

Michele Bachmann's Political Views on Iran

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Abstract

The Tea Party Movement (TPM) is a grassroots conservative reactionary movement that according to the Washington Post's, Christopher Parker, sees changes in traditional conservative values as a direct threat to its way of life. Initially started as an opposition to the fiscal policies of Barack Obama, the TPM soon embraced radicalism and adopted various hardline stances toward various domestic and foreign issues, ranging from the Obamacare to the recent JCPOA accord with the Islamic Republic of Iran. An influential figure within the TPM is the provocative and uncontrollably vocal former U.S congresswoman from Minnesota, whose controversial views have consistently made headlines in the media and the press. The so-called "undisputed queen of the TPM," Michele Bachmann was never a shy person in expressing her support of Israel as well as her questionable antagonism towards Muslims and more importantly, the Islamic Republic of Iran. This study aims to investigate political views of Michele Bachmann on major domestic and foreign issues, as well as her stance regarding the Islamic Republic of Iran, by utilizing qualitative-based systematic review and content analysis of official documents, congressional records and the media coverage. A new perspective is offered to the understanding of republican-sponsored radicalism that the TPM employs vis-à-vis the Islamic Republic of Iran. Furthermore, it is shown that the TPM and its members have negative views with regard to Iran and adopt anti-Iran stances that parallel of today's Republican Party.

Keywords: Tea Party Movement, Radicalism, Michele Bachmann, the Islamic Republic of Iran.

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Introduction

Since the establishment of the U.S. political system, various political parties in both ends of the political spectrum have emerged. However, today's de facto bipartisan political system is surely the result of the transformation of the demographical, politico-economic, cultural, and many other elements that have deconstructed past parties and re-constructed what is known today as the Democratic and Republican parties. For instance in the case of the modern-day GOP, many new ideologies and values has been infused into the Party that did not exist in the 1950's and 1960's. For instance the neo-conservatives and the right-wing religious constituents who originally existed in the Democratic Party found a new home in the Republican Party during the time Ronald Reagan was the President. Today's Republican Party is the mixture of four ideological movements (Goldberg, 2015) which are identified by National Interest's Michael Lind as: paleo conservatives, libertarians, the religious right, neo-conservatives and movement conservatives. This helps us understand the Tea Party Movement (TPM) that started first as a movement concerned with the ever-increasing U.S national debt and federal budget deficit that the government was afflicted with. However, with the introduction of hardline and radicalized organization and institutions such as the Tea Party Patriots, which is considered as a far-right group with highly controversial views regarding both the domestic and foreign issues, along with support from notable political figures such as Michele Bachmann, Sarah Palin, Louie Gohmert, Dick Armey, and later Ted Cruz and Marco Rubio, the last two who

received considerable support for their political campaigns, the TPM adopted staunch stances on many issues, in particular the Islamic Republic of Iran. As a highly influential member of the TPM, Michele Bachmann rose to national prominence and subsequently won a seat in the U.S House of Representatives, by receiving large amount of financial support from neo-conservative figures for her campaign race, most notably, the then president, George W. Bush, former U.S Vice President, Dick Cheney, Karl Rove, who have been known to have negative views regarding the Islamic Republic of Iran. Throughout her political tenure, Bachmann had been a strong supporter of Israel, while adopting anti-Iran stances, in order to appeal to her supporters that helped her to gain a seat in the U.S Congress.

Born in 1956, as Michele Marie Amble, the former congresswoman from the Twin City state, is no stranger to Israel and the Zionist philosophy; shortly after she graduated from high-school, the 18 year old Michele Bachmann went to Israel and spent the summer of 1974 working full time on Kibbutz Be'eri, which is a collective community in Israel and primarily involves agriculture and collective farming. In 2010 when she was interviewed about her stance on Israel and her early experience as a teenager, she described it as an enlightening and life changing experience:

I have been a long time supporter of Israel. The first time I went to Israel was the day I graduated from high school. I spent a summer working on kibbutz Be'eri near Beer Sheva in 1974. I've been 4 times in Israel – 3 times as a Member of Congress. I loved Israel – from the moment I first landed. As a young girl from Anoka, I was shocked at the level of security in Israel. We worked on the kibbutz from 4 am to noon. We were always accompanied by soldiers with machine guns. While we were working, the soldiers were walking around looking for land mines. I really learned a lot in Israel (Mitelman, 2010).

