

How do Iranians and U.S. Citizens Perceive Each Other: A systematic Review

Ehsan Shahghasemi

University of Teheran - Iran

D. Ray Heisey

Kent State University, UK

Goudarz Mirani

University of Teheran - Iran

Abstract

Whenever we turn our TV news channel on, we are likely to hear about an Iran-U.S. conflict. Images of the leaders of these two countries intimidating each other can be seen in news channels all over the world. When we are talking about Iran-U.S. international relations, most people think of the political relations which this study takes as intergovernmental rather than international relations. In this study, as we are Iranian and U.S. scholars, we tried a systematic review of studies focusing on perceptions the Iranian and American people have of each other. Our systematic review of studies reveals that, Americans have more negative perceptions of Iranians than the Iranians have of their American counterparts. Moreover, we discussed sources for these perceptions as well.

Keywords: Iran; U.S.; Perceptions; Systematic Review; Intercultural Communication

Introduction

A thousand years ago, Ferdowsi, one of the greatest Persian poets, wrote about *Jam-e- Jahan Nama*[1] (World Monitoring Cup), drawing back the history of this medium to more than 3000 years ago. As we read in his *Shahnameh*, *Jam-e- Jahan Nama* never seduced its owner and presented absolute truth, which the media of our time claim they do. This is where we start this work. Here we try to review the perspective of Iran-U.S. relations as it is represented in the media, political sphere and academic material as well, and compare it with what researchers found about perceptions people of the two countries have of each other. As you will see in the next section, when people – even in the academic world - talk about Iran-U.S. relations, they are talking about the governments of the two nations. Of course since governments are powerful and their decisions can serve some groups and deprive others, media owners have interests in what is going on in the international arena. One of the goals of this paper is to show international readers how people from Iran and the U.S. perceive each other as reported in selected research projects.

Iran and the US: A History of Clash

Justin Perkins, an American missionary, was recorded as the first American to visit Iran. Perkins entered Iran in 1833 and established a missionary center in Iran in 1835. Samuel G. Benjamin was the first American ambassador to Iran (Helfgott, 1990) who established the American embassy in June 1883. On the other side, Iran established its embassy in the U.S. in 1856 and sent Mirza Abolhasan Shirazi as the formal representative of Iran.

The political history of Iran-US relations has been always associated with suspicion and cynicism. One of the exceptions was the case of Morgan Shuster. In 1906 Shuster became treasurer-general of Persia by

appointment of the Iranian parliament. In 1908 oil was discovered in Iran (Keddie, 1979), so Iran became the focus of colonial powers and Shuster was a trouble-shooter for their interests. He had enemies inside Iran too (Faiz Samadzseh, 1989). Finally, under Russian and British pressure, the vice-regent of Persia expelled Shuster from office in December 1911 against the will of the Persian parliament and people (Abrahamian, 1982).

In 1953, the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency overthrew the democratically elected Mossadegh government (Miller, 2007; Kincheloe and Steinberg, 2006; Ravlo et al, 2003; Kincheloe, 2002) and helped the Shah back to power (Ramsay, 2004).

The late Shah of Iran was a major pro- American ally in the region. So, it is not surprising that after the Islamic revolution of 1979, the slogan of "Death to America" became a fashion in all Iranian demonstrations. In 1979, the United States was engaged in a hostage crisis that followed the occupation of the American Embassy in Tehran (Fenton, 2008) that continued for 444 days (Kincheloe, 2002). Shortly after that, the Iran-Iraq War began and made the Middle East the bloodiest region in the 1980s (Sørli et al, 2005). Throughout the 1980s, the United States provided significant support to Iraq in its war with Iran (Goertz et al, 2005), but there was an exception: the Iran-Contra affair. Reagan's national plan was never fully disclosed and is unlikely to be in the foreseeable future, thanks to Bush *hijo's* sealing of the Reagan presidential papers (McLaren, 2003). Apparently, in early 1985, the head of the National Security Council, NSC, Robert C. McFarlane, undertook the sale of antitank and anti-aircraft missiles to Iran in the belief that such a sale would secure the release of a number of American citizens who were being held captive in Lebanon by Shiite groups loyal to Iran (Britannica, 2007).

