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# Constructing Evil: U.S. Media Discourse and the Iranian State Murder of Neda Agha-Soltan

Justin Turner
*Eastern Kentucky University*

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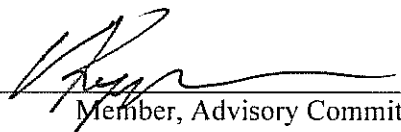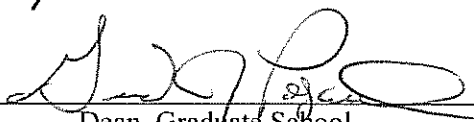CONSTRUCTING EVIL: U.S. MEDIA DISCOURSE AND THE IRIANIAN STATE MURDER
OF NEDA AGHA-SOLTAN

By

Justin Turner

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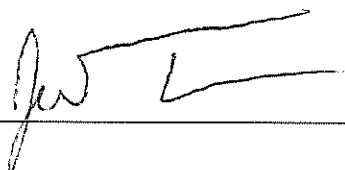
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CONSTRUCTING EVIL: U.S. MEDIA DISCOURSE AND THE IRIANIAN STATE MURDER
OF NEDA AGHA-SOLTAN

By

Justin Turner

Bachelor of Arts
Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green, Kentucky
2009

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in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
MASTER OF SCIENCE
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DEDICATION


This thesis is dedicated to my grandparents
Lucille and Rex Polly


Alyson Kershaw, who has helped me with all the little things


And

My sister, Brianna Turner for all her edits

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

# ABSTRACT

On June 20, 2009 one image became a symbol of violence, as well as a rallying cry for a movement that contested the disputed election of hardline Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. This image depicted a video of the murder of a 26 year old protester named Neda Agha-Soltan, and showed a first-hand account of the savagery of state crime. This video, downloaded to various social networking outlets began to gain mass attention from news organization in the United States by June 22, 2009. In studying how the *New York Times* and *Washington Post,* two of the United States most prolific newspapers, constructed the video of Neda's death, an analysis from June 23, 2009 to June 30, 2009 revealed an Iranian government that was unafraid to violently repress a democratic movement. However, this construction was framed through Orientalism, which created a dichotomy between "good" and "bad" Muslims. This dichotomy was found to situate the protesters as "good" Muslims, while portraying President Ahmadinejad and the Iranian government as "bad". Within a framing of "good'" Muslim and "bad" Muslim, the United States elite discourse representations of this video created an image of the Iranian government as evil, childlike, and violent, while portraying the protesters as innocent, repressed, and seeking protection. Elite discourse would shape the video of Neda Agha Soltan's murder as an instrument that would help justify deploying military force into a region already saturated with United States soldiers.

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# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

*The New York Times* ………………………………………………………………………… *NYT*

*The Washington Post* ……………………………………………………………………… *WP*

CHAPTER 1


INTRODUCTION



Neda's Murder

On June 20, 2009, one image became not only a symbol of unbridled state violence, but a rallying cry for a movement contesting the disputed election of hardline Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Ahmadinejad retained his current office by capturing the highest number of votes in the country's election history. The particular image in question was of Neda Agha-Soltan, a 26 year old woman whose murder was recorded by cellphone camera during a political protest and subsequently posted to social media sites Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, showing a first-hand account of the savagery of a state crime. The image of Neda's last breaths in the streets of Tehran quickly captured the hearts and minds of the American public. On June 22, 2009 this event became "newsworthy" in the United States, garnering front-page news in the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, two of the Nations' most prolific news agencies. Mainstream media portrayed Neda as an innocent victim of a violent government, representations which only added enmity to the ever growing lexicon of xenophobic and racist remarks in regard to Iran. Dissenting interpretations of Neda's murder never solidified into major news, and alternative accounts that might explain her death in more complex, which is also to say less neocolonial or Orientalist ways, were never given significant attention.

The case of Neda's murder nicely illustrates the concern and subject of the current study: the struggle to define the cultural and political meaning of news events around elite interests. The issues of concern within this study are not with her per se – that is, although relevant details of

her life will be briefly discussed when appropriate and important to the public narrative constructed about her, the focus of this study is not to excavate Neda's biographical details such as personality, wishes and dreams, life and work experiences. This study focuses on the ways in which certain sectors of the U.S. mainstream media represented, framed, and imagined the life and death of Neda Agha-Soltan. Therefore, this project focuses on several intertwined questions concerned with media representation, narrative power, meaning making, and the cultural and political dynamics of state violence.

Before these questions can be explored Neda's story must be presented. As already mentioned, her story begins with the 2009 Iranian presidential election, Iran's tenth election (Dahl, 2008). The incumbent, conservative Mahmud Ahmadinejad was running for his second term against three challengers, his main rival Mir Hossein Mousavi ("Ahmadinejad 'set for," 2009). In the final vote on June 12th, 2009, President Ahmadinejad won 64% of the vote compared to his closest rival Mousavi, who captured 33% ("Ahmadinejad wins Iran," 2009). Due to the surprisingly wide margin of victory, large populations comprised mostly of Mousavi supporters donning green buffs and located in the major cities of Iran, began to take to the streets. Al Jazeera English described the June 13th protests as the "biggest unrest since the 1979 revolution" ("Polls results prompt,"2009). Even before the election was announced, supporters of Mousavi experienced attacks and brutality from the hardline conservative supporters of Ahmadinejad , referred to as the Basij.

As the protests broke out, thousands of youth, particularly in Tehran, took to the streets urging Ayatollah Ali Khameini to reconsider the elections. Demonstrators chanted "down with the dictator", "death to the dictator", and "give us our votes back" towards the Ahmadinejad government. While Mousavi urged for calm and for his supporters to refrain from any acts of violence, he was unsuccessful ("Ahmadinejad defiant on," 2009). Soon competing rallies took place between Mousavi and Ahmadinejad supporters (reaching upwards of three million people

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as reported by Siamdoust, 2009), resulting in heavy street clashes and even a report of two deaths (Cohen, 2009a). Amid growing concerns, the Iranian government attempted to crack down on its protestors, shutting down the social networking cites Facebook and Twitter, and increasing police and the Basij presence. As a result, arrests within the cities increased drastically, and word of violence began to outgrow Iranian borders, being picked up by the BBC and *New York Times*.

Following the unrest, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei changed his stance of support for Ahmadinejad, calling for the Guardian Council (Iran's highest legislative body) to "carry out an investigation" in response to Mousavi's appeal letter for irregularities ("Iran's supreme leaders," 2009). However, the Guardian Council, after a nationally televised recount, certified the election, denouncing any claims of irregularities. And on June 19th, the Supreme Leader announced during Friday prayers that the protests that had been taking hold of the streets of Tehran and other major cities across Iran would no longer be tolerated (Dahl & Hafezi, 2009), that "if they don't put an end to this (protests), they will be responsible for the consequences" (Carlin, 2009). After the Supreme Leader's declaration, protests that had recently dwindled down suddenly exploded.  Maziar Bahari, a journalist from Newsweek Magazine said of that day: "I've never seen that many revolutionary guards, police, and para-military Basij forces on the streets (of Tehran) in my life" (as quoted in Thomas, 2009).   Such signs of force only incensed the protestors to even greater levels of protest and ultimately led to a spike in the violence—these protestors were declaring war on the Iranian regime by being in the streets that day (Thomas, 2009).

Dr. Arash Hejazi—the doctor at Neda's side as she died—declared that in the Supreme Leaders speech, he "virtually signed Neda's death sentence" (Thomas, 2009).  Within this fog of unrest, protest, and violence, Neda's murder, allegedly by state agents, was captured by a camera-phone from the crowded streets. The video was quickly posted to YouTube, a video-sharing website, and by June 22nd the clip, picking up millions of views within a short amount of time,

debuted on the major networks in America: CNN and FoxNews, followed by nightly news programs (60 minutes, ABC News, and CBS News). What observers of this 45-second video clip witnessed was a body lying in a crowded street, with blood pouring from her face, and someone, later determined to be a doctor friend, rushing over to try to stop the imminent death, while another friend pleads for Neda to stay alive. 45 seconds of a grainy video capturing the transition from life to death, literally signified with blood pouring from her face on the streets of Tehran, the capital city of Iran. The next day, Neda's death made front page news in the *New York Times* and became "newsworthy" in all of the major newspapers (i.e. *Los Angeles Times, Washington Post, USA Today,* etc.).  *The New York Times* front page declaring "In a Death Seen Around the World, a Symbol of Iranian Protests" with captions "A Young Woman's Fate Resonates", all of which are secondary to the front page picture of a memorial for Neda that reads: "a memorial in Dubai, united Arab Emirates, honored Neda Agha- Soltan, 26, an Iranian killed Saturday during a Tehran protest (Kamran Jebreili/Associated Press (picture)). To consider the story of Neda is to explore the ways in which her death captivated the attention of the United States media, segments of the public, and government, especially in terms of foreign policy.

How did this elite discourse frame this particular event where state violence, human suffering, and cultural and political constructions of "us" and "them" converge to form a week long media spectacle – one centered on a leaked video showing Neda's lifeless body lying flat on the street with blood pouring from her face?  As a scene of murder, how did the discourses surrounding the video represent Iran, and what might be the cultural and political impact of this representation? What logics and discourses were deployed in trying to negotiate or "make sense" of this state homicide?  Being that Neda was killed "over there" in Iran, yet televised all over the world, how did U.S. media discourse represent the relations between East and West, namely, the governments of Iran and the U.S.?  Although this project focuses on this specific case study and how this event was framed by Orientalist tropes, one goal is to take into account how this news

event was subject to a range of interpretations and competing interests. Although representations of state violence, especially as produced and constructed by media institutions, are often times reported from a perspective that privileges "official" accounts of the violence, these representations can still vacillate between the official and the counter-official while being unclear and even contradictory (Lawrence, 2000). But as I aim to show, the voices around the event of Neda attempted to shape and control understandings of this state violence by constructing a narrative that in turn supported U.S. use of violent, imperialist intervention. These are the questions that are posed and engaged throughout this study. Studying the representations surrounding the video of Neda's murder provides an encounter with how the United States government uses a "newsworthy" event to justify the right to deploy military force imperialistically.

In critically engaging these questions, the following study analyzes the media representations of Neda's televised murder. I attempt to show how the Iranian government was constructed as an Orientalized "Other", largely through the negative discourse depicting the political administration as a repressive, patriarchal "regime" bordering on totalitarianism. Within a discourse of "good" Muslim and "bad" Muslim (Mamdani, 2002), the United States elite discourse regarding this video created an image of the Iranian government as evil, childlike, and violent, while portraying the protesters as innocent, repressed, and seeking protection. Elite discourse attempts to shape the video of Neda Agha-Soltan's murder as an instrument that will help justify deploying military force into the "Middle East" region already saturated with United States imperial presence, including both soldiers "on the ground" and a plethora of military bases. This study is in no way trying to minimize the life and killing of Neda. Rather, this project is seeking to gain some dignity back for Neda by showing how a tragic murder can be exploited by the U.S. government. Also, in no way is this in attempt to defend the Iranian "regime". My goal is

to show not so much the "truth" of Iran, but the constructed nature of Iran in overly simplistic and self-interested ways by U.S. discourse.

A Note on Method

In examining the representation of the killing of Neda Agha-Soltan in US elite discourse, this study employs a qualitative research methodology. Specifically, a qualitative media analysis is utilized through the use of several media sources such as 1) newspaper articles, and 2) documentary films. In addition, online discussion board comments in reference to the two documentaries were also read through as supplementary material that helped provide some glimpse, however partial and incomplete, into the ways in which Neda's representation registered to some viewers. The newspaper stories sampled and analyzed for this analysis were published in the *New York Times (NYT) and Washington Post (WP)* between June 22, 2009 and June 30, 2009. The stories were retrieved from microfiche between January and March of 2012 at the University of Kentucky's main library. These newspapers provide the most significant, and the majority of the qualitative data for the analysis that follows. During this time frame, the story of the murder became front page news and hence was presented to the American public as a "newsworthy" story. In searching the microfilm of these two news sources, search terms included the word "Neda" by itself, as well as in combination with "Iran". In total, the searches yielded nineteen relevant newspaper articles—nine from the *New York Times* and ten from the *Washington Post*.

Table 1 and Table 2 highlight the articles that contained any mention of Neda's video. While all the articles touched on the scene of Neda's death, not all were solely about her. Rather, the focus on her death varied: some mentioned her death only in passing while focusing on nuclear disarmament talks between President Obama and President Ahmadinejad; others placed her at the center of attention with columnists expressing their deepest regrets in having to tell their readers about Neda's murder.

Table 1


*New York Times'* representation of Neda's Murder


| New York Times | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Author** | **Date** | **Title** |
| Nazilia Fathi | 23-Jun-09 | In a Death Seen Around the World, a Symbol of Iranian Protests |
| Brian Stelter & Brad Stone | 23-Jun-09 | Web Pries Lid of Censorship a Bit |
| Roger Cohen | 23-Jun-09 | Life and Death in Tehran |
| Helene Cooper & David Sanger | 24-Jun-09 | Obama condemns Iran's Iron Fist Against Protestors: Strongest Remarks Yet |
| Nazila Fathi & Michael Slackman | 26-Jun-09 | Options Shrink for Opposition as Iran Leaders Tighten Grip |
| Roger Cohen | 27-Jun-09 | Iran's Second Sex |
| John Burns | 29-Jun-09 | Persian Station in Britain Rattles Officials in Iran: New BBC TV Channel is Seen as Threat |
| Michael Slackman | 30-Jun-09 | Iran's Guardian Council Certifies Ahmadinejad Election Victory |
| Michiko Kakutani | 30-Jun-09 | Where Romance Requires Courage |

Table 2

*Washington Post*'s representation of Neda's Murder

| Washington Post | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Author** | **Date** | **Title** |
| Dana Milbank | 23-Jun-09 | A Royal 'We Shall Overcome' for Iran |
| Thomas Erdbink | 23-Jun-09 | Woman's Slaying in Protests creates an Opposition Icon: Video Clip Evokes Sympathies world wide |
| Glenn Kessler | 24-Jun-09 | Obama Steps up Criticism of Iran's crackdown on Election Protests |
| Anonymous | 24-Jun-09 | A Shift on Iran: President Obama's Embrace of Its Protest Movement is an Act of Realism |
| Anonymous | 24-Jun-09 | Neda's Legacy: A Woman's Death Moves Iranian Protestors |
| David Ignatius | 24-Jun-09 | Bet on Neda's Side |
| Robert Kaplan | 24-Jun-09 | Iran's Struggle, and Ours: How a Movement Could Transform the Region |
| Thomas Erdbink & William Branigin | 25-Jun-09 | Protest Met With Force Near Iran's Parliament: Supreme Leader Refuses 'Bullying' Over Vote |
| Suparsan Raghavan | 25-Jun-09 | Arab Activists Watch Iran and Wonder: "Why Not Us?" |
| Jeffery Silva | 26-Jun-09 | An Army of Nedas |

In analyzing these newspaper stories a critical discourse analysis is used.  By this I mean

a study that focuses on the construction of discursive knowledge, referred to by Blommaert &

Bulcaen (2000) as "the ideological effects and hegemonic processes in which discourse is a

feature" (p. 449). This analysis employs Stuart Hall's (2007) approach to discourse which is

focused on "specific languages or meanings, and how they are deployed at particular times, in

particular places" (p. 6).  This approach is applied by Michelle Byng (2010) in an article called

"Symbolically Muslim".  Byng studied the discourse used by newspapers in Great Britain,

France, and the United States as they constructed knowledge, influenced interpretations, and

formed social representations that supported dominance and inequality in regard to stories about

the hijab and niqab—two religious-based clothing styles that cover a Muslim woman's face and

head – popularly referred to as "the veil". My approach and analysis employs a similar critical discourse analysis, focusing on how discourse presented by the *NYT* and WP constructed specific representations of Neda's murder. The ideology and hegemony of the United States were supported by newspaper stories (Byng, 2010) mentioning Neda's murder, and were constructed through a lens of national identity and efforts to continue re-constructing Iranian identity as negative (evil, chaotic, Islamic, etc.).