In fact, not only Michele Bachmann considers herself as Jewish, but

also support the illegitimate Zionist regime and its aggressive policies towards the Islamic Republic of Iran. In order to show her loyalty and biased support towards Israel she states:

Iran is a very serious situation. With each day that we've failed to have sanctions, our choice is more difficult. Iran has been an aggressor. It has been unwilling to deal diplomatically with the issue. We need to be apprised [of the situation] and not underestimate the intent of the leaders [of Iran] to do damage to the United States and our friend Israel. Israel has always been a friend to the United States, and in the United States, it is in our best interest to maintain that stability, for democracy (Mitelman, 2010).

It is no surprise that Michele Bachmann has an apparent and unquestionable dislike towards Iran and its Muslim people. In November 2012 during her presidential campaign debate against the Democratic challenger, Jim Graves, she firmly stood by her earlier action in claiming that the US Congress was infiltrated by the Muslim Brotherhood members and wrote five letters to the inspectors of various security agencies warning that they may have been infiltrated by the aforementioned group's agents: "The events in Benghazi have proved that the United States remains under attack, both in the Middle East, and here in the United States" (Seitz-Wald, 2012).

Michele Bachmann has stated many times that she is the strong supporter of Israel and its policies in the Middle East, particularly against Palestinians. However when she states her views on Iran, she not only backs Israeli's interest on the American foreign policies such as AIPAC and a number of other lobbies, but also calls for more strict sanctions on Iran. The Islamic Republic of Iran has stated countless times that it is not perusing nuclear weapons, which is against its doctrines and Islamic beliefs and practices, thus condemning any form of nuclear armament.

In 2011, during the 2012 televised presidential debate between former Congressman Ron Paul and Congresswoman, Michele

Bachmann, Iran's peaceful nuclear program became the subject of debate between the two candidates. Clearly, Michele Bachmann "shortsightedly" called Iran a serious threat to Israel and U.S and condemned its peaceful nuclear program. She stated: "Without a shadow of a doubt Iran will take a nuclear weapon. They will use it to wipe our ally Israel off the face of the map and they've stated they will use it against the United States of America" (Sawyer & Stephanopoulos, 2011). She continued by referring to a invalid and in-existent report: "And we have an IAEA report that just came out that says literally Iran is within just months of being able to obtain that weapon" (Ibid.).

Of course, former congressman Ron Paul not only disagreed with Michele Bachmann's vague accusation towards the Islamic Republic of Iran, but also challenged her radical, aggressive, and baseless animosity towards Iran and the Muslim community consequently. Ron Paul replied: "That is not true," Paul continued: "There is no U.N. report that said that ... They produced information that led you to believe that, but they have no evidence that there has been enrichment" (Ibid.).

This is not the first time that Michele Bachmann is totally incorrect about Iran. In another instance in 2011, she told a crowd in Waverly, Iowa, that she would close the U.S. embassy in Iran that day. According to her own statement: "That's exactly what I would do [if I were president]. We wouldn't have an embassy in Iran. I wouldn't allow that to be there" (Hunter, 2011). The interesting part of her embarrassing statement is that she did not know the U.S has not had an embassy in Tehran since 1980, moreover it shows how ill-informed she is with regard to foreign policy and the Islamic Republic of Iran in particular. What is even more is that beside her controversial and baseless views, she was selected by the House Speaker, John Boehner for a critical and highly sensitive position on the "House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence" which appointed her as the overseer of the "Central intelligence Agency",

“national Security Agency” and the rest of the U.S intelligence community (Isikoff, 2011). In other words, she became the main investigator in the House which would have the ability to conduct investigations with regard to the concealed and highly sensitive nature of country’s intelligence activities. A day later the Bachmann campaign released the following statements:

Congresswoman Bachmann is a member of the House Select Committee on Intelligence and is fully aware that we do not have an embassy in Iran and have not had one since 1980. She was agreeing with the actions taken by the British to secure their embassy personnel and was speaking in the hypothetical, that if she was President of the United States and if we had an embassy in Iran, she would have taken the same actions as the British (Hunter, 2011).