In 1983, Shi'i Hizbullah (a major pro-Iran group in Lebanon) engaged in some bombings. These proved decisive in ensuring the pullout of all U.S. and French troops from Beirut shortly afterwards (Haddad and Khashan, 2002; Victoroff, 2005). In the summer of 2006, Hizbullah and Israel fought for thirty-three days and, led by the United States and France, the United Nations finally agreed on the terms of a ceasefire. One condition was that Hizbullah had to disarm, and military shipments from Iran and Syria had to stop (Kalb and Saivetz, 2007).

On July 3, 1988 the USS Vincennes shot down an Iranian Airbus A300B2, resulting in 290 civilian fatalities (Entman, 1991). Earlier, the U.S. had even fitted Kuwaiti oil tankers with American flags in order to warn Iran that an attack on these tankers would be considered an assault on U.S. vessels (Yazdani and Hussain, 2006).

The confrontation was not limited to regional military combat. U.S. sanctions became an important component of the U.S. policy of "dual containment" of Iran in the 1980s (Fayazmanesh, 2003).

The election of Mohammad Khatami in 1997 partly rejuvenated U.S.-Iranian relations (McGillivray and Smith, 2005). Khatami proposed 'Dialogue between Civilizations' (Mattelart, 2002) and in 1998, during an interview with CNN in Tehran, he said "I respect the American nation because of their great civilization. [. . .] With regard to the hostage issue which you raised, I do know that the feelings of the great American people have been hurt, and of course I regret it." [2]

In 1998 and during the World Cup 98 in France, Iran and the U.S. soccer teams fell in the same group (Delgado, 2003). Iran's win over the U.S. soccer team in the World Cup gave Iranians a sense of vindication and self-esteem. President Khatami and the religious leader, Ayatollah Khamenie, sent a congratulations message to the Iranian team (Gerami, 2003).

In January 2002, U.S. President George Bush branded Iraq, Iran and North Korea as constituting a lethal "axis of evil" (See Malici, 2005; Hartnett and Stengrim, 2004; and Kellner, 2002) and spelled out the U.S. national security strategy against these countries (Fuh-sheng and Hu, 2007). Iran continues to appear yearly on the U.S. State Department's list of states sponsoring terrorism (Simbar, 2006). The U.S. also condemns Iran's sponsoring insurgencies in Iraq (Siqueira and Sandler, 2006). Moreover, Israel sees Iran as a threat and affects the American policy regarding Iran (Ansari, 2007). After Afghanistan and Iraq, Washington seriously has tried to prepare itself for a possible attack on Iran (McLaren and Jaramillo, 2004).

During the presidential election of 2004, one of the main themes of questions about the program of candidates was the nuclear issue with focus on Iran and North Korea (Scheufele et al, 2007). The contribution of Russia in Iran's nuclear plan has made the problem more intricate. Despite tension over the Caspian Sea, Iran and Russia have a number of common interests (Mousseau, 2005), particularly their shared nuclear activities inside Iran (Seongwhun, 2007).

Although Iran has always denied any intention of developing nuclear weapons (Amuzegar, 2006), in August 2002, infiltrators presented evidence about a clandestine nuclear program. The Iranian government formally admitted the existence of the two plants in February 2003, but it maintained that they were for peaceful purposes only (Izadi and Saghaye-Biria, 2007).

After his election, President Barack Obama has urged for direct negotiations between the two countries, but the war in Gaza masw this hardly imaginable. Moreover, the Iranian Ahmadinejad frequently accuses the Obama administration of fomenting Iranian protesters against the contested June 2009 presidential election and on the other side, Obama experiences an overwhelming pressure to do something against suppression in Iran.

On May 28 of 2009, a Shi'it mosque in Zahedan, a major city in southeastern part of Iran, was blasted by a suicide attacker. Iran accused the U.S. of fomenting the attack but one day after the spokesperson of the Department of State formally denied American collaboration in any terrorist activity (Tafazzoli, 2009).

In September 2009, President Obama said Iran was constructing a secret nuclear fuel facility. This brought years of confrontation over the country's alleged nuclear weapons program to a new crisis point, as he joined with the leaders of Britain and France to warn that international patience was waning fast (DeYoung and Shear, 2009).