A quick note is warranted on the logic for choosing the *NYT* and *WP* as the primary data sources. The *NYT* and *WP* were selected due to their prominence among American newspapers in terms of circulation, since according to BurrellesLuce.com (an internet website designed to collect information about media sources), the *NYT* and *WP* placed third and seventh, respectively, among the top 100 American newspapers ranked by circulation in 2009 (BurrellesLuce, 2009)[1]. The *NYT*'s national readership consisted of a majority (60%) who had completed four or more years of college, 60% had incomes of $75,000 or above, 18% held management, business, or financial operations jobs, while 27% were employed in professional or related jobs (Audit Bureau of Circulations 2006a). The demographic profile of the *NYT* readership was solidly middle class. The same was true for the readership of the *WP*: 52% were college educated (four or more years), 65% had incomes of $75,000 or above, 19% were employed in management, business, and financial operations jobs, while 27% held professional and related occupations (Audit Bureau of Circulations 2006b).

The circulation rankings, coupled with the demographic profiles highlight the two papers' abilities to influence specific segments of the American population, especially those that are more likely to be politically involved (Byng, 2010). In this way, the study of media sources can be juxtaposed to the examination of the politically involved classes within the United States. Where the *New York Times* is considered by most a "liberal" newspaper, the *Washington Post* has been

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[1] *USA Today* and the *Wall Street Journal* were one and two

involved in a number of ideological shifts. The newspaper agency most recently publically

supported President Obama, the democratic nominee for President, yet a *Frontline* news

investigation noted a shift towards "conservatism" because of the increasing popularity of the

*Washington Times,* its main rival within the Washington, D.C. area, before it supported President

Obama. Within the ideological perspectives today, of "liberal" and "conservative", the

*Washington Post* could be considered moderate. It can be inferred that the papers' readers had

different perspectives on the death of Neda and varying interpretations of *NYT* and *WP* stories.

However, when education and professional status are coupled together and cross analyzed with

voter participation, the results signal the possibility that the papers' readers were able to

recognize the ideological implications (Byng, 2010) of the death of Neda, especially as the

implications are related to securing U.S. interests.

In addition to the primary newspaper data sources, video clips and comment sections,

accounts taken from documentaries by PBS and HBO, along with nightly news programs, were

also critically viewed and analyzed in this study. Because of this, a focus on the micro-level

analysis of the everyday interactions is examined. Comments in response to internet videos taken

from YouTube, Netflix, and online news databases such as MSNBC Meet the *Press* and ABC

*Nightly News* were also included.  In this analysis, I used David Altheide's (1996) process of

"theoretical sampling"—the approach of sampling that justifies the analysis of certain materials

based on the fact they present on the surface, issues related to the theoretical interests or focus of

study—to study these media sources. Therefore, to search these video clips I began with the key

term "Neda" in combination with CNN, FoxNews, President Obama, MSNBC, and ABC on the

internet site YouTube. Following searches of Neda I was able to funnel my searches towards the

news clippings that dealt directly with Neda.  There were eighteen news clippings and two

documentaries (HBO and PBS) that dealt specifically with these Neda's story. Following that, I

used the comment sections that addressed the news clippings and documentaries which are open

to the public, allowing anyone to express themselves.[2] In this way, I was able to focus my analysis on newspapers, and use the language from video clips and comments as supplementary data that would help show the thematic tropes present within Neda's representation that were being produced and circulated.

The major focus for this paper is on the way in which Neda is represented, and hence stories "about" Neda, but because of the significance of Neda as a "newsworthy" spectacle negotiating the relations between "us" and "them", the study is simultaneously a project engaging the representation of "Iran".  That is, the media construction of Neda is also a construction of the government and people of Iran.   This paper will strictly focus on the use of negative discourse to develop the identities of Iran. Moreover, while the themes that rest at the base of my analysis are presented as distinct categorical fixtures, they are anything but. Throughout the representations of Neda's death, these stories often were intertwined, working together to produce a single story within a discourse of barbarianism versus civilization. Finally, the attention is turned to the reinforcement of labels of relational superiority (1978). This term is an Orientalist dogma portraying the East as subservient or 'barbarous' and the West as steeped in valorized righteousness. This becomes a method that ultimately culminates in creating axiomatic beliefs of a "right" and "wrong", or "us" and "them".

Although a theme of good versus evil structures the representations of Neda's murder, the collection of data highlight specific manifestations of this orientalist trope that resulted in the dichotomized construction of good and bad Muslim. Within representations of good and bad Muslims the multiple discourses were themselves separated. This is not to say that they do not intersect, constructions of good Muslim go into constructing what the bad Muslim is and vice versa.  However, for the purposes of this analysis, they must be separated. For representations of

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[2] The comments section was somewhat limited by YouTube because of previous commentators who were not able to follow the rules of the comments section as stipulated by YouTube by-laws. Therefore, only 6 comments sections were able to be analyzed.

the good Muslim, I discovered themes constructing the protest movement, Neda as one of us, and gender discourse. For the construction of the bad Muslim, I found themes that constructed the Iranian government as a regime, censorship as evidence that the Iranian government was repressive (especially towards women), and constructions of the Iranian regime as "thuggish". Ultimately, what this analysis discovers is that the representations of the video of Neda's murder became a tool that allowed the United States to influence a politically involved segment of its population by creating constructions of good Muslims in need of saving, and bad Muslims in need of replacing. Also, as an Orientalized representation, the scene of Neda's murder also helps to erase, or disown and deny, the United States' own preoccupation in wielding violence. Through these constructions, Neda's death became an extension of a Manichean 'good' versus 'evil', forging what is perceived as an ahistorical conflict between the United States and Iran. But before jumping directly into my data on Neda, I would first like to situate my study within a conceptual framework concerning news events, discourse and Orientalism

CHAPTER II

MEDIA DISCOURSE AND THE ORIENTALIST FRAME

The News As a Stage for the Production of Reality

In order to understand the shifting representations of groups, events, and issues in the news media, the news must be thought of as a socially constructed reality (Tuchman, 1978). The news is part of a process of social construction and itself a product of social construction, meaning that not only does news remain a vital part of constructing reality by what is determined to be "newsworthy", but it is also a product of social, economic, and political processes. An event that becomes "newsworthy" because of the socially constructed reality that has already formed from previous accounts of the news. This study considers the social construction of news to be a larger political competition that defines public events in relation to elite interests (see Kappeler & Potter, 2005). This study uses a social constructionist approach to understand how one event—the video of Neda's murder—is talked about in the US news. What becomes news depends on what voices or "perspectives on societal conditions are highlighted in the news" (Lawrence, 2000); helping to determine if a particular event is "newsworthy". Therefore, the news arena becomes one of the main battlegrounds where "social groups, institutions, and ideologies" fight over the control of definitions and meanings that construct reality (Gurevitch & Levy, 1985, p. 19). The "generals" in this battle are predominately the journalists and editors, or any other member of the news organization involved in the construction and production of the framing and representing of the news (Gans, 1979; Lawrence, 2000). As these leaders present or represent the news, these

organizations give wide exposures to some by making them newsworthy (Wolfseld, 1997), while others are not given any mention or in the least little attention (Chomsky, 1998).

A variety of scholars have shown the importance of media representations in understanding the politics of crime, transgression, state and corporate power, and notions of justice (Brown, 2009; Campbell, D., 1999; Kraska & Brent, 2011; Michalowski & Kramer, 2006; Potter & Kappeler, 2006; Said, 1978). Stanly Cohen's (1972) pioneering work on moral panics helps publicize the roles of elite players in promoting a specific "reality" of the criminal, adding the public as a key element. Media depictions of crime in the United States have increasingly become a mixed product comprised of government ideology and media distortion (Potter & Kappeler, 2006). While Cohen studied the phenomenon of the Mods and Rockers in Great Britain, others from a diversity of theoretical and methodological frameworks have examined a variety of topics on the social construction of media discourses as they relate to crime, violence, and the state: representations of Chicano Youth Gangs (Zatz, 1987); the construction of police brutality (Lawrence); the rise in workplace violence (Glassner, 1999); the alleged increase in occult or "Satanic" criminality (Jenkins & Maier-Katkin, 1992); violent media and the rise of school violence amongst our children (Sternheimer, 2003); the even more disturbing gang initiation rites that call for graphic acts of violence by initiates (Best & Hutchinson, 1996); and the dangerous epidemic of Halloween Sadism (Best, 1990). Scholars have also focused broadly on the media's role in shaping a certain reality (Best, 1987; Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 1994; Kappeler & Potter, 2005).

As these diverse studies show, like other institutions of power, news organizations play a pivotal role in constructing an event. They possess the ability to not only determine which events are worthy of the news and which are not, but also significantly influence the ways in which events are represented to the public (Lawrence, 2000). In this way, news organizations are often capable of framing the event – to the point of actually framing a situation into a newsworthy

event or spectacle or by not giving a particular situation attention and hence not bringing it to larger public attention. By "framing" I mean the various ways of "organizing strips of reality—which are part of a constant flow of events, groups and individuals—in ways that help us understand the world" (Ryan, 2004, p. 363, 364). The role of the frame is to "turn nonrecognizable happenings or amorphous talk into a discernible event" (Tuchman, 1978, p. 192). Frames are important because facts can only be given certain meaning "by being embedded in a frame or story line that organizes them…selecting certain ones to emphasize while ignoring others" (Gamson, 1989, p. 157). Frames then define (or ignore) problems, find the supposed cause, and make moral and political judgments about particular social problems and issues (Gamson, 1993). Processes of framing also empower (or marginalize) claims-makers, allowing "some realities [to] win authority and legitimacy over others" (Lawrence, 2000, p. 4). Here the frame has the ability to "set someone up", framing the idea that a subject is "guilty" by marginalizing part of the image, while highlighting specific aspects of it at the same time (Butler, 2009). The frame is able to shed light on a specific aspect of an event, captures a certain image that can "set someone up", or "placing" them at the crime scene if you will.

Regina Lawrence (2000) suggests that "which problems are either designated or warded off depends upon how the news simultaneously confers and denies power to different groups' perspectives on reality" (p. 5). In what Lawrence (2000) calls an "official dominance" model of the news, the study of news making becomes steeped in relations of power (p. 5). The "primary definers", as Stuart Hall *et al.* (1978) discuss, are the officials who are responsible for creating the frame. In reporting on crimes, journalists rely heavily on the official to get breaking news and "scoops". These officials are considered legitimate sources of news (Cook, 1998 as cited in Schudson, 2002). Through this relationship between reporter and official, the journalist's selection of what sources to cover is through the official (Graber, 1993). The marginalized, in this case, are those that are not considered officials, who have no ties to institutions of power.

They lack knowledge and access to sources of power that can significantly influence public

narratives of the issue in question – and knowledge is power for journalists and media institutions

more generally. This helps to explain the reasons why marginalized groups are less frequently

able to voice their opinions and experiences in elite discourse, and when they are given this

opportunity their messages are often minimized and given less attention (Lawrence, 2000). The

result of the production of the news becomes showcased quite clearly; as journalists adhere to the

official's knowledge of an event they produce news that provides a similar function. This

produces an elite media discourse that constructs a specific reality that is determined by

asymmetrical power relations between institutions such as the state, corporations and media.

In *Framing War*, Judith Butler (2009) discusses the power of the frame in not only war,

but in the politics of imprisonment, torture, sexuality, and immigration. Butler (2002, p. 179)

argues that the frame "works both to preclude certain kinds of questions, certain kinds of

historical inquiries, and to function as a moral justification" for state violence. For Butler (2009),

the frame helps to determine who can be recognized as a human life, whose life is worth

grieving —what Butler (2009) calls a "grievable life". The grievable life becomes someone

represented as possessing similar norms and identity, in the case of Neda, similar to the United

States—traits that then are seen as belonging to the category of the "human". The non-grievable

possess no such attributes that distinguish them as human—therefore discourse represents them as

"not quite" human. Butler (2009) shows that these lives, while not being physically lost, are often

destroyed and abandoned because of the lack of attributes given to them by representations within

discourse, including media discourse. Attention to the ways in which events and issues are

framed become an important task in helping uncover how these lives are abandoned. In the

process it will help recognize how human life becomes structured by broader norms within

society (Butler, 2009). Butler's work represents a valuable contribution to aspects of

dehumanization. Producing a subject who is "not quite" human allows for the lack of

representations within media, these "not quite" humans are thus, excluded from entering public consciousness. If life can only be defined by what is visible, a life becomes valuable only when it has become public (Butler, 2009). When representations, which are not public, disappear (or never appear) there are no consequences when they are destroyed. The presentations of lives that are grievable are quite the opposite in that they can have enormous political consequences. "To grieve," says Butler (2003), "and to make grief itself into a resource for politics….may be understood as the slow process by which we develop a point of identification with suffering itself" (p. 19). Some lives then will be protected, and if their value and worth are violated then calls for retributive war can be heard. If violence is done to those who she refers to as ungrievable then the death of those lives fail to register as deaths at all since they never appeared to begin with (Butler, 2009). In this sense, discourse does not necessarily dehumanize the "Other" but rather does not distinguish them within discourse. The inability to exist within discourse produces dehumanizing affects (Butler, 2003). The public, in this sense, will be created by the images and events that do not appear in the media, or that are framed in such a way as to deny them significance. What is not represented in the media solidifies an idea of nationalism that is predicated on the construction of an "Other". This also suppresses or marginalizes alternate narratives (Butler, 2003).

In determining the ability to differentiate what lives appear and do not appear, the state possesses the power to influence the field of "representability" (Butler, 2009, p. 72)—an instrument used to control the event's entrance into the news. What becomes important is the regulation of images that might arouse political opposition to the state's interest. In times of conflict, the state attempts to establish control over the event (if only ever achieving limited success) (Butler, 2009). Projecting an air of legitimacy, the state has become the "official" source from which news organizations are able to receive their stories—especially in regards to events abroad (see, Kellner, 2004; Pfau, et. al, 2005). A state's power lies in the establishment of norms

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or "ontological givens", argues Butler (2009), in the sense that the state's power is based in notions of the "subject, culture, identity, and religion" (p. 149). What constructs and provides power to the state also enables the state to maintain power. In the name of protecting these identifiable norms then, the state is given the power to determine which lives are worthy of "living, protecting, and grieving" and which are not (Butler, 2009, p. 163). In times of war, the lives that are mourned, and those that are not, in turn define who "we" are and who "they" are. This notion of "us" and "them" will be explored in more detail, particularly in regards to Orientalism.