As a strong supporter of Israel with highly controversial and devious stances toward the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Muslim world, Michele Bachmann is a prime example of the reflection of an ideology which fully embraces hardline republican radicalism to a significant degree. The TPM has never been shy with regard to its stance on foreign policy issues, particularly vis-à-vis the Islamic Republic of Iran. The TPM has reflected its antagonism towards Iran, particularly through their affiliates and Congressmen and women such as Ted Cruz, John McCain, Marco Rubio, Lindsay Graham, Sarah Palin, and of course, Michele Bachmann. In fact organizations such the Tea Party Patriots which are known to have a far-right worldview, demonstrated their opposition to the accord with Iran through various statements and declarations and even went further and published an 11-page document (Anon., 2015) which denounced the July’s P5+1 deal with the Islamic Republic of Iran, by putting forward false and senseless arguments. The study of this and other similar documents as well as various media and news outlets that covers the Tea Party hardline stances, and Michele Bachmann as one of its more notable voices toward Iran, provides us with valuable and informative

insights in this regard. Also, by utilizing a qualitative content analysis of the related primary and secondary documents, this article tries to find relevant answers to the questions proposed below: “Does the TPM have a negative view toward the Islamic Republic of Iran?” If so “How does Michele Bachmann represent hardline Republican stance that the Tea Party Movement employs toward the Islamic Republic of Iran?”

This research utilizes a qualitative content analysis combined with systematic review of the major concepts in regard to Michele Bachmann’s political views. Thomas et al (2004), defines this method as:

A systematic review is a specific type of methodology focused on a research question that tries to identify, appraise, select and synthesize all high quality research evidence relevant to that question. A systematic review aims to provide an exhaustive summary of current literature relevant to the research question (Thomas, et al., 2004).

A qualitative content analysis is a process of gathering and constructing knowledge which is best described as a flexible data analysis method ranging from impressionistic interpretations to highly systematic analyses of text-based data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). It is considered a qualitative method for systematically and rigorously integrating, interpreting, and synthesizing qualitative findings that have been extracted from multiple qualitative or mixed-method research reports (Finfgeld-Connett, 2014).

This article aims to make Michele Bachmann’s political views more transparent for purposes of general understanding of TPM and its radicalism. Accordingly, the current study finds and examines related information such as official documents, congressional records and media coverage that reflect the ideology and viewpoints of Michele Bachmann as one of the prominent members of Tea party. Strictly speaking, the necessary information will be searched and collected by referring to various online websites and news services,

which serve as the primary and secondary sources and provide valid information on Michele Bachmann's political views. Then a qualitative systematic review of the gathered data will be performed in order to establish an inclusive and pervasive perception on Michele Bachmann political viewpoints about domestic and foreign matters, especially US-Iran relations.

In continuation, an orderly categorization of the political views of Michele Bachmann is offered in separate but consecutive sections. Each main section is thoroughly discussed and followed by the next category consequently. The conclusion section, which briefly mentions what is discussed throughout the research, attempts to answer the proposed research questions by identifying Michel Bachmann's radical stances, in particular, towards the Islamic Republic of Iran. It should be noted that, due to difficulty in conducting a direct interview with Michele Bachmann and gathering first-hand information in the host country, the research is limited to the information provided by the mainstream and alternative media and online websites as the primary and secondary sources of information.