After the disputed June 2009 presidential election of Iran, American media covered unrests intensively and the Iranian governments ordered foreign correspondents to stay in their offices. But, Iranian protesters developed new initiatives to bypass official censorship. Thousands of video files from protests were sent to American news media. CNN and VOA made options for Iranian users to upload their own videos. Moreover, CNN established an office to verify originality of the uploaded images. Images on CNN of this office and employees working restlessly provoked the Iranian authorities. In June 21, Foreign Ministry spokesman Hassan Qashqavi said CNN had set up a "situation room and a psychological war room." [3]

Though at first it seemed Obama was a more favorable possible president of the U.S. for Iranian government, the "wall of distrust" showed itself again. Ahmadinejad's continuous hate speech about U.S. pushed optimists back. And Obama had recently invited the young population of Iran to throw off the government there in a Web address transmitted to the region, adding, "I am with you" (Calmes, 2011).

This review is an effort to draw a discursive context of Iranian-American relations. But here our concern is to depict an intercultural image of Iranian-American perceptions of each other. In doing so, we managed to find relevant materials to answer the difficult question of how Iranians and Americans see each other.

Method

This is a *systematic review*. "A systematic review is a review of the methods and results of all individual studies designed to answer the same research question and that conform to set criteria" (Bruce et al., 2008: 393). This study manages to find and compare studies, surveys, qualitative inquiries or any other fieldworks that try to explore perceptions people of Iran and U.S. have of each other. In doing so, we searched some hard copy materials in libraries in Tehran, we searched the Web for related material, and most importantly, we contacted some people who could lead us to relevant resources regarding the topic. These people were our students, classmates, professors, colleagues and friends who were acquainted with the field of intercultural communications. Furthermore, on one occasion, one of the authors traveled to U.K. and searched the LSE, SOAS, British Library and Cambridge University libraries for related material. Though we tried to be as inclusive as possible, we do not claim that every related study has been included here.

After reviewing all studies, we compared their findings in order to see what general image will be delineated by this collection of studies. Then each main theme was extracted to be later discussed in the conclusion. We tried to answer some possible questions by putting these conclusions in the general context of society, politics and culture.

Findings

While much has been devoted to the Iran-U.S. clash, few studies have focused on the perceptions and attitudes of the citizens of these two countries towards each other. These kinds of studies also may jeopardize the security and well-being of the researcher. On October 30, 2002, Hossein Ghazian, an Iranian sociologist, public opinion expert, and the director of Ayandeh Research Institute, who was conducting opinion polls about the visions of Iranians toward Americans for the Gallup Organization and the Zogby Polling Institute, was sentenced to 9 years and 6 months of imprisonment. However a second court reduced his sentence to 4 years and 6 months. One of his charges was espionage by revealing the opinions of Iranians. After being released from jail, Ghazian claimed that he had been tortured.

Frye (2003) puts the U.S. in its European legacy and reviews and "traces the stereotyping of Persia in the popular imagination of the 'West' from ancient Europe until the America of the twentieth century" (page 403). Taking an historical approach, Frye (2003) shows how Iran (Persia) has changed from being seen in ancient times as a "respected enemy," to an "envied enemy," a "respected friend," a "despised friend," and currently a "despised enemy" (p 403). He recognizes that the present day embodies the lowest opinion that both sides have held of each other. He hopes that the mutual characterization of fanaticism may change once again, but for the better, into a common belief in globalization and the future.

Johnston Conover et al. (1980) use the notion of "mirror image," in this way. Their analysis revealed that mirror images were very common just one month after the seizure of the American hostages, that they were more commonly focused on the nations (Iran and the U.S.) than on the leaders of the nations (President Carter and Ayatollah Khomeini), that they were most often evaluative rather than simply descriptive, and, perhaps most interestingly, that they were expressed most frequently by more highly educated and more knowledgeable people. The same mirror image concept between the U.S. and Iran could also be claimed even beyond the Johnston Conover et al. study. This will be seen especially when we come to the drawings of the teenagers from these two countries.