Orientalism, the "Middle East", and the News

In his book *Orientalism*, Edward Said (1978) developed the concept of imagined geographies in order to make sense of representations and logics by the West and for the West that claim to "know" the East, or Orient (see also Gregory 2004). The space that is imagined through these Orientalist discourses becomes a place that exists within geographical locations, where violence sits in specific places and "marked" differences separate groups of people based on where they "live". "The marking of difference" between cultures is the foundation of how culture is created (Hall, 1997, p. 236). This marking separates cultures by defining one as negative, which reflects the positive attributes of the other culture. In this light, binary relations that create separate categories (i.e. good/evil, civilization/barbarism, and us/them) are vital in maintaining difference (Hirchi, 2007). "Marking", in this sense, does not put up with unclear boundaries; rather, difference becomes distinct and readily visible. As Hall states, "Stable culture[s] require things to stay in their appointed place. Symbolic boundaries keep the categories 'pure', giving cultures their unique meaning and identity. What unsettles culture is "matter out of place"—the breaking of our unwritten rules and codes" (1997, p. 236). By creating perceptions of a required, "pure" space, feelings of racism and prejudice abound. In its apparent difference, the "marked" becomes "other", or inferior, or strange others. Drawing on Foucault's (1972)

acknowledgment that power and the support of a particular knowledge are related, imagined

geographies, in the words of Derek Gregory (2004), converts distance into difference (see also

Springer, 2011). Imagined geographies function by separating difference between "our" space

that is familiar and "their" space that is dangerous, largely because of its unfamiliarity (Springer,

2011). For Said (1978), separating space fed into an understanding of Orientalism as a discourse

that created representations of the Orient as "barbaric", "evil", uncivilized, and inferior in relation

to the supposed superiority of "the West".

Orientalism is part of the imperialistic project for the United States (see Said, 1993; also

Gregory, 2004; Springer, 2011) – casting itself as "good" and "civilized" while the Orient is

framed as everything that the United States is not (Said, 1978). This imperialism is "supported

and perhaps even impelled by impressive ideological formations that include notions that certain

territories and people *require* and beseech domination, as well as forms of knowledge affiliated

with domination" (Said, 1993, p. 9). Not only does Orientalism create xenophobic and racist

connotations, but also leads to justifying deployment of military forces. This process allows the

ability to marginalize and overlook those that are "different" from the West creating a

"geographical and cultural space" between "us" and "them" (Hirchi, 2007, p. 7). Gregory (2004)

sees this division—where "they" are seen as lacking the "superior" characteristics of "us"—as

creating the necessary building blocks for an "architecture of enmity". Arguing that the same

imagined geographies and oriental discourses that Said (1978) uncovered are prevalent in the

discourse of the War on Terror, Gregory (2004) exposes neocolonialist discourses behind the

present day representations of Muslims and Islam. Simon Springer (2011) argues that such

imagined geographies erase the context of where and how violence occurs; creating a belief that

violence is a "part" of "them". Springer (2011) argued that these constructions create a perception

that violence naturally "sits" in the places of the East. Such constructions justify the need for

intervention. The creation of the Islamic world as uncivilized defines the public imaginary,

strengthening the feelings of fear and the justification of imperialist and neocolonial means in order to subdue the Middle East. Therefore, attention to the ways in which state violence is represented and framed becomes an important project in coming to grips with imperial power and the construction of "us" and "them".

When an event surrounding the Middle East comes into the news, these spaces are often represented or framed through Orientalist tropes and logics. Orientalism is the understandings of the East by the West, namely understandings that claim a certain "truth" or "knowledge" about the East (Said, 1978). A variety of commentators have expressed their concerns of how the image of the Middle Easterner has been represented by and in the West. For example, over the past 40 years, Muslim Americans have experienced a growing cultural distancing from non-Muslim Americans (Cainkar, 2006). This distance "is manifested in government policies, mainstream cultural representations, public perceptions and attitudes, discriminatory behaviors, physical insecurity, and social and political exclusion" (Cainkar, 2006, p. 243). Beginning in 1979, Iran has been routinely portrayed by the media, cinema, fiction, and advertising as one of the most important figures depicting barbarian "Others". In movies, the Middle Eastern man is often depicted as terrorist, evoking racist and xenophobic sensibilities (Campbell, A. 2010). After September 11, 2001 there have been negative representations of Muslims in the United States that have been more fastened in the "American" cultural imaginary (Hirchi, 2007). Mohammed Hirchi (2007) states that "The constructed images manipulated throughout time have delegated Arabs to second degree citizens, unable to embrace the secular ideals of the Western worldview" (p. 8). Hirchi (2007) found that the news media helped to foster "stereotypical representations of Middle Eastern cultures and people and promote[d] misunderstanding and intolerance in mainstream American culture" (p. 8). Here the knowledge produced through Orientalism shape understandings of Middle Eastern culture.

In exploring media representations of Muslim culture within U.S. society, Fawaz Gerges (2003) examined the ways in which the United States' public, media, interests groups, and foreign-policy elites influenced the creation of a political policy towards Islam. Highlighting the consistent violence towards Muslims after the 1995 bombing of the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, Gerges (2003) showed the negative feelings towards the Muslim population despite knowledge of Timothy McVeigh's guilt. Here, the representations created a blurring between political Islamists and violent Islamists, framing distinct categories of good and bad Muslims (Gerges, 2003). Mahmood Mamdani (2002) continues this study of the "good Muslim" and "bad Muslim", finding that new rounds of "culture talk" applied by the media separated "good Muslims" from "bad Muslims" rather than terrorists from civilians after the attacks on September 11, 2001."Culture talk" is the "predilection to define cultures according to their presumed 'essential' characteristics" (Mambani, 2002, p. 766). Other representations helped further create perceptions of good and bad Muslims. Jessica Winegar (2008) examined how U.S. secular elite discourse on Middle Eastern art helped conceal ways in which these depictions presented a particular understanding of Middle Eastern history, cultures, and religion that relies on Orientalist tropes (2008). The U.S. secular elite choose what is represented as "Middle Eastern art" of "Islamic art", in this way, the U.S. secular elite (unintentionally) recreate, "as Orientalist representations do, a one-to-one homogenizing correlation between region, culture, history, and religion" (Winegar, 2008, p. 655). This selection creates a history of Middle Eastern Muslims as only human in the past or only after they reflect a certain Islam or critique of religion that is acceptable in United States discourse (Winegar, 2008). What is chosen as "art" by the U.S. secular elite to present in their showrooms represents perceptions of the Middle Easterner expressing their need for freedom (i.e. the unveiling of women).While other images, images that do not reflect negative images of a repressed Muslim culture are not selected, and therefore, are not considered art in the U.S. secular's eyes. Such a selection delineates between the "right" and the "wrong" type of Muslim. Discourse presents the "right" Muslim as one who is attempting to

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Westernize, or protesting the repressive governments of a Middle Eastern country – a trope that will be shown present in the media reporting of Neda's murder. The "wrong" Muslim is the artist who remains attached to the "old" ways of repression represented in Middle Eastern culture (Winegar, 2007). In this way, representations of good Muslim art and bad Muslim art are situated to help the United States viewer differentiate between Western and the Orient (Winegar, 2007).

In addition, Rana Kabbani and others have explored the use of Orientalist discourse through a feminist perspective (Schick, 1990). Images of seduction, conquest, pillaging, and rape became tools used by the West to advance the notions of an Orient that was awaiting "penetration by the West" (Schick, 1990, p. 347). In *Europe's Myths of Orient*, Rana Kabbani (1986) found that the representations of a hedonistic Orient became a justifiable means of the West's civilizing mission, creating the colonial mission as benevolent and humanitarian. Malek Alloula (1986) criticized the ways that erotic postcards steeped in Orientalism were used in a way to continue the colonial power of the French in Algeria. These postcards highlighted the removal of the veil as a connotation of the pacification of Algeria. Alloula highlighted that media representations helped serve as a medium to anchor a link between the "imperial eye and the domestic imagination" (Hirchi, 2007, p. 8). Vera Mackie (2012) studied three iconic photographs published by first-world media organizations portraying how Afghanistan is perceived in the United States. Mackie argues that even optimistic photographs of freshly unveiled women have aided a specific "regime of representation" which situates the United States as sovereign and powerful.

Focusing on the elite media discourses of U.S. Empire, which this study does, provides a starting point for "identifying the complex confluence of forces most likely to give rise to crimes of states, as well as the most promising potential dimensions that could contain the outbreak of such crime" (Friedrichs,2010, p. 79). Catherine Lutz (2006) defines empire as "a constellation of state and state-structured private projects successfully aiming to exert wide-ranging control, through territorial or more remote means, over the practices and resources of areas beyond the

state's borders." (p. 594). While authors such as David Harvey (2003) have discussed the political and economic functions of empire, cultural cerebration plays a significant factor in understanding the details of how such acts of criminality are played out—both at home and abroad (Lutz, 2006; Michalowski, 2009). Focusing on the cultural making of value at home allows for the examination of the process of identity formation between "self" and "other"—that separates and distinguishes cultures, making each distinct culture visible(Graeber, 2005).

In understanding the representations surrounding the murder of Neda, the study of empire proves a way in which to examine the consequences of the demarcation between "self" and "other". Neda and the protesters were represented as part of the "self", while the Iranian government was situated as the "other".  In a criminology of empire (Iadicola, 2010), the focus must remain on the harms and social injuries of internal domination that reflect the consequences of extraterritorial projects of power (Michalowski, 2009). A criminology of empire "must also consider, in addition to political and economic self-interests, how leaders and followers come to believe their actions flow from noble motives, and how the construction of this understanding resonates with culturally inscribed historical narratives of a people and their purpose" (Michalowski, 2009, p. 316). Representations of Neda's murder highlight the goals that a criminology of empire focuses on.  Through representations of Neda's murder in Orientalist tropes of "good" and "bad" Muslims, the U.S. government and its citizens attempt to wage a civilizing mission, a mission that can be seen throughout the history of the United States. Within this we must examine the influence of mass communications and mass entertainment industries who have a history of dehumanizing empire's victims—the individuals or groups who have "experienced economic, cultural, or physical harm, pain, exclusion, or exploitation because of tacit or explicit state actions" (Kauzlarich, Matthews, & Miller, 2002, p. 176)—and justifying and neutralizing empire's crimes (Montagu & Matson, 1984). Within the framing of Neda's murder, effects of Empire can be seen in the representations of the Iranian government as the "bad"

Muslim, which creates the belief that the "people" of Iran need to be rescued from the "bad" Iranian government. Similar to the recent invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, the depictions of the respective governments as "bad" Muslims justify the need to deploy soldiers into an already military saturated region. The findings and analysis show the discourses used to create these representations of "good" and "bad" Muslim.

CHAPTER III

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The Good Muslim and Bad Muslim

The U.S. elite discourse analyzed for this project speaks directly to the ways in which Orientalism framed the knowledge and structure of the representations of Neda's life and death— and by extension US/Iranian relations.   In what follows, I underline two powerful tropes or discourses in which the killing of Neda was represented to spectators of U.S. mainstream media. Specifically, the discourses surrounding the scene of Neda's murder focuses on two dominant themes: 1) "Good" Muslim, and 2) the "bad" Muslim. In examining specific themse themes, a central goal is to discuss the overall orientalist structure that Neda's murder was presented in. Themes of the "good" Muslim include the idea of Neda as "one of us", protesters as "good", and gender discourse. The themes that represent the "bad" Muslim are notions of oppression, use of "regime", censorship, and violence.

The results and findings from the data analysis underline how Neda's murder was framed by a structure of orientalist discourses. This paper is not intended to trace the genealogy of orientalist discourse; however any foray into Neda's story must also be given context. The video that showed Neda's death is not the beginning of orientalist structure; rather this structure has been laid out over the history of colonialism and imperialism, providing a wealth of knowledge of Iran and the Middle East available for media purposes at any given time. Orientalist discourse presents a conflict of a civilized "us" and a barbarian "them". These tropes heavily influence how the audience is intended to view Neda's murder. It becomes apparent that the display of her death

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as a scene of grief is being used to (re)construct Iran as an unruly and chaotic place, controlled by a regime mired in a pre-modern way of life, with a leader who represents an unquestioned evil. This study is not to say that President Ahmadinejad was not repressive, or that he has not ordered the violent suppression of the protesters. However, this study is to highlight how U.S. elite discourse represents Iran and its leader that as violent, glossing over the knowledge that the U.S. government has committed violent acts upon its citizens. The fact is that both of these governments are violent at some point towards its citizens.

For purposes of this analysis, the beginnings of the representation of "evil" pertaining to Iran can be seen as early as 1979. This year saw a grassroots uprising that lead to the eventual overthrow of the Shah[3], and only a few weeks later a revolutionary group took fifty-two diplomatic hostages in response to the United States government providing sanctuary for the recently evicted Shah. This event captivated elite media discourse for the 444 days that it took place—even creating a nightly program that informed the American audience of what was going on "overseas" (Said, 1997). During this spectacle, the United States media depicted Iran as a chaotic, barbarous state, led by its Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khomeini, the person who replaced the Shah as ruler of Iran.

This new leader was regarded as a pre-modern figure, one existing in a pre-enlightenment era of knowledge, while the ousted Shah became seen as a modern leader who was attempting to bring Iran into the community of Western nations (Said, 1997). This new Islamic republic has proven to be an alarmingly perplexing phenomenon. All at once, the television and newspapers were filled with "turbaned, bearded, old men espousing a combination of religious and political philosophy that was strange to westernized ears" (Beeman, 2008, p. 70). When the public was

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[3] The established ruler of the monarchy, the Shah was widely believed to by a puppet of the United States, and was in fact given power by the United States government after their successful overthrow of the democratically elected Prime Minister Musaddiq as he attempted to start an anti-colonialist movement within Iran in 1953 (see Gasiorowski, 2004)

confronted with such visions, coupled by the events of "mis-treatment" by their hostage takers, the "new" image of Iran became portrayed as the closest thing to evil outside of the Soviet Union. Previous perceptions of a Shah-run Iranian state as the center piece of dominance in the Middle East quickly fell apart as the wave of chants "Death to America" swept through the streets of Tehran and into the ears of the West in 1979.

Through the collapse of the USSR, and into the 21$^{st}$ century, representations of Iran have continued unabated. As the Berlin Wall collapsed and the Cold War became all but won for the United States, the Iranian government along with the idea of the Middle Eastern terrorists can be seen replacing the Russian in David Campbell's(1999) "discourse of danger", taking up the mantle of the "the world's most dangerous enemy". David Campbell (1999) argues that as the Soviet Union collapsed a respite from danger should have occurred, yet representations that created the Middle Easterner helped continue a discourse of danger within the United States. Continuing funding for a military-complex that would soon outspend all of the Western countries combined. Throughout the 1990s Iran was sanctioned and embargoed, blocking the government from trading with big importers of the world such as the United States and Great Britain, and following the attacks of September 11, 2001, Iran continued (if not even more so) to be viewed as a major enemy of not only the U.S., but also the West in general. This can be exemplified by President Bush naming the country as one of the "axis of evil" nations following the air attacks on the world trade center. With Iraq and North Korea as co-conspirators, President Bush represented Iran as a geography of evil (Campbell, 1999) that produced representations of violence as if they only existed in these specific places (Springer, 2011). Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice continued this word association, referring to Iran as an "outpost of tyranny" in 2005 (Rice, 2005). In that same year President Bush stated that he was looking forward "to the day when the Iranian people are free" (Bush, 2005), implying the United States' active role in "freeing" the Iranian people from a violent government.

