Iranian and American History Textbooks and Representations of Iranian-American Relations

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One of the more important global issues in the contemporary world is the troubled relationship between the United States and Iran. It seems natural that as a result, the issue of Iranian-American relations since the second half of the twentieth century would be covered and discussed extensively in the high school and university textbooks used in the two countries. It is beneficial to determine the nature of the representation of the ‘other’ in the textbooks of each country, especially as what is presented as truth is often viewed as a distortion of historical reality and ideologically loaded rather than being faithful to the original. This runs against the expectation of History to be a field where facts and evidence necessarily have the final say. The issue at stake here is not about simplification or emphasis, which are inevitable, but rather distortion or the emphasis of certain elements and the de-emphasis of others. Major crimes and injustices can often be justified by emphasizing certain elements and deemphasizing others, if they are at all represented. In this paper, an attempt will be made to determine if there is a regular absence of opposing perspectives in such texts as well as whether representations of the other country are regularly stereotypical or not.

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