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“Constructing the Other: Orientalism, US Foreign Policy and the Press”

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This study employs Said’s concept of Orientalism and van Dijk’s concept of the ideological square to analyze three elite American newspapers’ editorial coverage of Iran’s nuclear program. A critical discourse analysis of editorials appearing in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Wall Street Journal* from 1984 to 2004 identified the following six Orientalist themes: Oriental untrustworthiness, Islam as a threat, Oriental submissiveness, Oriental irrationality, Oriental inferiority, and the theme of Jews vs. Muslims. The themes of Oriental untrustworthiness and Islam as a threat had the highest number of occurrences and appeared in all three newspapers. These three elite US newspapers label Iran a “rogue nation” whose word can never be trusted. This construction of the “other” as a “rogue nation” is premised on the fact that the nature of the Iranian government is Islamic. From the Orientalist point of view, Islam is considered a threat, and, by definition, Iran’s government is deemed untrustworthy. This study finds that *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Washington Post* drew primarily on Orientalist arguments than did *The New York Times*. With regard to policy recommendations, *The Wall Street Journal* advocated regime change through covert and overt means. It also argued that the military option against Iran should remain open at all times. *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*, however, argued against the use of force and regime change, pointing to the impracticality of those policies. Instead, they proposed that the United States should participate in diplomatic efforts with explicit multilateral incentives and threats.