While Iran has yet to be invaded militarily, the country has been circumscribed by a dense network of textual and visual associations that have constructed its government as violently different from those in the West. Figure 1 shows a 2012 Gallop Poll that highlights the consequences of the continued associations of Iran with evil. The poll, titled, "Americans Give Record High Ratings to Several Allies" showed that only 10% of U.S. citizens surveyed viewed Iran as favorable, while 87% feel very/mostly unfavorable.

Americans' Views of Iran, 1989-2012

■ % Very/Mostly favorable    ▢ % Very/Mostly unfavorable

89   84   83 84   79   82   86   88   85   87
76 79                 77 77           80   85

5   14   6   12   13 17   12 7   8   12 10 11 10

1989  1991  1993  1995  1997  1999  2001  2003  2005  2007  2009  2011
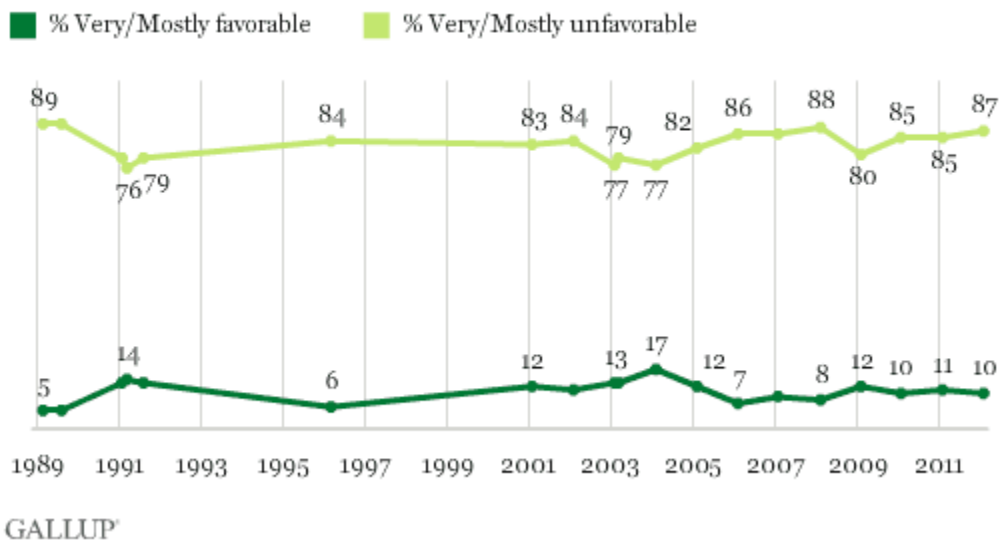
GALLUP

Figure 1: American's Views of Iran, 1989-2012

Source: Sadd, L. (February 16, 2012). Americans give record-high ratings to several U.S. allies: Iran has the lowest favorable rating; China's declines. *Gallup Politics*. March 12, 2012.

http://www.gallup.com/poll/152735/americans-give-record-high-ratings-several-allies.aspx

As Figure 1 shows, perceptions of Iran have not been positive in the twenty three years that this survey has been recorded. In large part, these feelings can be traced back to the mainstream media's portrayal of Iran as a danger to most Americans.  The scene of Neda's death

is situated in this genealogy of orientalism as well. Viewing her murder through such discourse makes sense for the audience. Scenes of barbaric chaos, repressive regimes, and murder are presented as common knowledge in elite discourse. Representations of Iran's past have led to a present that sees Iran as the Orientalized "Other". In the video of Neda, this orientalist discourse successfully dichotomizes Iran into two distinct categories: good Muslims and bad Muslims—taking a nation of 79 million and placing everyone one of them into either/or categories. In the representations surrounding Neda's video, elite discourse presents Neda, and the protestors by virtue of symbolism, as good Muslims—they become situated as Western and in need of rescue. The Iranian government and President Ahmadinejad become the bad Muslims—the ones out of control, who lash out irrationally and are responsible for the repression of Neda and her conspirators.

By blanketing all presentations of Neda's video through good and bad discourses, the United States involvement becomes unrecognizable. On the heels of representing the Iranian government in need of a regime change the United States appears to idly sit by, throwing its support behind the protestors but remaining on the sidelines. History has proven, however, that this is simply not the case. Within perceptions of good and bad Muslim, the United States has been able to create regime change in a number of Middle Eastern countries—Iraq and Afghanistan being the most recent (Adas, 2006).

The "Good" Muslim: The Representation of Neda as "One of Us"

In framing divisions between the Iranian people, elite discourse situated the scene of Neda's murder as a set of binary oppositions—good and bad. Where Orientalist discourse describes the Middle East as negative, these connotations are used, in turn, to create the identity of the West. The West becomes what the East is not. In other words, depictions of Iran as uncivilized create the construction that the United States is civilized. The creation of identity

through negative constructions of the "Other" is reflected in the creation of the relationship between "good" and "bad" Muslim. The "good" Muslim becomes all that the "bad" Muslim is not. Case in point, as the mainstream media announced the murder of Neda, the Iranian government was represented as the "bad" Muslim. On the other side of the coin, the good Muslim becomes the protester, who did *not* kill Neda. The creation of the protester as a "good" Muslim frames the Iranian government as the "bad" Muslim for attacking the protesters.

Presenting the protestors as "good" Muslims required representations that connected the protestors to American ideals—the commonsense rhetoric that ties a nation together. Hence, words such as democracy, freedom, "right", and innocent became symbols of a "good" Muslim. Connecting the protestors to "us", bridging the gap from outside to inside by creating similarities required a number of representations: creating Neda as "one of us"; using images of Neda to converge the protestors with images of West; and using gender discourses to show that the protestors were in need of rescue. As Judith Butler (2009), says "our ability to respond with outrage depends upon a tacit realization that there is a worthy life that has been injured or lost" (p. 54). Neda is able to connect with the U.S. viewer, and through her the protesters are able to achieve the same support. This connection allowed the viewer to express their grief and concern not only over Neda's video, but at the way in which the protestors' rights were violated at the hands of the Iranian government.

As discussed above, Orientalist discourse has been involved with constructing Iran as politically and cultural corrupt and evil for well over forty years. The entrance of Neda's video into mainstream media just provided another way in which elite discourse could attempt to solidify the image of the protestors as good. As an event then, Neda was framed as an Iranian citizen that had more in common with "us", or the U.S. and even "the West", than she did her own national and territorial belonging. Following the scene of Neda's murder, elite discourse describes Neda as if she was an American woman, developed in large part by language that

reveals her to be apolitical (Carlin, 2009), a young woman who loved (Fathi, 2009), someone who sought justice for what was right(Cooper & Sanger, 2009), who ultimately gave her life in sacrifice for her country. She was a young woman who became a hero for "freedom fighters" says Bardio Bardiozamani (Lemon, 2009).

As U.S. media outlets picked up the story of Neda's death, largely due to the growing popularity of her video, they found it necessary to explain to the American people the reasons for showing such a graphic video clip. Various media outlets all shared a similar technique: an upfront warning of the tragic event and subsequent bloody images. This discursive technique helped set up the importance of this particular news story, perhaps separating it from run-of-the-mill news, while simultaneously serving to pull at the "heartstrings" of media consumers/spectators. Following this warned introduction of the video on mainstream news, the news anchor then discussed how tragic, horrific, and violent Neda's murder was. Don Lemon (2009), a CNN News anchor, began his segment of Neda's murder on June 23, 2009 by stating "at a protest rally in Tehran yesterday, just before something, something really horrible happened…the story of Neda, in particular, has deeply shocked the country [U.S.], and really the world…" Lemon encourages the viewer to connect emotionally to the video. By situating the story in such a way, the viewer can understand the pain and grief that he/she is about to witness. Lemon (2009) subsequently introduces Octavia Nasr's (a Middle Eastern correspondent) segment that presents the actual footage of Neda's death. As Nasr continues the story, showing Neda collapsing, she reinforces a message of grief, providing imminent warning that this material is graphic and disturbing. As the video ends, the image of Neda's eyes are caught staring blankly into the camera, this becomes an image that connects to the audience. Nasr's voice in the background fades out in despair at documenting this event.

After the clip, the camera focuses back on Lemon who calls the scene "a grim reminder of what's going on overseas." He wants to iterate "it's important to know what's going on there."

Lemon (2009) draws in his audience, stating to them that Neda's death is important. It is "newsworthy" as Lemon says, because "most news organizations aren't in the business of showing someone's death, even when people are killed in war…this is unprecedented what's going on." In other words, he implies this video would not have been shown, but because of the gravity of the situation, because the United States needs to be reminded of "what's going on overseas", the mainstream media is giving the video front-page headlines. Lemon's phrase, "A grim reminder", also resides within the imaginative geographies that "fold distance into difference", informing the audience that violence continues "overseas", highlighting the fact that it is not happening "here" at the same time that it is creating a distance between the U.S. and Iran. Hence Lemon creates a boundary for his audience, situating the fact that violence is continues "over there", creating a binary from which U.S. identity is forged. By creating boundaries between Iran and the United States at the same time as helping form a connection between Neda and her audience, Lemon is separating Neda from Iran in a way that allows for a better emotional tie for a viewer.

In another news medium, The *NYT* found her story worthy of front-page news within the eight-day period in which data was collected. On the front-page of the June 23, 2009 paper, framed under a picture of a memorial in Saudi Arabia for her death, Nazila Fathi (2009) gives the reader a chance to hear Neda's story. Fathi explained that her relatives stated "she was not political." This description would prove to be powerful in helping frame Neda as "one of us". In addition, The *Washington Post* expanded its foreign section to allow for more articles on the video of Neda. In Thomas Erdbrink's (2009a) "Woman's Slaying In Protests Creates An Opposition Icon", he began his story of Neda by quoting from her fiancé (Caspian Makan): "Neda, just wanted to have freedom for everyone… [Her] goal was not to support Mousavi or Ahmadinejad, she was just in love with her country." All of which humanized her and situated her as someone worth grieving, someone not like "them" but more like "us". She was simply a

patriot, trying to fight for freedom. She became seen as someone so in love with her country that

she was willing to lay down her life to see it freed from tyrannical rule. As her fiancée stated, she

was not political. Her sister Hoda in *Frontline: A Death in Tehran* (2009) said she didn't even

vote. While calling for notions of freedom, Neda did not support any side, instead, her side was

on the ideas of freedom, rather than any political candidate. Badio Badiozamani (Lemon, 2009)

an Iranian Expert used during Don Lemon's segment on Neda's video explained to him that Neda

was at the protests because "she got the calling, she got the call." She did not have an agenda, she

wasn't protesting because she wanted Mousavi to win office, she was protesting because that was

the right thing to do. Badiozamni goes as far as to call her a "freedom fighter", a "democracy

seeker" (Lemon, 2009).

After watching the Neda video, President Barack Obama publicly addressed Neda's

death, calling it "heartbreaking" and believing "that anybody who sees it [the video of Neda's

murder] knows that there's something fundamentally unjust about that" (A shift on, 2009).

President Obama's reference placed Neda on the side of justice declaring, "Those who stand up

for justice are on the right side of history" (Cooper & Sanger, 2009). Standing up for justice

provides a direct connection for the American people to see her as a patriot, drawing distinctions

between her fight against the Iranian government and the U.S. revolution in 1776. This shows

how Neda became such a public symbol within the U.S. She was someone that stood for notions

that the United States' identity was founded upon. She stood for the United States' commonsense

rhetoric of "freedom" and "democracy" and "peace". She became peaceful because she didn't

even have a rock in her hand (Carlin, 2009). She went to the streets to voice her disagreement

because she wanted freedom and democracy. These words have long been identified as being

cores value of the United States and the West, and help identify her as someone worth getting

upset about. Calling her not political, yet a patriot helps naturalize her innocence and democratic

character. In other words, she is not political because her cause, and the protesters cause, is

beyond criticism. As Mr. Obama says, Neda and the protesters are "on the right side…of justice". There can be no criticisms within such discourse, it is clearly on the "right side of history", in the fact that this movement is justifiable in its actions.

In order to strengthen the relation with "us", personalized descriptions of Neda's life were made public. Rudi Bakhtiar (CBS, 2010) discusses on the website for CBS News why Neda became such a symbol:

> Neda was there that day to fight for her right of her votes….what was very important was the fact that this girl could be any girl, this is a girl…you see her bedroom could have been a bedroom of any young girl, the books she was reading, Wuthering Heights, Sartre, were books that all of us have read as young girls, so it really humanized her…

"I could be her" marveled Faranak (Thomas, 2010), a journalist from Iran that took part in the protest. Faranak was stunned when she saw the video, mystified about how similar Neda was to herself, proof that mediated images were making it possible for people to identify with Neda. These representations showed that Neda was a girl just like any other, a realization that resonated with and tugged on the emotions of the viewer.

Anthony Thomas's (2010) documentary *For Neda* furthered these comparisons, showing Neda's bedroom and house, creating a "normalcy" of her life. This "normalcy" depicted Neda as someone with parents, a brother and sister—similar to the ideal American family; her dad sat around watching television while her mom cooked dinner. The camera man was even able to interview Neda's mother and brother who reminisced of Neda's youth, flipping through a photo album, enjoying the memories of her young life. Orientalist discourse takes away the Oriental's history, situating them within a perpetual timelessness. Yet when Thomas (2009) shows the house, the grieving family, and the mother looking at photos of Neda's past, he is able to carve out a history for her. Such effects bring the audience in the U.S. some 8,000 miles closer to Neda. She became a woman that would be welcomed into any home in the U.S.

Thomas (2010) provided more similarities between Neda's life and that of the characteristic life of the so-called average American young woman. In a voice of reliability, the narrator says that "She went to the gym regularly, she cared about what she wore, she wore the coolest, latest fashions" (CBS, 2010). This language is spoken through an understanding of the groundwork of orientalist logics, understanding that the East is nothing like this image of Neda. This immediately and directly frames her as opposite of the stereotypical "oriental". These notions implore representations of the West by deviating Neda's life from the, already in place, notions of Orientalism's representations of culture that are constructing Iran. All of these descriptions help draw the audience emotionally to Neda's death, they start to understand who Neda was.. As orientalist tropes dissolve the histories of the Oriental, Neda stands out by being provided a background; her life is framed, not by orientalist tropes that provide no context, but by the images of the West. She has a family who loves her. She stands up for freedom and justice in the name of what is right. She is all that is good. These characteristics create Neda's life more in the imagery of the United States than with the monolithic Iranian image created within an orientalist lens.

It was not just the openings and prequels to the story that helped the U.S. public mourn for Neda's death. Within the media, she was described as a student of philosophy, someone who enjoyed vacationing and travelling, who took private singing lessons and "loved pop music" says her sister Hoda (Carlin, 2009). These characteristics gave qualities and substance to the girl in the video. She was not simply the young murdered girl; she possessed values similar to any young girl in the United States; she could have been their friend or neighbor. She had a home, a past and a family. Providing dimensions to Neda's life directly contradicts Orientalist tropes, "such as the image of timelessness (Mackie, 2012, p. 121). In this way, she is separated from the Orientalized other even though her life and death played out in an Orientalist geography. With a possession of these values, Neda becomes someone "we" all know. In this way, it becomes possible to situate

her, not only as a good Muslim, but as "one of us", successfully being brought into discourse as a part of the good Muslim identity.

