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American Perceptions of Iran

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Introduction to Research

- This study explores how the medium through which a person consumes their news influences their perception of Iran's nuclear program and American foreign policy toward Iran.

- Several factors influence public opinion of American foreign policy

- Media: Coverage and framing of an issue; agenda setting

- Elites/Opinion leaders: According to Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, elites dominate the media and marginalize dissidents.

Therefore, the media operates under a propaganda model to further the agenda and interests of elites. For example, elites favor a more active U.S. role in the world than everyday Americans. However, they date suggests they are more partisan than general public.

- Interest Groups: There are many influential lobbying groups that influence American foreign policy and public opinions. For example, public opinion of Israel is influenced by Jewish-American lobby and also Israel itself.

- Partisanship/Party identification: Up to the end of the Vietnam War, there was not a strong correlation between public opinion of foreign policy and party identification. After that, clearer partisan cleavages that correlate to opinion of foreign policy can be observed.

- Demographics: Differences such as gender, socioeconomic status, education or generation influence foreign policy opinions.

- Ultimately, the media is heavily intertwined many of the factors that influence public opinion of foreign policy.

American Perceptions of Iran

- Because of America's historical isolationism and avoidance of wars, Americans have a tendency to view the world in black and white terms.

- We are the good guys, they are the bad guys, and there is no middle ground.

- Americans have a tendency to view Iran as driven by religious radicalism and therefore undeterrable.

- Americans have a tendency to view adversaries and world through historical lenses

- Americans automatically assume that a nuclear armed-Iran would be inherently destabilizing and threatening to the Middle East and the U.S.

- Limited engagement between the U.S. and Iran, in addition to its sponsorship of terrorism have only further hardened American perceptions of Iran.

- Research suggests that there is a American media bias toward Iran's nuclear program.

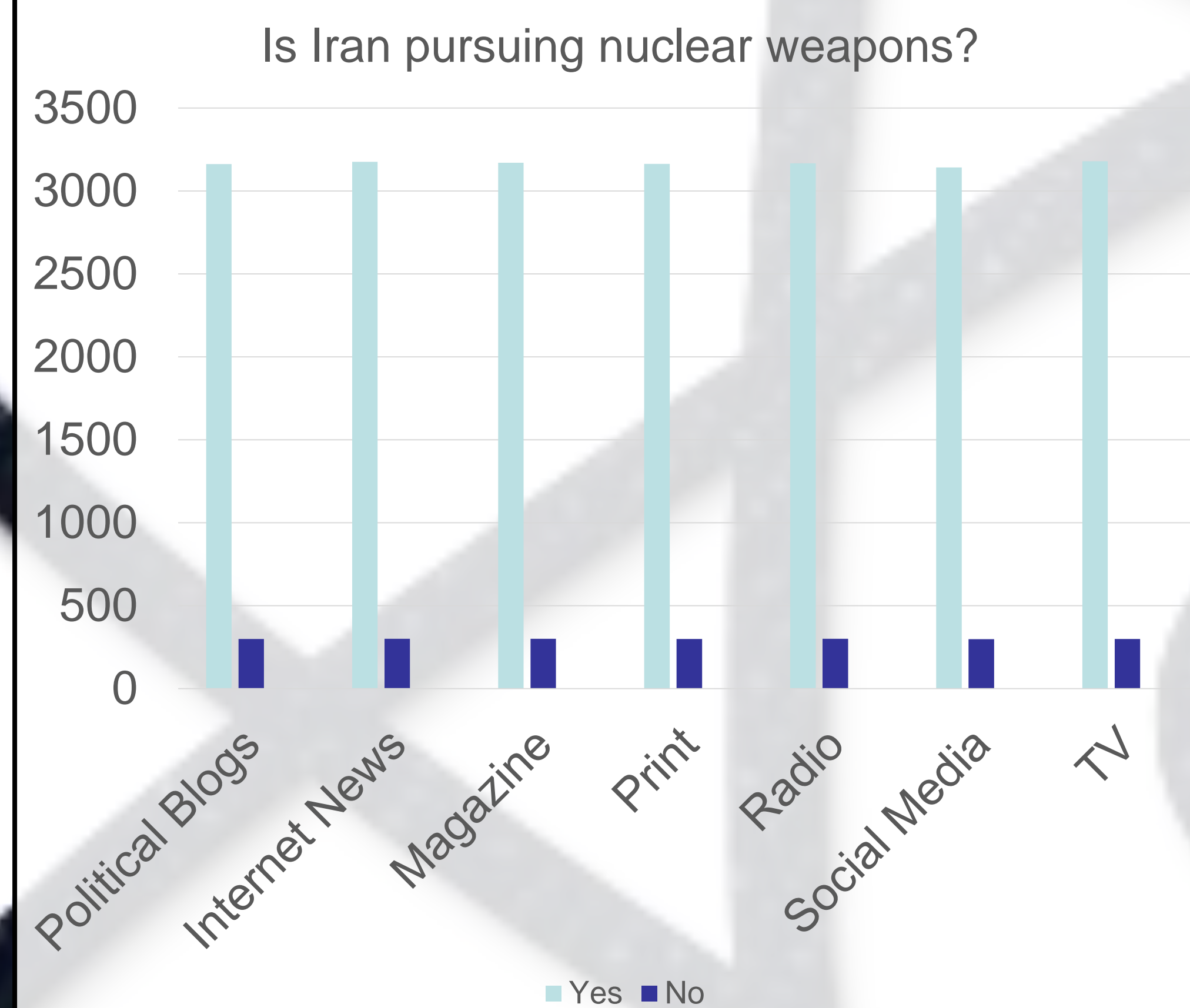
Hypotheses:

