that the foreign policy of the Iranian revolution principles has been flexible and the orientation of the external behavior of Iran has been established on the basis of pragmatism. In this framework, "the principles of peaceful coexistence and cooperative policy based on trust" has been regarded as a priority (Sarmadi and Badri 2017). Similarly, Dehghani Firoozabadi (2017) argues that priority in Iran's foreign policy behaviour has been given to the three principles of peaceful coexistence, commitment to international obligations, treaties and laws, and mutual respect between countries. However, this interpretation of the current researcher does not refute the fact that there have been times of tension and turbulence in the international relations of Iran and its discourse.

This study focused on two mainstream newspapers only. It also revolved around certain interrelated news stories and reports as its data corpus. Furthermore, it did not account for the differences of the Iranian reformists' and conservatives' international relations discourse. In addition, as was discussed in Method of the Study, the epistemology of the researcher, i.e. interpretivism, and his appreciation of subjectivity might have affected his interpretations of the data and analysis. In sum, any generalisations from the findings of this study and the arguments made by it need to be done cautiously.

First, it would make sense to extend the circle of this research to examining other newspapers and mass media. Second, as was shown in Analysis and Discussion, it would be interesting to conduct an experimental study where the discourse of the diplomats and politicians is separated from the interjections of the British journalists and to compare the attitudes of the reader to the text excluding the journalist's interjections and the text including them. Third, researching the perceptions and representations of the two newspapers of the discourses of the diplomats and politicians of other countries could shed further light on the approaches and outlook of the two dailies.

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