Helping to propel this notion of familiarity forward were Representatives Thaddeus McCotter (2009) and John McCain (2009) who addressed Congress on behalf of Neda's well-being, displaying a very Western portrait of Neda in the background.  In the portrait, Neda is beautiful, with bangs, eye-liner, and lip-stick—a very Western appearance. Gone were the hijab, an Orientalized symbol of repression in the United States; gone was any semblance to Middle Eastern culture. This picture was not only used here, but later became the face for her public obituary. Reza Deghati (Thomas, 2010), the designer of the masks of Neda, chose to put this particular picture of her, rather than one of her wearing a hijab, as his "face" of the movement (Thomas, 2010). Hand held pictures of a Westernized Neda soon dotted protests throughout France, Great Britain, and the United States. Behind this choice is the ability to distance Neda from the consideration of a Middle Eastern woman, situating her within a framework that is acceptable to Western ideals of beauty and freedom.

In the United States, images of Neda were of this "Western" look rather than the picture where she was wearing a veil. In U.S. elite discourse, the veil functions as a simplistic visual metaphor for lack of freedom, and in turn is identified with the Iranian regime (Mackie, 2012). Without the veil, Neda is shown possessing freedom, the positive aspects associated with the United States, rather than the veiled and make-up less image associated with Iran. Even the cosmetics become signs of freedom. "Make-up by women during television programs is illegal and against Islamic sharia law ... There should not be a single case of a woman wearing make-up during a program," says Ezatollah Zarghami, the head of Iran's state television (Tehran, 2009). Yet Neda is wearing it, and it is all over the Western news. Displaying her picture becomes a celebration of defiance against the repressive measures of the Iranian government. The picture of Neda on the floor of Congress shows Neda as free, and she is seen "being free" on the steps of the

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United States' Congressional floor. The symbolism within this image shows how closely identified Neda has become with Western ideals of freedom: pictures of her wearing make-up show that she is a free woman, similar to any woman in the United States.

Also associated with this image is Neda's beauty. Not only is she wearing makeup and eye-liner, but she is beautiful as well. While the *NYT* and *WP* talked of her beauty, images showed it, constructing a powerful force of fame and possessive familiarity for the audience, functioning as "the dialectic of spectacular distance and emotional closeness" (Carney, 2010, p. 26). Through her image, Neda was brought closer to the West. She is able to bridge the gaps of difference and distance, becoming "Western" like in a manner that destroys difference. In her beauty she is no longer one of "them", but rather "one of us". Azar Nafisi, author of "Reading Lolita in Tehran", helped continue this trend, saying "everyone is so shocked to see that beautiful young girl dying and looking so modern and secular" (cited in Raghavan, 2009). To Nafisi, the only way people have a reaction is because of the ability to actually "see" this beautiful young woman. Once again, this beauty is given value in Western culture. While every culture has their own values of culture, in this case, Neda's beauty becomes solely a Western description, a commodity of value; while the Orientalist tropes fail to acknowledge that beauty is even possible in Iran. Her beauty stands out from the mob because it doesn't appear that she belongs there, it is not a face of the East.

Online comments taken from an online forum for the PBS Documentary *Frontline: A Death in Tehran* (2009) consistently mentions her beauty; one commentator calling her "the most beautiful woman in the crowd"; and another stresses the importance of her beauty makes Ahmadinejad a monster. Even Thomas' HBO documentary *For Neda* (2010) showcased a segment that suggested that the reason she was killed was because of her beauty, that her beauty attracted the anger of the Basij to kill her. "Basij men target beautiful girls, and they will shoot you" said a woman on the street to Neda (Thomas, 2010). These Basij men "could not control

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themselves in front of beauty" Reza Deghati is quoted as saying, "and they know that if they can't control themselves…they lose the relations to the Gods…they cannot control themselves in front of a beauty, they want to kill it" (Thomas, 2010). Even the reasons why Thomas (2010) suggests that she was killed group Neda as one of "us" instead of "them". Does the Basij hate her because she is beautiful, or is it because beauty has become a metaphor for freedom (Mackie, 2012)? If beauty is synonymous with freedom then "the most beautiful woman in the crowd" and "Basij men target beautiful girls" can be read as "the most *free* woman in the crowd" and "Basij men target *free* girls", which presents a more obvious meaning. Because of the connotations of the word freedom Neda's association becomes stronger. Here at the heart of Neda's beauty were Western values. Not only did her fiancée say that she wanted freedom, but her beauty signified that she was indeed a soldier for freedom and justice. Framing Neda as an attractive Iranian woman helped bridge the gap between "us" and "them", and created a shared grief for what was happening overseas. In this grief, the audience was shown a tyrannical leader instead. Ahmadinejad murdered one of their own. Where Ahmadinejad came off as violent – to which I will turn in the following section – President Obama's welcoming of her image helps "bring her in". This difference told the audience that President Obama not only cares for his citizens; he even cares for foreign others more than Ahmadinejad cares for his own.

As the evidence shows, Neda had been brought "inside". Her story was demarcated from orientalist tropes that helped formulate a justifiable grief over watching her death. How much she was grieved shows that she had been brought into discourse in a way that characterizes her as "us" and not "them". When Helen Thomas asks President Obama where pictures of abused detainees held abroad by the United States military were and if they could be released to the public, she was rebuffed. Her question had come as a response to Obama's acknowledged grief over seeing the video of Neda's murder, yet he did not spare, nor consider for a moment the lives of detainees that the United States military were holding in foreign lands (Greenwald, 2009). The

irony between a life worth grieving and a life unworthy of such commemoration and adoration becomes harshly apparent in this episode. These detainees come from the United States' War on Terror, the same constructions used to create Neda as "one of us" are the same ones that make these detainees vanish. The detainees did not receive an inch in any mainstream newspaper. Pictures were forbidden to be shown by President Obama and the White House. While the connection between Neda's smiling and beautiful face and that of the horrific scene of murder witnessed by millions throughout the United States highlights the acceptability of grief, the inability to show any resemblance of horror or smiles of the detainees highlights the inability to grieve for their life (Giroux, 2009).

Declaring one life worthy of grief and the other as not highlights the impact that the President has in constructing reality. His words were spread across mainstream media discourse, quoted often, and taken for granted or normalized as "common sense". Neda's life became grievable; her image showcased the power of a repressive Iranian government. The detainees that Helen Thomas inquired about had no such power, without the capabilities to show their picture, they fail to exist in media discourse and had no way of showing the power of a the repressive power of the United States. As Judith Butler (2009) says, the dehumanization effects can occur from the fact that the image was not shown in discourse. This draws us back to Helen Thomas' question, how was Neda's death deemed "heartbreaking" yet still shown throughout the world, but the detainees' pain and torture not even allowed in the discussion (Greenwald, 2009). An easy response would be that Neda's life has become identifiable as "one of us", while the detainees are still portrayed as terrorists and discussed in a discourse of guilt. While this is true, it does not bring us closer to understanding the point of creating Neda as identifiable. Ironically enough, the administration has acknowledged the ability for the image to galvanize public perception, and have stated that it would be inappropriate to show images of the detainees because of these very reasons. Yet Neda's image is displayed, proclaimed as "heartbreaking". It appears to be that

Neda's image was used to galvanize the public perception on the issue of the Iranian government. Her image would soon be folded into the image of the protester with the same galvanizing effects. That is, the "face" of Neda would soon converge into the "face of a movement".

The Convergence of Neda and the Protesters

The connection between the video of Neda's death and the protest movement converges; Neda has been categorized as a "good" Muslim and given idealistic Western values and so too have the protesters. In the discourse that connected her to the protest movement, the scenes of Neda dying became iconic. Neda's face gave the United States a face to attach to a previously anonymous movement—a face that also helped continue the frame the Iranian "people" as innocent, a now oppressed population controlled by a regime of violence. The scene of Neda's death no longer became just a photograph of one individual; she signified what the protest movement represented within U.S. elite discourse. The documentary *For Neda* (Thomas, 2010) begins with a voiceover: "Every conflict of the last seventy years has its own defining image, Vietnam, China, Iraq, and now Iran". As this voiceover introduction begins, iconic images of war, strife, and human suffering were displayed. Visually complimenting her voice were the images of the Jewish child forced at gunpoint by German soldiers to enter the Warsaw Ghetto—a look of stark fear clearly etched across his face; the naked Vietnamese girl running through the street after being severely burned by a South Vietnamese napalm attack; the execution of Nguyen Van Lem by a General of the Republic of Vietnam; the image of the lone Chinese man in Tiananmen Square attempting to block a line of tanks heading east on Beijing's Cangan Boulevard; and leaked pictures of the tortured at Abu Ghraib. All of these pictures situate the image of Neda, describing the scene that is about to be shown—an iconic image that will forever be remembered alongside the Iranian protest movement.

An anonymous letter to the editor at the *Washington Post* provides proof of how her image became iconic. The letter explains the footage of Neda, but the way in which it is presented creates a perception for the audience that something special is going on with this footage. It is symbolic of what is going on in Iran. The author clearly states what the video of Neda has become "a powerful symbol for thousands of women and men risking their lives for the right to be heard" (Neda's Legacy: A, 2009). "An Army of Nedas" reiterates this iconic image, believing that the video "will transform an instant icon into an immortal martyr" (Silva, 2009). It becomes acceptable for the language of "martyr" to be used when it is for "democracy". However, the use of the word "martyr" when describing non-"democratic" support is considered fanatical and often times misunderstood. Thomas Erdbrink (2009b) of the *Washington Post* reinforces notions of Neda as an icon by quoting an Iranian blogger who states that the video of Neda's last seconds, as she looks into the camera, don't speak of her pain, rather these "eyes…spoke of the tragedy that has betaken us all". Even parts of her body had become iconic. In this sense, Neda's death is captured, reshaped and possessed, rather jealously, in the elite discourse's process of enabling representations of the protesters as "good" Muslims. Thus, as an iconic symbol, Roger Cohen's (2009b) statement in the *WP* makes sense, when he stated that the image "personifies a certain Iran I've tried to evoke since the beginning of this year". The now iconic images of Neda's video creates perceptions of "good" Muslims, and as an iconic image, the video can be tied to the protest movement more securely while simultaneously constructing Neda and the protest movement as "good" Muslims.

With the unfolding of the scenes of Neda's murder within depictions of the protest movement, the ability for President Obama to place the protesters on the side of "right" becomes believable (as quoted in Cooper & Sanger, 2009). This is a construction that strengthens the ability for the U.S. audience to believe that the protests are justified in their anger towards Ahmadinejad and the Iranian regime. As the Iranian regime becomes a regime of darkness and

difference, the protest is constructed as a movement of light. Within this discursive analysis, not only was the movement defined through representations of Iran as regime, but it was also able to influence the lenses in which the Iranian government was viewed.

In creating "good" versus "evil", protester versus Iranian government, or "good" versus "bad" Muslims, President Obama along with mainstream media discourse show the protesters to be morally right. Analysis of mainstream discourse clearly shows that these articles situated the protest movement as morally good: "A Shift on Iran: President Obama's Embrace of its Protest Movement is an Act of Realism" (Anonymous, 2009); "Bet on Neda's Side" (Ignatius, 2009); "Iran's Guardian Council certifies Ahmadinejad Election Victory (Slackman, 2009); "Life and Death in Tehran" (Cohen, 2009a); "Obama Condemns Iran's Iron Fist Against Protests: Strongest Remarks Yet" (Cooper & Sanger, 2009); "Protest Met with Force Near Iran's Parliament; Supreme Leader refuses 'Bullying' over vote" (Erdbrink, 2009b); "Woman's Slaying in Protests Creates an Opposition Icon: Video Clip evokes Sympathy Worldwide" (Erdbrink, 2009a). All of these articles shared a similar trend: that the protesters were justified in taking to the streets because the election was obviously rigged. As the protesters become symbols of light, what they are protesting becomes morally grounded. Within the justified, these protests are decrying fraud, attempting to challenge the decision. It is worth noting that while these articles specifically dealt with placing the protesters as "right", other articles defining the Iranian government as evil also helped create perceptions that the movement was indeed "good". For purposes of clarity, the aim here is to strictly highlight articles that mentioned that the protest movement was on the side of the justice specifically.

In representing the protesters, the mainstream media took pains in publishing humanizing characteristics. Quoting from online tribute boards to the video of Neda's death, calling the protesters innocent (Erdbrink, 2009a), or even expressing their simplest desires to be free, create an identity of the "good" Muslim--they become rational because like those in the West, they want

freedom, and are following in the West's footsteps. Humanizing the protester produces a positive

identity for the group. With the now iconic symbol of the video of Neda's murder connected to it,

the protest movement develops similar characteristics. When quoting online tribute borders to the

video of Neda's death (Erbrink, 2009a), the journalist is able to show that these protesters are the

same as Neda. They share similar stories of innocence and have the same desires of freedom.

They, like the image of Neda, are given moral support from the administration (A Shift On,

2009). The protest movement did not necessarily "need" Neda, since Orientalists othering was

already in place long before her death. The U.S. most likely would have framed the protes

movement as on the side of right without neda, but the point is that she helped personalize this

protests through her "face".

Not only were the protesters humanized in ostensible ways, but the language used when

talking about their actions changed to highlight these characteristics. Violent discourse helped

separate the distinction between the Iranian government and the protesters as well. The violence

that sits with Iran through orientalist tropes was separated from that of the protesters. Erdbrink, of

the *WP*, tells a story of demonstrators who "were trying to gather in front of the parliament

building to show support for opposition presidential candidate Mr. Hossein Mousavi" was met by

"large numbers of security personnel, some riding motorcycles, used baton charges, beatings, tear

gas and arrest to disperse" the crowd (Erdbrink, 2009b). Words such as "mob" that have negative

connotations of disorder are not used to describe the protesters. Using words such as "gather" or

"demonstrate" create a picture of the protesters actions as peaceful and non-violent, who are

stopped from their demonstrations by a group of violent security forces clearly sent by the

government to "break-up the gathering". This helps support Robert Kaplan's (2009) opinion, a

journalist for the *Washington Post*, who says that the movement is "organized". Kaplan's opinion

is based on the fact that they have one clear message that is situated as a Western message, one of

freedom. The word "gather" helps support this notion of "organized", implying that the protest is

planned. They aren't irrationally protesting, they are gathering to tell the Iranian government that the elections were wrong, organized in their message of freedom. Descriptions such as "organized" help draw comparisons to a Western identity of civilized as well. Creating perceptions of rational thinking people, rather than the Orientalized image of the "chaotic mob" that is often times displayed in elite discourse.