In a poll of mainstream Americans conducted by Slade (1981), 76 percent of the respondents indicated that they had a low opinion of Iran; 56 percent cited "hostage" as coming to mind when Iran was mentioned; after "Khomeini," "oil," and "the Shah," many also cited "anger," "hatred," "turmoil," and "troublesome country" (quoted in Gerges, 2003, p 77).

Tadayon (1982) conducted a meta-analysis. He compared open-ended and closed-ended studies regarding the view of Americans toward Iran. He mentioned differences between qualitative and quantitative research toward the subject, but these two methods both proved that the reputation of Iran in the U.S. was damaged after the hostage crisis. Tadayon also believed that hostage crisis "created an unprecedented American obsession with Iranian affairs, and thus Iran came from relative obscurity in the U.S. media and among the American public in the early and mid-1970's" (page 89).

Keshishian (2003) employed interpretive theory to conduct her autobiographical study. Her qualitative research showed how media news coverage shaped perceptions of American people and affected her own life and those of other Iranians living in the United States at the time of the November 4, 1979, Iranian hostage crisis. She revealed that it became difficult for Iranians to function in the American society during the crisis. According to Keshishian (2003), her colleagues made racial comments at the office and threatened to take violent actions against Iranians if the American hostages were not released. She notes that only after years and thanks to her Christian-Armenian identity, "friends, colleagues, and neighbors had accepted" her into the American society (Keshishian, 2003, p. 237).

Perhaps one of the most exhaustive studies about Iranian-American attitudes towards each other is by the World Public Opinion Organization that was published in 2007. Through questionnaire, interview and web survey, they asked Iranians and Americans about key international issues. Results showed that forty-nine percent of Iranians had an unfavorable opinion of the American people (33% very, 16% somewhat).

Forty-five percent had a favorable opinion (9% very, 36% somewhat). These results also showed that a clear majority of Americans also have a negative view of the Iranian people. Fifty-nine percent said they had an unfavorable opinion of the Iranian people (20% very), while only 29 percent said they had a favorable opinion.

Four studies used schema theory for analysis of Iranian-American attitudes toward each other. The first study was conducted by Ahmad-Zadeh et al. (2005) and showed that Americans do not believe in common stereotypes about Iranians in the Western media. This study also showed that Iranians have "positive stereotypes" about American people. However, they had limited their respondents to Iranian and American university students and professors. They interviewed their Iranian respondents while American respondents were reached by email. A second study was done by Mirani et al. (2006) and showed that their Iranian respondents have favorable attitudes towards Americans, but their project failed because Americans did not respond to their questionnaire.

Terror Free Tomorrow organization (2007) tried to reveal opinions Iranians hold for multiple issues, including the relations with the U.S. The survey was conducted by telephone from June 5th to June 18th, 2007, with 1,000 interviews proportionally distributed according to the population covering all 30 provinces of Iran. 68% of Iranians who participated in this study favor normal relations and trade with the United States.

Shaghasemi and Heisey (2009) in the third study explored cross-cultural schemata between the citizens of the two countries. Two groups of students from the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Tehran and the School of Communication Studies at Kent State University participated in their qualitative study. Respondents were asked about their image of the people of the other country and after that they were asked how they got such an image. Their results showed that Iranian respondents had more positive cross-cultural schemata towards American people than Americans had of their Iranian counterparts. "The 'Negativity,' 'Positivity' or 'Neutrality' of these cross-cultural schemata was evaluated according to the language of the responses comparing to the cultural context of the respondents" (page 147). Examples of negative cross-cultural schemata Americans in this study had are "Poor, Need Help, Oppressed, Evil, Bad Government, and Wear Turbans (page 148). Examples of negative cross-cultural schemata Iranians in this study had are "Bully, Immoral, Drone, Ignorant, Selfish" (page 152). For both groups, the mass media were the primary sources of their schemata. They also found that both for their 209 Iranian respondents and 255 American respondents, personal contacts proved to be the source of positive perceptions about the other people.