Since the 1979 Iranian Islamic Revolution, the U.S Republican Party has always been amongst the most vocal elements within the country. It should be noted that it was not until the Reagan administration that the antagonism toward the Islamic Republic of Iran became an underlying trait of the GOP. A number of new elements such as the rise of Religious Right and the hawkish neoconservative ideology with the traditional Republican establishment, mostly concerned about fiscal conservatism and limited government involvement, resulted in the creation of today's modern-day Republican Party. Therefore, it should not be surprising to see the majority of opposition and belligerent views directed at the Islamic Republic of Iran coming from those congressmen and women who are a member of this party. For instance, when Saddam attacked Iran in the longest conventional war of the 20th century, Ronald

Reagan, who might be considered as the creator of today's multi-faceted Republican Party, sided with the aggressor and provided Saddam with an array of conventional and unconventional (chemical) weapons, economic aid, military intelligence, special operation training, and many other forms of direct and indirect assistance (Mohammadi, 2015; Harris & Aid, 2013; Friedman, 1993; Timmerman, 1991). Additionally, Washington continued his strong support for Saddam Hussein despite his worst atrocities during the 1980s including the brutal slaughter of the Kurds, which blocked any congressional protests. The excuse offered was that Iran was more dangerous, but apart from the cynicism, such apologetics cannot be taken seriously. Well after Iraq's war with Iran, the US continued to support Saddam, even to expedite his development of weapons of mass destruction (Chomsky, 2010).

During the George H. W. Bush administration, the antagonism and aggression toward Iran did not decrease, but rose to the point that in 1988, in the first year of his presidency, the American Aegis Cruiser, USS Vincennes in the Strait of Hormuz, in an act of crime against humanity, shot down the commercial Iranian airliner Air Flight 655, killing 290 passengers onboard while giving an unforgivable explanation that it mistook the civilian passenger for an F-14 jet, which was quite false and incorrect (Kaplan, 1988). In the aftermath of this horrible incident, George Bush, as the top Republican figure in America, never offered an apology (Rajaei, 1993) and remained hostile to the Islamic Republic of Iran throughout his administration.

The Republican radical ideas toward the Islamic Republic of Iran rose to its highest levels, when George W. Bush became the U.S. President in 2000. The prominent feature of George W. Bush administration was the involvement of many neoconservative politicians and figures such as former Vice President, Dick Cheney who had already served as the White House Chief of Staff in 1976 during Gerald Ford administration, as well head of the U.S.

Department of Defense during the presidency of George H. W. Bush from 1988 to 1992. Other prominent Republican neoconservative figures include Paul Wolfowitz, former Department of Defense Deputy, who is known as the architect of the 2003 U.S. invasion to Iraq; Donald Rumsfeld, former Defense Secretary; Richard Perle; Dennis Ross; and Condoleezza Rice, the latter who held prominent positions in the Bush administration both as National Security Advisor and Secretary of State. The Radical approach that the Republican President, George Bush chose, could be best seen during the 2002 State of the Union Address, when he called Iran amongst the Axis of Evil, along with Iraq and North Korea (Bush, 2002). Throughout his unpopular presidency, George W. Bush displayed full belligerence toward the Islamic Republic of Iran and never ceased to demonstrate his aggressive stance, fueled by the radical members of his administration's views, which almost unanimously embraced anti-Iran and pro-Israel views and policies in this regard.

More recently, a full embracement of Republican radicalism has fallen on the shoulders of the Republican congressmen and women (accompanied by a number of congressmen from the Democratic Party such as Senators Bob Menendez, Bob Corker, and Charles Schumer), amongst them, Michele Bachmann who never have fallen short of employing radical views and propaganda against the Islamic republic of Iran. The radical members of the Republican Party, who employ anti-Iran stances, have a number of views on the ways in which the US should deal with Iran, including the idea of conducting full-scale war against the Islamic Republic. For instance, as it was mentioned earlier, Michele Bachmann as a member of the House of Representative until 2015, called for a direct military aggression against Iran on a number of occasions. She even called for an aerial strike against Iran in the time of Christmas, which was also accompanied by another Republican member of the House of Representative from Kansas, Mike Pompeo who served with Bachmann on the House Intelligence Committee in December 3,

2014 (Ahmed, 2014). Another Member of the U.S Congress who is known for his staunch anti-Iran stance, is Senator Lindsay Graham (R-NC) who has never been shy in displaying his opposition to issues regarding Iran, most notably the country's peaceful nuclear program and the recent nuclear accord with P5+1, which he immediately opposed and condemned, and then followed it up by supporting Israel and its aggressive policies in the region (Gregory, 2014). In May 2012, Graham sponsored Resolution on Iran's nuclear program, emphasizing on the full suspension of all uranium enrichment-related activities by Iran (HRes568/SR41).