Labels of "organized" also helped strengthen and support notions that the movement was democratic. The need to clarify the protesters as "good" Muslims came in this form labeling the protesters as a democratic movement. At the beginning of this analysis, the movement was referred to as protests in the *Washington Post's* article by Thomas Erdbrink titled "Woman's Slaying In Protests Creates an Opposition Icon" (2009). Erdbrink called the protesters demonstrators or opposition, but never referred to it as a democratic movement. As the control of the representations surrounding the video of Neda's murder grew stronger within elite discourse, the protest became viewed as a democratic movement. Robert Kaplan (2009) also of the *WP* defines a new image of the protest, referring to it as "Iran's democracy movement", even going as far as to say that "it is strikingly Western in its organization and discipline". While Kaplan seems surprised at how Western it is, he shouldn't. The protesters have been represented as justified and advocators of freedom throughout discourse. His surprise seems to originate from the fact that Iranian protesters were able to handle the complexities of Western organization. The positive connotations evolving out of this phrase allows for the closure needed for the American public to get behind the possibilities of a democratic Iran.

Kaplan (2009) then goes on to defend Mousavi, who some argued was an insider of Iranian politics. However, Kaplan brushes these detractors off, quickly comparing him to Mikhail Gorbachev, the former head of the state of the Soviet Union and widely credited with initiating reforms that would help lead to the end of the Cold War. Not only does this create a better image of Mousavi, but it also supports David Campbell's (1998) claim that a new discourse

of danger was framed at the end of the Cold War. Kaplan (2009) showcases the belief that the danger is surrounding the Middle East. If democracy took over Iran, he could be symbolically reminiscent of the collapse of the Berlin Wall. A democratic Iran could possibly bring an end to a barbarous Middle Eastern world.  Helping to complete this convergence, other authors continued to suggest that this democratic movement could bring about such change within the region. By collapsing Iran into the Middle East, believing that change in one would bring about change in the others situated not only Iran as "bad", but the Middle East as equally "bad". Discourse set the stage for a conflict between democratic change and the Middle East, ultimately a conflict between "good" Muslims and "bad" Muslims.

The Role of First World Feminism in Constructing the Protester

Other frames of Neda's video might help us understand this question. In continuing the reiteration of "good" Muslims, the data sources analyzed also presented gender and feminine tropes that created images of repressed women who are in need of rescuing. Nazilia Fathi (2009) of the *NYT* says it best, "Ms. Agha-Soltan's fate resonates particularly with women". Not only does this discourse frame Neda as in need of rescue, but it also provides the opportunity to connect the Neda video to the protest movement via the presentation of a feminist revolt. Such methods in turn helped let the U.S. audience know that these demonstrators were "good" Muslims.

Titles from both the *NYT* and *WP* help Neda's name and ideals of feminism become synonymous with the protest movement: "Iran's Second Sex" (Cohen, 2009b); "Role of Women in Iran Protest Kindles Hope: Female Muslims Abroad Say They Draw inspiration For Own Struggle at Home" (Raghavan, 2009). All of these titles highlight a specific gender discourse that depicts the protesters as standing up against the repressive control over a woman's life in Iran. This study is not supporting that repression of women is acceptable or not, rather the purpose is in

analyzing how gender discourse is presented and used by elite media discourse. In distinguishing

gender discourse, mainstream media framed the protest movement and the video of Neda within

discourses of first-world feminism. Cheryl Johnson-Odim argues that:

> While it may be legitimately argued that there is no one school of thought on feminism among First World feminists -- who are not, after all, monolithic -- there is still, among Third World women, a widely accepted perception that the feminism emerging from white, middle-class Western women narrowly confines itself to a struggle against gender discrimination (p. 314, 315).

Such feminism places more focus on the facts of sexual freedom rather than freedom from

sexualization writes Gayle Kimball (2012). In the case of the protesters, first world feminism

allowed the adoption of "an army of Nedas" to enter elite discourse (Silva, 2009). However, on

its entrance, it became adopted as a trope that helps distinguish not just "good" Muslim and "bad"

Muslim, but who needs to be rescued. Creating perceptions that the only capable rescue attempt

must come from the United States, and that "they" as a society in which women are free, can

provide the needed support for the women of the protest movement. Journalists such as Roger

Cohen (2009a, 2009b), Jeffrey Silva (2009), Suderson Raghavan (2009), and Nazila Fathi (2009)

helped create representations of the Iranian movement in need of rescuing from a repressive

authoritarian regime comprised of barbarous men. Reza Deghati's (Thomas, 2010) claim that

Neda was killed because of her beauty also be seen influencing the thought of these journalists.

They believed that these women were in need of rescuing because they saw the brutality of

Neda's murder and associated the violence with her beauty to the violence that is being unleashed

onto the protesters. Using veils as representations of repression have provided a brief history of

the female life in Iran that allows for an easy narrative when using gender discourse (Mackie,

2012). Not only is beauty seen as repressed, but strict enforcement on all laws is shown to be of a

repressive nature. These representations have been used as tools for elite discourse to

commandeer gender discourse and shape it into a tool with which to help create the protest movement into the image of a good Muslim.

Accounts of daily life in Iran were propagated throughout the eight days of analysis. Michiko Kakutani (2009) of the *NYT* gave an account of what a day in this life would be like: "under the mullah's rule, and the myriad ways in which the Islamic government's strict edicts on everything from clothing to relationships between the sexes permeate daily life". In "Iran's Second Sex", Roger Cohen (2009) put the Iranian regime's view toward women simply: "laws that can force a girl into marriage at 13; discriminatory laws on inheritance; the segregated beaches on the Caspian; the humiliation of arrest for a neck revealed or an ankle-length skirt (a gust of wind might show a forbidden flash of leg)". Cohen is hitting on all the major points of repression, steeping such repression as humiliation for the women, a method that applies even more repression. Cohen creates a sense of perverted sexism that situates the repressive Iranian male as unable to control his desires around women and that's why he covers her. "From the outset, the regime targeted women, calculating that the patriarchal culture of the country would embrace the idea of an Islamic diktat that "put women in their place"" (Cohen, 2009b). While Cohen is describing Iran, and the strict rules towards women, his purpose becomes clear later in his article. He wants the world to see how repressive Iran is. In a story of a girl he met while in Iran, Cohen tells the reader that her biggest fear is the punishment that would come if she ever forgot to wear her hijab. As she was telling Cohen this fear, he said that "she looked at me wide-eyed as if to say: do you understand, does the world understand our desperation". Once again the veil is situated as a repressive measure, but what is more important is the author situating himself as the women of Iran's moral protector. The use of Neda's image here becomes important. Her murder signified to Cohen and others that rescuing these women could not wait. It is important to point out that the discourse expressing concerns over the veil, and signifying repression with images of the veil have simplified a complex issue. Studies have shown that Muslim women do

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not necessarily associate veiling with ideas of repression or the idea that the veil continues to stabilize traditional roles (Bullock, 2003; Read, 2003). Scholars have shown that Islamic clothing can be used to reassert their identity (Ahmed, 1992). In instances of Muslim-American women, veiling could be seen as a way to help formulate both a Muslim and U.S. identity (Williams & Vashin, 2007); while for Western converts to Islam, the veil has helped assert their new found identity (Franks, 2000). These scholars show that the veil is not a simple tool of repression, but the issue is far more complex than that, rather helping to strengthen an Identity,  or to negotiate minority status (Read & Bartkowski, 2000)

It becomes Cohen's mission to draw light on how these poor women are treated. However, the fact of the matter still remains that Cohen is placing himself within a hierarchal module of power in which he is the savior. These women need someone to protect them and he is placed perfectly to do so. In his own way, Cohen is marshaling his own troops. While attempting to detract from Iran's patriarchal system, he himself is establishing it in a different sense. Cohen is playing towards the notions of freedom within a first world feminism structure in that women should be liberated from having to wear a veil. An automatic resituating that places a whole culture as being evil. Suderson Raghavan (2009) of the *Washington Post* was not as overtly heroic as Cohen, yet still subscribed to a narrow first-world feminism. Her article titled "Role of Women in Iran Protests Kindles Hope; Female Muslims Abroad Say They Draw Inspiration for Own Struggle at Home" allows the repressive nature of Iran to spread throughout the Middle East, converging the problems within Iran with that of the entire Middle East. If Iran has already been represented as a "bad" Muslim, then the Middle East can be generalized as "bad" as well. In her article, Raghavan creates the protest movement as an iconic movement for the Middle East as a whole. Not only did Raghavan (2009) name Neda Agha Soltan as a "major icon" she also drew on opposition leader Mousavi's wife, Zahra Rahnavard as a highlight to how inspirational this movement was. Both of these women became role models in Raghavan's article, breaking all

stereotypes of the Middle East woman says Baho Abdula, an Egyptian activist (quoted in Ragahavan, 2009). "It was a huge empowerment to lead the protests" she added. "They didn't fear the state. Images like that live on" (Baho Abdula quoted in Raghavan, 2009). The importance of quoting an Egyptian activist shows the movement's ability to spread throughout Iran. In supporting her claim that these Iranian women are becoming role models, Raghavan (2009) says that other Middle Eastern states have long admired the women of Iran, quoting a lawyer and member of parliament in Iraq as wanting "Iraqi women to imitate Iranian women in boldly and courageously expressing their views, especially since Iraqi women do not lack courage or daring" (Ragahaven, 2009).

Not only does this help fold Iran with the Middle East into one body, but it also helps represent Iranian women as possessing Western ideals. They are women who want to be like "us", they are trying to gain their freedom like the women of the West are privileged with. If the discourse of first world feminism calls for sexual liberation then Neda, representative of the entire movement now, who was presented as possessing of western attributes can now be transferred completely to the movement. Stories of her beauty and of her strive for freedom not only identifies her as "one of us", but now it has the power to shape the representations of the protest movement as "one of us"—or in the very least possessing Western values of freedom and support for women's rights. Looking back on Anthony Thomas' (2010) documentary in which she was described as hating school because she didn't understand having to follow rules on what she had to wear now became associated with the protest movement. The PBS Documentary, *Frontline: A Death in Tehran* (2009) interviews women activists within Iran as they discuss her life. Not only does the scene of Neda's murder become tied to discourse of repression, but she is also tied to the movement. Discourse becomes reflective, naturalizing the history of Neda's murder and the women's movement in Iran, leaving in its wake a tie between Neda and the women's rights movement for the audience to connect with. Through this gender discourse, the protester is now

associated not only with Neda, but with the women's movement in general. In this conflation of protester and Neda, elite discourse is able to shape each as a "good" Muslim.

This discourse not only discussed gender, but also creates a connection between the protest movement that developed from the Ahmadinejad election and women's right as one and the same. To do this, Raghavan (2009) and others had to create a depiction of newly elected Ahmadinejad as a hater of women. Raghavan gave a history of the Iranian woman's role after the 1979 Islamic revolution, "as more traditional families began educating their daughters", stating that the result is "the best-educated generation of women in Iranian history" (Raghavan, 2009). "More than 60 of university students are women, and female lawyers, doctors, athletes and politicians are not uncommon…A woman, Shirin Ebadi, won Iran's first Nobel Peace Prize in 2003" declares Raghavan (2009). The women's empowerment movement has become a means of reproach for the Ahmadinejad regime. According to Cohen (2009b), "the vote offered an opportunity to bridge the gap between a fast-changing society of highly educated women and the regime", instead they chose not to. The most basic evidence becomes the damning scene of Neda's murder. Women became the focus of attack by the Ahmadinejad regime says Fathi, a journalist writing for the *NYT*(2009). "Women were particular targets after President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad began to strictly enforce previously loosened restrictions. Thousands of women were arrested or intimidated because they did not adhere precisely to Islamic dress code on the streets" (Fathi, 2009). The ability to show Ahmadinejad as violent towards women proved to a U.S. audience that he and his hard-liners wanted to continue this suppression—which read as a flat out refusal to accept democratic change. This violence towards women helped highlight orientalist tropes that see the Muslim culture as repressive in nature towards women, and would also help strengthen ideas of change through Iran and the Middle East.

Such a gender discourse not only highlights the Iranian government, but it also frames the United States is the complete opposite. Explaining the crimes against women, elite discourse

plays out an already established discourse of Muslim culture. Just the mention of violence

towards women in the Middle East brings to mind a preexisting narrative of "middle-Eastern

despotism, oppression of women, and a call to "save" these women" (Mackie, 2012, p. 120).

While the violent treatment of protesters is never anything to mock, it becomes imperative

through these findings to understand how these protesters in Iran were seen as democratic. Yet

the recent Occupy Movement that saw thousands take to the streets in cities across the world were

mocked, made fun of and dispelled for being "hippies" by mainstream media discourse within the

U.S.—this became a way to marginalize and create perceptions of a fringe group. They were

protesting their rights to vote, expressing the feelings that they did not have a say in the current

political system non-violently, yet they were not represented in such elite discourse.

The Occupy Movement also experienced violence from repressive state tactics,, yet

mainstream coverage rarely acknowledged this coercion and violence. Even as images captured

former-military serviceman Scott Olsen shot in the head with a rubber bullet from less than ten

feet away, there was little attention given to him by mainstream media outlets (Dailybail, 2011).

Maybe more disturbing was the lack of coverage of the video of an 84 year old woman having to

dip her head into milk because she was peppered at an Occupy protest in Seattle, WA by Seattle

security forces (Fang, 2011). Where were the cameras and attention there? Discourse was full of

Iranian security forces shooting tear gas and other "non-lethal" ballistics into the crowds during

their democratic protests. Even live video of the Oakland Occupy protests were cut moments

before state security officers began launching tear-gas into the crowds (Occupy Oakland: Tear,

2011)[4]. Questions must be raised as to why this event was not covered in such a supportive light

as the protests in Iran were covered. This shows that identity as "us" is not encompassing of

everyone within the geographic realms of a nation. Some lives become more important than

others. This correlates with the previous questions asked by Helen Thomas to President Obama.

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[4] http://www.rt.com/news/occupy-oakland-protest-violence-773/

In both cases we are seeing the continuous battle fought to control the image. Indeed, the image is one of the most important features of any struggle of defining reality. What is constantly being shown, not only through representations of the video of Neda and the protest movement in Iran, is that images that are deemed "newsworthy" are created and displayed with a specific purpose. By representing Neda and the discourse in the news, elite discourse is able to highlight an atrocious event of state crime. However, this atrocious event also creates the perception that this doesn't happen in the United States, hiding the fact that protest movements and other dissent is also quite prevalent within the U.S. yet is refused from elite discourse.

The "Bad" Muslim: The Creation of the Iranian Government as a "Bad" Muslim

The construction of the "bad" Muslim requires the opposite definitions used to define the "good" Muslim. Discourses dominated by protesters, Neda, and gender discourse are "good"; "bad" Muslim discourse travels through representations that are the exact opposite. In representing the event of Neda's murder, the subject of the "bad" Muslim became the Iranian government. This discourse highlighted factors that are deemed unwanted in governments of the West. Here the Iranian government is situated as irrational, evil, and violent. Using words such as regime, repressive, irrational, evil, and violent constructs the Iranian government as "bad". The Iranian government is described in an Orientalist discourse that is able to pull from 40 years of dehumanizing narratives, adding to the elite discourse's rhetoric in how it was represented.

Even before the video of Neda, the Iranian government was seen as guilty of voter fraud. There was no debate on whether the election was actually rigged. Rather, elite media discourse took the words of the protesters as truth. Not to say that this wasn't the truth, yet without any alternative accounts of what happened, the U.S. news media operated on the assumptions of guilt. Such assumptions were made based on "who" Iran is, meaning that because Iran has been represented so intensely for over 40 years by Orientalist tropes, "Iran" has become naturalized

within mainstream media. In this light, it becomes difficult to construct the election in any other way than as rigged. Even when the video of Neda aired, there was no debate over who had murdered her. Regardless of if it is true or not, no hesitation was spared in announcing her murderer—the Iranian government.