Borrowing the notion of "cross-cultural schemata" from Shaghasemi & Heisey (2009), Shaghasemi (2009) distinguishes 11 cross-cultural schemata of American people in the Iranian Persian weblogs. The qualitative analysis of 1500 Persian weblogs in four main blog service tools showed that the election of Obama as U.S president has affected Iranian bloggers more than any other issues regarding American people. The schemata in his work include: (1) "Americans as Fair and Aware Voters"- 24%; (2) "Americans as Unaware Public"- 18%; (3) "Americans as Nationalist People" -14%; (4) "Americans as Nice People" – 11%; (5) "Americans as People Who Are in Control of Their Country and Government"- 8%; (6) "Americans as Bully People" – 7%; (7) "Americans as Highly Educated People" – 6%; (8) "Americans as Joyous People" – 4%; (9) "Americans as People Who Are Fair to Women"-3%; (10) "Americans as People Who Love Iranian Culture and People" -3%; and (11) "Americans as People Who Have no Clear Image of Middle East and Muslims" – 2%.

The review of comments by Iranian bloggers in this study shows the influence of politics on views of Iranians. Both negative and positive comments have been issued for Americans as political actors and even sometimes as soldiers. These highly diverse cross-cultural schemata could reveal the diverse trajectories of perceptions about the U.S. in the Iranian society.

Heisey (2008) also examined the perceptions students at Hiram College in the U.S. have for Iranians and found an average of 40 percent of the responses to be negative. Under the title of "The Great Satan Versus an Axis of Evil," he concluded that the media sources of the information students get are responsible for this high degree of negativity.

In another study which has been conducted by Ahmad-Zadeh-Namvar (2008) Americans show more negative perceptions of Iranians than perceptions Iranians expressed about Americans. Through an open-

ended questionnaire, Ahmad-Zadeh-Namvar found that in general, her 50 American respondents in the American academia were particularly suspicious about Iranian nuclear activities and the Iranian role in the region. Analyzing 70 open-ended questionnaires completed by Iranian academics and students, Ahmad-Zadeh-Namvar concluded more than a half are positive about Americans.

In August of 2008, the Public Affairs Alliance of Iranian Americans (PAAIA) commissioned Zogby International to conduct a national public opinion survey of American perceptions of Iranian Americans, Iranians, and Iran. The results of this PAAIA/Zogby survey indicated that about half of all Americans has a favorable impression of Iranian Americans, as well as the Iranian people. On the other hand, about one-eighth of all Americans have an unfavorable impression of Iranian Americans and the Iranian people. Significantly, however, about one-third of Americans are not familiar with either Iranian Americans or the Iranian people. The similarity of the American public's overall impressions of Iranian Americans and the Iranian people perhaps indicates that such impressions are in large part formed by media reports on Iran (Public Affairs Alliance of Iranian Americans, 2008).

Another American-Iranian collaboration by Heisey and Sharifzadeh (2009) which explored the role of political representation of Americans and Iranians is represented in the media contents which impact perceptions of teenagers. Their participants were teenage students from two schools in Ohio, USA and Tehran, Iran. They asked their teenage participants to draw an individual from the other country. Their study revealed that almost all of the drawings of Iranians and of Americans show the influence of the media in the political images that are portrayed in them. The Americans' drawings depict Iranians to be people of terrorist inclinations and the Iranians' drawings show Americans using force to dominate the world as illustrated in the bombing of Iraq. Examples of these drawings follow.



An American Teenager Views an Iranian



An Iranian Teenager Views an American

They finally conclude that perceptions Iranian participants have of American people can be attributed to what they read in their school textbooks about America's history and role in the world and to what they see in their media. However, American participants are more likely to adopt the image of Iranian people as it is represented in the main stream media. These teenage drawings of the other country illustrate graphically Zur's claim: "Children, according to this view [political socialization], learn about enmity from their surroundings and internalize prejudices and enemy images as part of the process of becoming members of the culture. Allport's concept of the 'propaganda of integration' . . . is exactly the tool used in socializing youth and adults to conform to the group's beliefs and promote normative behavior." [4]

Another study which is highly informative in explaining what is really going on between Iranians and Americans, used the schema perspective to explore the role of schema adjustment in cross-cultural encounters. All participants in the study of Chang (2009) were from Taiwan and were experienced in international work assignments. They were interviewed to determine the changes in their schema. The researcher found that the components of the adjustment process were schema awareness, mental tension, mental dialogue, and culturally relevant others. Chang concludes, "In other words, learning is not only the process by which individuals acquire new outside symbols/information, it also involves an interaction between new outside stimuli and the meaning constructed by the current schema" (pp. 65, 66). The schema people have of others become important components in the interaction process when they experience intercultural encounters whether in person or in the media.