H 1: The medium through which a person gets political information influences whether they think Iran is developing a nukes.

H 2: The more frequently a person consumes media, the more likely they are to think Iran is developing nuclear weapons.

H 3: Some mediums are more influential in shaping perceptions of U.S. foreign policy toward Iran.

Is Iran developing nuclear weapons?



Does the frequency with which a person consumes media influence their perceptions of Iran?

Source of political information	Every Day	3 times a week or more	Almost every week	1-3 times a month	Less than once a month	Never
Political Blogs	3.9%	4.5%	7.7%	7.8%	13.2%	62.9%
Internet news	23.5%	14.6%	14.4%	10.7%	11.1%	25.7%
Magazine	3.1%	5.6%	13.3%	17.1%	25.3%	38.9%
Print	26%	12.4%	16.4%	10.4%	14.4%	20.4%
Radio	23.8%	15.9%	15.2%	12.9%	13.5%	18.8%
Social Media	6.6%	7.0%	10.4%	8.8%	13.6%	53.6%
TV	47%	18.1%	14%	8.7%	6.3%	5.9%

Comparison of Different Mediums Influences on Iran

Source of Political Information	Correlation	Standardized Coefficient	Significance
Internet Blogs	-.029	-.028	.198
Internet News	.03	.044	.036
Magazines	.019	-.031	.145
Print Newspapers	.092	.05	.019
Radio	.052	.019	.323
Social Media	-.048	-.071	.001
Television	.139	.117	.000

R-squared: .027
Significance level: .05

Table Interpretation

- The table measures the correlation and regression between different news mediums and whether Americans believe Iran is developing nuclear weapons.

- Only internet news, print newspapers, social media and television had statistically significant relationships with whether Americans believe Iran was developing nuclear weapons.

- The relationships between internet blogs, magazines and radio with whether Americans believe Iran is pursuing nuclear weapons were not statistically significant.

- Of those, television by far had the strongest correlation with whether Americans believe Iran is developing nuclear weapons. This was followed by print newspapers, social media and internet news.

Findings and Conclusions

H 1: Medium influences on U.S. opinion of Iran

While the numbers of Americans who believed Iran was developing nuclear weapons were not identical across all mediums, the figures were still very close. Consequently, the percentages were nearly identical as well. Thus, I conclude that regardless of the medium, the breakdown of those who think Iran is developing nuclear weapons and those who think Iran isn't was within a percentage point or two of a 90 percent/10 percent split.

H 2: Frequency of media consumption and Iran

For all mediums, there was a clear relationship between how often the media was consumed and opinion of Iran. For political blogs, magazines and to a lesser extent social media, the more media was consumed, the less likely the person was to believe Iran was developing nuclear weapons. For Internet news, print, radio and TV, it was the inverse.

H 3: How effectively did different media influence American opinion of Iran's nuclear program?

There was a statistically significant relationship between media and American influence of Iran only for internet news, print newspapers, social media and television. Of those, television by far was the most influential of American opinion, followed by print. The influence of social media and internet news trailed much farther behind. Of the statistically significant media mediums, only social media had a negative correlation, which meant it was the only medium that caused people to believe Iran was developing nuclear weapons the less they consumed political information through social media.

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