The lenses of Orientalism shaped how the event was seen, by journalists and audience alike. Through these lenses, the video of Neda's sightless eyes did not create suspicion within the protest movement, but rather looked directly at the Iranian government for blame. Within this negative frame, Orientalism helps naturalize the image of the Iranian government as guilty. In constructing the Iranian government as evil, elite discourse is able to pull from familiar narratives of orientalist logic. This same discourse's continued use becomes the means in which the Iranian government was framed after the video of Neda aired. Within this presumption of guilt, the video of Neda entered elite discourse.  Starting out then, the assumption must be that she was murdered by the Iranian government because of her participation with the protest movement. In this way the audience is able to make sense of what is represented in the eight days surrounding the video of Neda within elite narratives.

The "Bad" Muslim's Use of Censorship

In representations of the video of Neda, its discovery by mainstream media advanced a notion that censorship was a frame of anti-democracy for Iran. This helped represent the idea that Iran was violent, repressive, corrupt, anti-democratic, and a backward nation. This discourse presents a conflict around the ability of the video of Neda to escape from the stringent censorship of the Iranian government. As victor, the video was able to show the world the repressive nature of the Iranian government, and helped create the representations that would construe the government as being a "bad" Muslim.

With the escape of the video of Neda from the stringent censorship of the Iranian government, Neda's murder officially became public knowledge. June 23, 2009 was the day the video of Neda's murder became an event for both the *Washington Post* and *New York Times*. As a result of it being leaked, the video was represented within a discourse that created a justifying tool used to show the Iranian government's repressive nature through an understanding of the censorship capabilities that the country possessed. The *NYT* even gave a whole front-page to this event. On it was a picture of a memorial being held in Saudi Arabia, and just beneath that picture were two articles. The first, by Nazila Fathi explained to the reader the story behind Neda's murder. But the other article presented, initiated the notions of censorship and is the main focus of how this censorship fabricated the image of the bad Muslim. "Web Pries Lid of Censorship a Bit" by Brian Stelter and Brad Stone (2009) garnered front-page attention with their look at the Neda video. Where Stelter and Stone's companion on the page, Nazili Fathi, presented Neda's story in a tragic discourse, Stelter and Stone saw a bigger conflict. According to them, they saw an authoritarian regime's inability to keep a video from escaping its jurisdiction. For Fathi and others, the video became a sign of the repressive nature of the Iranian government. For Stelter and Stone (2009), this video signified a cracking of the Iranian government's control. As a country that can't help but define its self by the technology it can create, this "prying of the lid" as Stelter and Stone say can only mean that the U.S. has a foothold. The U.S., in its categorization of modernity through technological achievements, helps situate the conflict between civilization and barbarism, technology resulting in the destruction of barbarism. Here the video of Neda's murder provided a breach in Iranian controls. Which helps signify the fact that Iran, not only has been breached, but technology has been the way to do this.

In situating the conflict around censorship, Stelter and Stone (2009) declare that "at one time, authoritarian regimes could draw a shroud around the events in their countries by simply snipping the long-distance phone lines". These methods will no longer work declare the two

authors (Stetler & Stone, 2009). The 21st century has finally invaded the Middle East as "cellphone cameras, Twitter accounts and all the trappings of the World Wide Web have changed the ancient calculus of how much power governments actually have" to keep others from monitoring them (Stetler & Stone, 2009).Stetler and Stone can see the fear in the Iranian's knowledge that they can now be monitored by outside forces. The authors represent the modern world as one in which information and communication technologies, especially as linked to social media, couples with progressive social movements in order to monitor corrupt and violent governments. The fact that Iran was seen as striving to censor images of its violence waged against protesters effectively frames them as anti-democratic.

Elite media discourse focuses on the manner in which Neda's video was able to escape the clutches of Iranian censorship, winning "the battle between tradition and modernity" says Michael Slackman (2009) of the *New York Times*. But censorship cannot be reduced to a tool only of non-modern governments. While this successfully frames the Iranian regime as a bad Muslim, this discourse also is able to construct an axiomatic truth around the fact that censorship is strictly a tool of violence for the East. Just recently, multiple states in the U.S. have attempted to make recording a police officer a crime (Brauer, 2010; Sotteck, 2012 ). However, as Carlos Miller (2012) chronicles, almost on a daily basis in the U.S. a person is charged with a crime and has their cell confiscated and sometimes the images erased. On July 10, 2012, an event in Houston, Texas occurred in which police were called to the scene, where they mistakenly shot an unarmed man. While the police say one side of the story, other witnesses are coming forward saying that there is another side, a side where a man, Rufino Lara, was innocent. However, one witness says that the proof of his innocence rests in the memory of her camera phone. In this instance, the Houston police confiscated the cell phone and erased all data pertaining to the event (Ravat, 2012).

Not only have cases of censorship been ignored by elite discourse, but images surrounding the War on Terror are now censored. As of late 2006, new censorship rules prohibit images of dead or wounded soldiers to be shown in the media (Arnow, 2007).  This new regulation prohibits the publication of any image, name, or description that can identify the soldier. While using a veil of respect for the family members, this regulation sanitizes war in attempts to maintain "public legitimacy of its interventions" (Gusterson, 2010, p 80, 81). Creating this axiomatic belief in that censorship, and repression, only occurs within non-Western states creates misconceptions about the West. As a result, the events Arnow (2007) and Miller (2012) present are pushed on the fringes of the media, labeled as unbelievable or pushed so far out that they are unable to get their message across. A message that says that it isn't just countries in the Middle East, or the Global South for that matter, that are taking part in repression, the West, and the United States in particular, are committing these same crimes. Traces of power and elite discourse can be seen through this marginalized media. Because they are not presenting "official" discourse in the sense that they are presenting information from a non-official position, Arnow and Miller are not given credit within the mainstream news media. This limits the ability to publicize these crimes and in turns erases such events from the majority of the American public.

The "Murderous" Iranian Regime and the Personification of Evil

In the representations that occurred over the video of Neda's murder, the most common theme that presented itself was the connection of the constant reference to the Iranian government as different from the United States. One way was to construct Iran as being repressive, using words such as authoritarian, comments about threats, beatings, and bullying, or even the use of the word regime. These words not only framed the Iranian government as different form the U.S. in a negative way, but it also was founded in orientalist narratives that situated any Muslim involved with the Iranian government as being "bad".

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In this study regime was observed to be used as a negative expression implying that the government dominated its citizens through violence and control.  Not only did "regime" create these negative impressions but it also helped distinguish Iranian politics from U.S. politics. Therefore, regime not only creates negative representations, but within these negative representations regime separates the United States from Iran in meaningful ways. While possessing negative connotations of violence, the definition of regime does not mean that it is repressive, rather it simply is another word for government.. However, the convergence with governments constructed as violent quickly creates these negative associations. The utilization of regime in connection with the Iranian government proves this point.  Not only does regime develop a negative connotation, but journalists also connected regime to a multitude of oppressive governments from the past. Ignatius (2009) at the *Washington Post* was able to draw a connection between Saddam Hussein's regime and the Iranian government. This method of comparison was easy because both are constructed in elite discourse as oppressive regimes. Ignatius speaks of these two countries as if they are one and the same. However, this comparison Orientalizes the history of these two distinct countries. Such constructions erase the history of the fact that these two countries were at war no less than twenty years ago.

Within the elite discourse surrounding the murder of Neda, regime and Iran were inseparable. In fact, it became a tool that elite discourse could use to connect evil and regime. Multiple sources implored this method to describe to the American people the events in Iran. Representative McCotter (R) went on the television news shows Redeye a day after Neda's death aired and called Iran a "state sanctioning murderous regime", ultimately referring to the Iranian government as "a barbarous regime" (McCotter, 2009). John McCain (R), another congressman, believed that her murder was "the symbol of an oppressive and repressive regime" (McCain, 2009). Both of these men associate the Iranian government with words used to represent Orientalist discourse. McCotter more bluntly, but McCain's expression connects just as strongly.

On PBS's *Frontline: A Death in Tehran* (2009), the word regime was used thirteen times in 41 minutes. In any reference to the Iranian government, regime took the place of government. Articles like "A Shift on Iran: President Obama's embrace of its protest movement is an act of realism" (Anonymous, 2009); Mr. Ignatius (2009) of the *WP* believed that the "regime" was in demise"; even Roger Cohen's (2009) article published the 27th of July in the *Washington Post*, connects regime with the repression of women. The online comments section on the documentaries online forum shows that this notion of regime was received. One explained that Neda's murder was because "an oppressive regime" used their power, while another commenter calls the Iranian government "illegitimate". Creating images of regime surrounding the video of Neda's murder adds to the construction of the Iranian government as evil, authoritative, and repressive and violent.

The connection to regime has also led to the idea of regime change. Because regime has been constructed as such a negative word, the idea of regime change draws easily from this association. Within the United States, the notions of regime and change go hand in hand. As proclaimed as rescuers, through the implications of regime as repressive elite discourse of the U.S. situates around the fact that the U.S. has a moral obligation to lift people from their oppression—and thus support or even initiate the idea of regime change becomes justifiable. The previously mentioned notions of a democratic movement throughout the Middle East as "good" Muslims capture this idea of regime change. Representations of regime then seem to serve the purpose of justifying regime change. There can be no change from government to government in language, instead events transpire that create a change from *regime* to *government*. Underneath the call for a democratic movement lies the need for regime change for these journalists. Cohen (2009a) and Raghavan (2009) of the *WP* in support of the gender movement also highlight such a shift. This implication is consistent with the ideas that regimes are repressive and violent, represented throughout the Middle East according to Raghavan (2009) of the *WP,* who claims

that the region needs a democratic movement. Government on the other hand is associated with images of the West, the United States, and civilization. The connotations become filled with notions of democracy, equal rights, and moral justification.

While regime change can be seen as a transition from simple regime to regime change, other journalists have reported on Iran's repressive nature, a belief that has become synonymous with the Iranian regime. As already shown, some commentators discussed the Iranian government as oppressive or illegitimate, but journalists found other ways to depict the government as "bad". Discourses of gender, which has already been discussed in creating the image of the "good" Muslim, also was used in the creation of Iran as repressive. The violence this discourse is directed towards in Cohen's (2009b) "Second Sex" shows just how repressive and different the United States and Iran are. Not only does this representation show that the Iranian government is violent, but it also reflects itself within Orientalist discourse that uses first world feminism to criticize Middle Eastern politics. The constant expression of Iranian women being repressed was not only part of constructing the figure of the "good" Muslim, but also told the audience who the "bad" Muslim was.

While a discourse used to represent the protester as peaceful, the opposite side of the coin can be found when representing ideas of the violent Iranian government. The ability for the American spectator to show grief for Neda and the protesters highlights how effective these Orientalist tropes were in distinguishing "bad" Muslim from "good" Muslim, the "bad" Muslim being the Iranian government. In the *Washington Post* article "Bet on Neda's Side", David Ignatius (2009) expresses this connection: "on one side you have all the instruments of repression in Iran, gathering their forces for a crackdown. On the other you have unarmed protesters symbolized by the image of Neda Agha Soltan". Dichotomizing between peaceful and violent in terms of protesters and Iranian government also connect oppressive military power to a form of government. Discussing the Iranians repressive tactics, military power becomes distinguished as

their method of rule. This, not only strengthens the connotations of aggression and tyrannical rule, but it also (re)creates the image of a "bad" Muslim. This image of the "bad" Muslim becomes seen as supporting military power, a (re)situating that creates the perception that the "bad" Muslim is violent. Violence, then, becomes an association with Iran that is as strong as regime is. Constructions of the violent Muslim play into Orientalist discourse that depicts violence as "sitting" in a specific geography (Springer, 2011). In other words, violence becomes tied to Middle Eastern actions, which not only creates a place like Iran as axiomatically violent, but it also creates perceptions that the United States is not. Violence, in this sense, connects to the representations of irrational behavior, and help frame the Iranian government as "bad".

However, Michael Foucault (1996) says that the most dangerous thing about "violence is its rationality" (p. 299). Simon Springer (2011) suggests that "sanctioning certain acts of violence as 'rational', while condemning others as 'irrational'" can be discerned as a primary instrument of power" (p. 93). Edward Said (1978) states that drawing such a line creates the perception of a conflict of "civilization" and "barbarism". Because of the columnists' construction of a violent Iran, a measure of illegitimacy is given to the Iranian government. "There" violence is irrational; "they" do not know how to manage it. By representing Iranian use of violence, the United States is shaped in the image of legitimate use of violence. Legitimate violence, however, only appears in discourse, when illegitimate violence, of violence seen to galvanize against a certain political policy disappears (or never appears) from discourse. Banning images of dead and wounded soldiers coming home from Afghanistan and Iran or denying the Occupy Movement coverage in the mainstream media are just a number of ways in which the United States makes violence vanish. Discourse can construct not only the Iranian as uncivilized, but as "bad" through representations of violence within government.

Framing "Thugs" and "Bullies" as the Murderers of Neda

While military power continues the representations of the violent Muslim, it also creates the perception that the protester does not use violence. This situates the protester as someone who is in need of protection. Bully and thug discourse reiterates such perceptions. Not only does Ignatius (2009) help (re)create Manichean oppositions of "good" and "evil", but later in the article he describes the Iranian government as "thugs who claim to rule in the name of God". Describing the Iranian government as "thugs" characterizes its actions in a negative construction. An online comment taken from the online forum for the PBS documentary *Frontline: A Death in Tehran* (2009), describing the actions taken by the Iranian government in the murder of Neda as "thuggish" supports the claims made by Ignatius (2009). "Thuggish" represents a person unhindered by the rule of law and norms of decency. Thomas Erdbrink (2009b) published an article titled "Protest Met with Force Near Iran's Parliament: Supreme Leader Refuses 'Bullying' Over Vote" in the *Washington Post*. The quotation marks around "Bullying" imply that this word is cynical. Of course the Iranian government is the not being "bullied", in a discourse represented through Orientalism, they are the bullies. Quickly Erdbrink tells the reader of the violent forces used on the demonstrators. Eventually he brings the story back to his title, stating as a matter of fact that Ayatollah Khameni had claimed that the protesters were the ones causing violence, but cynically referring to the Iranian government as bully in the titled shows that Erdbrink believes this is false. Therefore, the quotations highlight a mockery of the Supreme Leader's word. In these statements, Ignatius (2009) and Erdbrink (2009b) situate Iran not only as the bully, but a childish bully who is out of control. "Thug" and "bully" also bring with it connotations of violence—more specifically violence between two unequal parts. Labeling the Iranian government as a "thug" and "bully" utilizes the fact that the two sides are unequal in their conflict. Neda and the protesters become the victims in this conflict. As a victim it becomes simple for U.S. discourse to create assumptions of guilt. Not only can guilt be confirmed, but as

victims, Neda and the protesters show how evil the Iranian regime is—a method that successfully (re)affirms their placement as a "bad" Muslim.