Conclusion

Our systematic review shows that based on studies included, Iranians have generally more positive perceptions about Americans than the Americans have of their Iranian counterparts. Another conclusion we can make is that media are the main sources of perceptions Iranians and Americans have of each other. This is the point in which politics intervene in the process of building consensus through the influence of the media. Certainly every agreement in the perceptions of others in society can be made to serve political ends.

The positivity of the Iranian perceptions for Americans can be attributed to the multiple media sources they use. There are currently over 36 Persian satellite television channels available in Iran, as well as countless channels in other languages (Semati, 2008). Although the law prohibits the ownership and sale of satellite dishes, the government has refused to enforce these laws strictly for various reasons. By 2005 it was estimated that there were 3 million satellite dishes in Iranian homes (Sazegara, 2005) and research indicates that Iranian youth have kept their interest in satellite TVs (Shakoori, 2006). Internet growth in Iran has been phenomenal and among the fastest in the world. There are reportedly two million Persian-language weblogs (Ziaei Parvar, URL)[5] with about a hundred thousand of them being updated on a regular basis (Namazi Khah, 2007). Persian comes only third in the ranking of weblogs according to

language. The proliferation of Internet cafés has been phenomenal. Iran has a vibrant newspaper industry in terms of production and circulation even in the face of the state's restrictions (Semati, 2008). Restrictions include the requirement of state approval to establish any sort of press, strong Internet filtering technologies, and prohibition of establishing TV and radio stations by private agents. Iranian journalists know well that crossing the red line will not be tolerated. In 2010, a report by Amnesty International claimed "Iranian journalists and bloggers are increasingly under siege in one of the biggest crackdowns on independent voices and dissent in Iran's modern history."

The print press has been a battleground for the reformists since the state controls the national broadcasting outlets. Iranian cinema is very active and many Iranian film directors have won many international awards (see for example, Dabashi (2001) and Chaudhuri and Finn (2003)). Popular music in Iran, with officially sanctioned and unauthorized underground concerts and online music festivals, partakes of the global youth culture (Nooshin, 2008). Currently, more women are graduating from universities in Iran than are men. The 80 percent literacy rate among the general population is quite an accomplishment for Iranian society (Semati, 2008). Moreover, examining the data taken from a number of empirical studies on media habits of Iranian people, Seyed-Emami (2008: 67) concludes: "There is a growing trend among young people to diversify their sources of news, and the Internet in particular seems to be emerging as a genuine alternative news medium for many people who seek information on political developments inside and outside the country." Certainly, when people get their information from different sources, they tend to be fairer to others.

Negativity of Americans perceptions for Iranians is a complex issue. Because of widespread predetermined and unchallenged assumptions about Iran, positive public attitudes are not just unfamiliar but are also nearly inconceivable to many Americans. American misperception and a lack of clear thinking about Iran significantly affect policymaking and unnecessarily close off policy options (Hart, 2005). As Shaghasemi and Heisey (2008) show, Americans who know Iranians in person have more positive perceptions about Iranians than those who know Iranians through media. These personal contacts are important not only for ordinary people, but also for academicians. Hoover (2008) and Horsfield (2008) both show how their perceptions of Iranians shaped by the Western media changed immediately after visiting Iran. As Horsfield (2008: 103) puts this: "Contradictions between my initial expectations and my firsthand experience in going to and participating in the conference [in Iran] made me aware that I carried a number of unconscious, unquestioned presumptions as a result of simply growing up and living in the West."

Recent studies indicate that public opinion often has a measurable impact on U.S. foreign policy (Soroka, 2003; Hartley and Russett 1992; Hill 1998; Sobel 2001; Wlezien 1996) and many studies (eg. Entman 2004; Holsti 2000; Bloch-Elkon, 2007; Robinson, 2000) point to the role of American media in shaping American public opinion. So if the interests of media owners necessitate demonizing a group of people, the media take the shoulder of manufacturing consent. This is what happened in the American media during Bush's administration which left a negative impact on the American public's perceptions of Iranians.