In this way, too, Ignatius (2009b) and Erdbrink (2009b) are able to create an image of an irrational child who has gone insane with power. As an irrational subject, the statements that members of government say are portrayed as irrational. When the Iranian government claims they are being bullied, the implication is not readily believed, not only because of the violent images of Neda's death and repressive actions taken towards the protesters, but because of the irrationality associated with Orientalist discourse in terms of the Middle East. In this sense, as the audience consumes the discourse around events in Iran, they consume how the statements issued by government officials from the Iranian government are portrayed by the *WP* and *NYT* as outlandish, exaggerated, and unbelievable.

As the global news media focused on Iran after the airing of the Neda video, its government began leveling blame towards the West. John Burns (2009) of the *New York Times* reports that "as Iran's ruling Ayatollahs tell it, the main strike force plotting to end Islamic rule in their country is not on the streets of Tehran, but on the upper floors of a celebrated Art Deco building in central London". What Burns is implying is that the British Broadcasting Company's television channel is seen as a threat to the Iranian government. Burns (2009) presents the Iranian government's claims mockingly, challenging even the consideration that a television channel could actually bring down Iran, or even that they would if they could. He also presents an interesting comparison between the streets of Tehran and the upper floors of an Art Deco building in central London. This comparison creates a binary distinction as well that turned central London and the streets of Tehran into two opposite spaces. The modern one contains the art deco buildings, a symbol of architectural modernity. The architecture of art deco represents the perceptions of the modern world, reflected in designs of not only central London, but the Empire State Building in New York City as well. The use of controlled, stream-lined designs implied a

rational thinking to art deco. Art deco then becomes another conflict in which the West separates itself from the East. One possesses modern architecture, the other does not. While this perception remains, in no way does this actually mean that the Middle East, or Iran, does not possess modern architecture. However, the representations that say they do not possess such architecture remain consistent with themes of modernity and barbarism. Burns (2009) continues differentiating these two spaces, saying that the BBC was located within "the shopping mecca  of Oxford Street in London". Once again Burns highlights a center of capitalist identity, the shopping mall, as providing a distinction between the West and the East. Orientalist discourse presents the East as unacceptable of such ventures. A false construction considering that the Iranian economy has the seventeenth largest purchasing power in the world, reports the World Bank (Country, 2010).

Not only did Burns (2009) draw a distinction between Iran and the West through architecture and capitalist ventures, he also continued to align the Iranian government with a discourse of irrationality.  He gives examples of allegations made by the state run media of Iran. This apparatus alleged that the BBC was paying people to go out and do violence with protesters. "The allegations prompt weary smiles among the staff members in London" claims Burns (2009). Of course the staff is smiling, hearing these allegations through orientalist ears make the claims seem preposterous. They smile because the Iranian government has already been tried and convicted in Western elite discourse—a smile that makes these allegations even more incredulous. Rob Beynon, who the allegation was made against, responded by saying, "I wouldn't be doing my job effectively if we were fomenting anything of a political nature" (Burns, 2009). Given more credibility to what has become an obvious fact, Burns (2009) describes Mr. Beynan, the BBC channel's acting director in the Middle East, as graduating from Cambridge University, one of the more prestigious universities in the world, and gives an air of credibility to the BBC's reporting. Benyon is explaining himself, with the help of his credentials, as being objective. He even stated that he had tried to interview government officials (Burns, 2009).

Burns (2009) highlights the fact that the news in the West is presented as objective. In the United States, news outlets consistently try to reiterate to their audience the ability to remain objective. The goal is to present the news objectively—one news outlet's mission statement is to be "fair and balanced" (FOX News.com). Such constructions create a reality that makes the news not only objective, but truthful (Jones & Woordle, 2008). In this reality, any claims against Western media for tampering with the protest movement come off as irrational. Where the Western news institution is presented as objective, Orientalist representations of Iran's news organizations is that it is propaganda. A constant referral to state-run media in the discourse of the video of Neda's murder highlights such beliefs. In an article in the *NYT* on June 30, 2009, Michael Slackman (2009) suggests that the state-run media is a propaganda machine for the Iranian government. In the Iranian government's attempt at situating blame in the murder of Neda, they "lashed" out, claiming that "foreigners killed her [Neda]". However, his fear is that, while the protesters wouldn't believe it, "there are millions more citizens who may, because they receive virtually all of their information from state media" (Slackman, 2009). Not only does Slackman denounce the news, but he also (re)focuses the eyes of the audience onto who actually is a "bad" Muslim. Slackman (2009) pardons the citizens of Iran; it appears that those who are not protesting are not given the "truth". The only available news that they have is the state-run media. Coming from an irrational government, this means that these citizens are not going to get the "truth". Slackman (2009) is saying that these citizens are not to be blamed for believing what the Iranian government has said in regards to who murdered Neda. Because of this, they are pardoned from their crimes in a sense. While not considered "good" Muslims because they are not protesting, they are not considered "bad" Muslims either because they are not objectively supporting the Iranian government. The "bad" Muslims become the ones controlling the state-run media, blaming Neda's death on foreigners—the "bad" Muslim is then (re)constructed as evil for warping and controlling the minds of its citizens. Lacking control of one's mind goes back to the deep rooted narratives of American individualism founded on the ideals of the Enlightenment.

The Enlightenment period believed that the human was one that was able to think for himself. The Iranians watching state-run media are not in control of their mind, and based on Enlightenment notions are not considered "rational" individuals. In this way, Slackman's (2009) presentation of state-run media removes the Iranians watching the state-run media, removing any consequences if (or when) Iran is invaded.

Perceptions of Iran as an irrational thug can be broken down even further. By blaming others in the murder of Neda, the Iranian government can come off as childish--they refuse to accept responsibility for their crimes. In fact, when accused, it appears that Iran is throwing a temper-tantrum. When Mr. Slackman (2009) of the *New York Times* explains that the Iranian government has "continued to lash out at the opposition", "lash" becomes symbolic of a child's temper-tantrum. The "child" is seen as unable to accept responsibilities in the death of Neda, and as a result of this refusal, they lash out. The "child" lashes out when the video of Neda's death escapes its control--the "child" does not like being caught. The government lashes out at the protesters as a child would when throwing a temper-tantrum, in the midst of this action, the government harms its own citizens.

In this way, the Iranian government can be seen as a child in need of punishment. Strengthening this construction is the ability for U.S. discourse to construct itself as the adult nation, coming to punish Iran through sanctions, or even regime change. The elite discourse in the United States is able is able to say that Iran is not capable of being a responsible government. Because the Iranian government is not responsible, it cannot remain. Through the "child" and irrational discourses, the United States' mainstream media created justification for regime change. This is a fact that not only falls within "child" discourse, but is also reinforced through the discourse of the protesters needing to be saved. Once again, the creation of "good" and "bad" Muslims has led to concepts of regime change. In such discourse, the "good" Muslims are placed above "bad" Muslims in a hierarchy of power, yet they still lay beneath the West and in particular

the United States. By representing the Iranian government as a child, and the United States as the adult, it not only provides the United States government justification to punish, but it also created the perception that the United States government's punishment was morally good, that it was punishing the Iranian government in order to fulfill its role as protector of the "good" Muslims. In this way the control of representations in regards to the video of Neda's murder enable the United States to justify to its own people the need to enforce a regime change in Iran. The video of Neda's murder became a way to consistently Orientalize Iran.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

Imaginative Geographies and the Future of Violence

        In concluding this study, it is imperative to discuss the consequences of these

constructions. The findings showed that elite discourse within the U.S. media represented the

murder of Neda Agha-Soltan as a violent state crime. Journalists' ability to represent this murder

as state crime was made through Orientalist narratives that framed the protesters as "good"

Muslims and the Iranian government as "bad" Muslims. Moreover, these dicthomoized

constructions bring us back to divisions between "East" and "West", and a clarity between

civilization (U.S.) and barbarism (now signified as Iran itself) (Butler, 2002). The framing of

Neda through these discourses serves as moral justification for intervention and regime change.

        In these constructions, the call for regime change became a dominating result within

discourse. Since the 1979 revolution, the United States elite discourse has continuously structured

any knowledge of Iran through Orientalist tropes, creating a constant need to get rid of the

regime. The video of Neda showed promise that it would unite, not just the protesters, but the

United States citizenry in favor of a "regime change".  Columnist from the *Washington Post*

offered up hope that this video would provide a change (Cooper & Sanger, 2009), even to the

point of spreading change throughout the Middle East (Kaplan, 2009).  David Ignatius (2009) of

the *Washington Post* felt that the regime was in demise, believing that the protesters, with help

could create a regime change. Through a comparison with other historical events of "regime

change" that were constructed by the United States the material consequences of these types of constructions can be seen.

History provides us with the ability to learn from mistakes. However, in this case, history provides an opportunity to show that representations of the "Other" have supported imperialist measures of domination for the United States since its formation in 1776, and provide a context around the use of "regime change" in representations of the Iranian government. Using notions of the barbaric "Other" (Sardar *et al.*, 1993), the United States demonized the Native American, a technique that would allow the United States to spread its empire from the east to the west. The extermination of the Native American was situated in similar narratives similar to how Iran is today. There were "good" Native Americans and then there were "bad" Native Americans. The "bad" Native Americans were seen as uncivilized and barbaric (Sardar *et al.,* 1993), while the "good" Native Americans were seen attempting to "Americanize" themselves. The material effects that this had on the Native American population were astonishing. David Cesarni says that "in terms of the sheer numbers killed, the Native American Genocide exceeds that of the Holocaust" (Cesarani, 2004, p. 381).

In a more present day example, the discourse representing Iraq prior to the invasion in 2003 appears to draw the same similarities. The Iraqi government was seen as repressive, Saddam Hussein as violent. The same Orientalist tropes that have created knowledge of Iran have also been used in justifying the Iraqi invasion in 2003. The people in Iraq were seen as needing to be rescued, in turn U.S. discourse constructed the invasion of Iraq as a civilizing mission. The U.S. represented the deployment of military forces as providing humanitarian aid to Iraq—the Orient is constructed as needing saving. The Iraqis appeared to want "democracy" but had to rely on the United States to deliver it. The same discourse is seen through the representations of Iran. Representatives McCotter (2009) and McCain (2009), who both described Neda's beauty, were also calling for a stronger reaction from the United States. The grief in which the spectator felt in

the U.S. was presented as the need for the U.S. government to do "more" for the protesters. The United States was the world's savior, and these representatives believed that they must use their military power to create a regime change in Iran. However, the effects that this similar discourse shows the "cost" of this "regime change" to be extremely high. The Humancostirq.edu shows just how devastating the war with Iraq has been. Seventeen percent of Iraqis lived in slum conditions in 2000. The percentages of who live in these conditions in 2011 had jumped to fifty percent. Between 2003 and 2011 it is an estimated 150,000 to 400,000 Iraqis who have died out of a population of thirty million. These effects have become common with the United States attempts at "regime change".

After the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, the United States government represented its goals as "liberating", pledging to free Afghan women and children from the Taliban (Afghanistanafterdemocracy.com). Laura Bush went as far as to say that "Only the terrorists and the Taliban threaten to pull out women's fingernails for wearing nail polish" (BBC, 2001). In 2005, a report issued by the Senlis Council (a security and development think tank) stated that one out of every four children will not live past the age of 5 (cited in Kolhatkar & Ingalls, 2006). Afghanistan even saw a spike in the illegal drug trade. Before the invasion, 7,606 hectares of opium were produced in Afghanistan; in 2007 there were 193,000 hectares[5] (Arizona, 2010). As Dr. Gideon Polya reports (2010), the human cost is now 4.9 million from either military or events such as deprivation, events that could have been avoided. Because of the conditions that the United States military has created in Afghanistan, the Taliban, the regime the U.S.'s invaded in order to change, has begun to take back territory (Kolhatkar & Ingalls, 2006). These reports indicate the effects of Afghanistan's "civilizing mission". The death toll continues to mount even as United States forces began to withdrawal. In their wake, the United States has left behind an

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[5] 1 hectares equals 10,000 square miles (100 x 100 meters)

Afghanistan population that cannot eat, has little to no electricity, and a number of war lords to rule over them rather than the prosperous democracy that was promised.

The only thing deterring an invasion of Iran it seems, is the fact that the Iranian government is enriching uranium (Barsamian, 2003). A fact the journalist continued to mention. Cooper and Sanger (2009) of the *Washington Post* discussed the risk that the Iranian government posed because of its uranium factories. In "A Shift on Iran" (Anonymous, 2009) of the *WP,* reiterated these fears, believing that "the demonstrators became a key" in ending these nuclear programs. David Ignatius (2009) believes that betting "On Neda's side" is the best answer to this problem, supporting the protesters but remaining behind the scenes appears to be the safest (and least galvanizing for the citizen body) in attempting a regime change. Even within these articles a sense of hesitancy still seems to be underneath this support. The fear it seems, revolves around the fact that the Iranian government could actually have the capabilities of making nuclear bombs out of enriched uranium. Within an Orientalist discourse, the possibility of an Iranian government who is irrational and violent, having the capabilities to use their nuclear weapons becomes almost unbearable.

The main point within this study was to show how representations of state violence are not always what they seem. From a constructionist approach, these representations helped formulate Orientalist notions of "us" and "them". In this way, the video of Neda's murder was able to clearly separate between "good" and "bad" Muslim. However, this study not only highlighted Orientalist narratives, but focused on how the determination of what is "newsworthy" lies with the power to define the situation. Not only does power have the ability to frame perceptions of Middle Eastern people as backward, violent, and uncivilized, but it also has the ability to make bodies disappear. In the instances of the wounded or dead soldier, the detainees, or the Occupy movement, framing allows for the select disappearance of violence. Framing a movement this way allows for the mainstream media to determine that the pepper spraying of an

eighty-four year old woman by state security officers is not "newsworthy". Or the fact that the United States has picture evidence of torture and are refusing to release it. Without this release it is almost as if torture has not happened. Without showing the milk running down the elderly woman's swollen face or the death of U.S. soldiers in wars abroad, it is almost as if these events did not happen either—that these events are not "real". The lack of these images within the news continues to pacify the United States citizenry for the most part—dissent obviously with the Occupy movement, but dissent continues to be kept on the margins. As a result, what is shown on the local news is simply a reflection of power.

It appears then, that lives can be separated into those that represent certain kinds of states—the protesters were associated with a democratic movement—and those that represents threats to state-centered liberal democracy—the Iranian "regime" were shown to be violently repressive towards the protesters. A separation that allows war to be charitably waged on behalf of the protesters, while the destruction of the Iranian government can be honorably defended (Butler, 2009). The representation of Neda's murder has been fabricated by the cultural and political dynamics outlined above. By becoming "newsworthy" the images of her death were able to frame, within politics of grieving in which we identify with suffering (Butler, 2003), that this was murder as a state crime, committed by an oppressive Iranian regime.. Specifically, a crime by an Iranian state that is irrational and violent towards protesters who rallied around notions of freedom and democracy. These creations helped (re)construct Iran within Orientalist logics and tropes, not just creating the Iranian government as a "evil state", but framing the United States as "savior"—for any construction of the "Other" is a simultaneous construction of the Self (Said 1978). As "civilized savior", the United States government and elite media discourses can make justifications for the U.S. public, for the support in sending military force into the territorial sovereignty of Iran, calling it a "civilizing" mission like it has so many times in the past.

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