In contrast, the media in America are covering more positively the change in tone toward Iran being taken by the current Obama Administration. President Obama has received considerable coverage of his direct video talk to the Muslim people and C-SPAN television in the U.S. covered live the address by President Ahmadinejad on April 10, 2009, when he spoke of Iran's advances in its nuclear energy development program. Even beyond the media coverage of President Obama's efforts "to turn the page with Iran," his change in tone was emphatically recognized by the Norwegian Committee when it awarded him the 2009 Nobel Peace Prize, citing him "for his extraordinary efforts to strengthen international diplomacy and cooperation between peoples" (N.Y. Times, 2009) and for creating "a new climate in international politics" (LA Times, 2009). Obama's policy of engagement with nations with whom his country differs has gone beyond the media to capture such an international event. This recognition of Obama's intentions for change certainly will encourage the U.S. media to look for more positive developments in U.S. and Iranian relations. The media have a responsibility to be "fair and balanced" in presenting the news of other cultures.

While the media have a responsibility to be fair, the public in both the U.S. and Iran has a responsibility to demand of its systems and social structures the building of justice and tolerance of diversity in others

as well as themselves. As Zur, in the article quoted earlier, has argued, "We must transform our social and political systems, our communities, workplaces, schools, homes, religious structures and individual psyches by dismantling prejudice, injustice and bigotry. Justice, tolerance and appreciation of diversity can be developed by exploring our hidden biases, by deconstructing biased language, by challenging distorted, violence promoting messages in the media, by promoting and teaching justice and non-violent conflict resolution and by learning to understand and accept the diversity within ourselves." [6]

Notes

¹ The importance of the work of Ferdowsi in his masterpiece *Shahnameh*, is in his noble approach to the importance of information and its close relation to power. The owner of the *Jam-e- Jahan Nama* could see anything in the world in a live way which gave him an upper hand in a world without simultaneous media. That is why sometimes *Jam-e- Jahan Nama* is taken as absolute power or even corruption.

² Amanpour, (Interviewer) & Khatami, S. M. (Interviewee). (1998). Transcript of interview with Iranian President Mohammad Khatami [Interview transcript]. Retrieved from CNN Web site: <http://www.cnn.com/WORLD/9801/07/iran/interview.html>

³ Visit: <http://worldmeets.us/kayhan000003.shtml>

⁴ www.zurinstitute.com/enmity

⁵ www.reporter.ir

⁶ www.zurinstitute.com/enmity

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About the Authors

Ehsan Shahghasemi is PHD candidate in Communication at the University of Tehran and member of International Academy of Intercultural Research. His areas of Interest include intercultural communication, cyber studies, Iranian studies, minority studies, visual culture and Journalism. He also has translated several books on communication to Persian.

D. Ray Heisey is Professor and Director Emeritus, School of Communication Studies, Kent State University, Kent, OH 44242. B.A., Greenville, College, M.A., Ohio State University, Ph.D., Northwestern University. Professor at Kent State University from 1966-1996 teaching intercultural communication and history and criticism of public address. Professor and Director Emeritus

Goudarz Mirani is MA graduate in communication from the University of Tehran.

Authors' Addresses

Ehsan Shahghasemi, PHD candidate, Department of Communication. The University of Tehran, Iran. Email: ehsanshahghasemi@yahoo.com, Mailing address: Kooche Sangbori, Nourabad Mamasani, Fars, Iran, Phone: 00989124224592

D. Ray Heisey, Ph.D., Professor and Director Emeritus, School of Communication Studies, Kent State University, Kent, Ohio, USA, Mailing address: 2000 Carlton Road, Kent, OH 44240, Phone: 330-678-4707. Email: rheisey@kent.edu

Goudarz Mirani, M.A. Department of Communication. The University of Tehran, Iran. Email: gmirani2002@yahoo.com, Mailing address: Faculty of World Studies, University of Tehran, North Amir Abad, Tehran, Iran