As it was highlighted above, the Republican Party since its transformation into what it is today (which includes religious right and neoconservative worldviews) has become the most radical and antagonistic element in existing U.S political body. Therefore, many US Congress members, as well as former Presidents who have had membership and affiliation with the Republican party (notably Michele Bachmann, Lindsay Graham, Tom Cotton, Marco Rubio, Ted Cruz) and many others who are also favored by a radical branch of the Tea Party Movement such as the Tea Party Patriots, have shown radical views toward the Islamic Republic of Iran.

I- Radicalism of Michele Bachmann

The Tea Party Movement is an organized and collective interest group of American citizens who identify themselves as the Tea Party activists. This political movement consists of six national organizational networks at the core of the Tea Party movement: FreedomWorks Tea Party, 1776 Tea Party, Tea Party Nation, Tea Party Patriots, ResistNet, and Tea Party Express.

In terms of political affiliation, this newly formed Party, tend to gravitate toward the Republican Party ideologies and political agenda; however, the Party members consider themselves as the modern-day-self-proclaimed-blue-collar-American-patriotic movement with its roots dating back to 1773 "Boston Tea Party", when anti-tax (read

anti-Royal British establishment) protestors under the larger group known as the “Sons of Liberty” sabotaged the ship containing the entire shipment of premium tea from England as an act of defiance from the Royal Government on the other side of the Atlantic ocean.

According to one of the six official websites of The Tea Party Movement addressed www.teaparty.org (Anon., 2004):

It is a grassroots movement that calls awareness to any issue which challenges the security, sovereignty, or domestic tranquility of our beloved nation, the United States of America. From our founding, the Tea Party represents the voice of the true owners of the United States: WE THE PEOPLE.

It also continues: The Tea Party includes those who possess a strong belief in the foundational Judeo-Christian values embedded in our great founding documents. We believe the responsibility of our beloved nation is etched upon the hearts of true American Patriots from every race, religion, national origin, and walk of life sharing a common belief in the values which made and keep our beloved nation great. This belief led to the creation of the modern-day Tea Party.

Steve Eichler who is the Tea Party C.E.O believes that,

Many of America's dilemmas lay squarely on the shoulders of We, the People. Meanwhile, economic issues burden small businesses. However, we must not define ourselves by the calamities in our lives, but by our resolve to pick up the pieces and move on. The power of a few can change a nation, save a people and illuminate a generation. Commonsense, Conservative, Constitutional Self-Governance Is our Mode of Operation. Yes, we are a Christian nation. However, you do not have to be a Christian to enjoy freedom. The Tea Party welcomes all red-blooded U.S. Citizens (Anon., 2004).

The Tea Party Movements champions a number of principles and ideologies which are concentrated in three core beliefs: personal freedom, economic freedom, and debt free future (Anon., 2004;

Anon., 2014; Anon., 2014).

By studying the ideologies and political interests of this newly formed and unorthodox party, we can assume that the Party's objectives are widely consistent with the GOP political ideologies (Barstow, 2010). According to Perrin et.al, the Tea Party political function is strikingly similar to other republican conservative orthodoxy, in terms of both social and economic themes and issues (Perrin, et al., 2011).

The Tea Party Movement (TPM) is the story of the 2010 midterm elections. Enigmatic and multifaceted as it is, the TPM captured the attention of voters, pundits, and politicians between the Democratic wave of 2008 and the Republican resurgence of 2010. It represents the most recent cultural expression of the Republican Party coalition that formed during the second half of the 20th century (Perrin, et al., 2011).

The Party's core concentration is focused on the nation's economic issues, such as reduced government spending and lowering taxes. What the party basically promotes in terms of economic reforms, is the tax reduction on corporate and private businesses, which in the Tea Party leaders' views, is essential in creating jobs for the unemployed, thus decreasing the unemployed rate in the country. If the 2008 global economic recession is taken into account, which initiated in the U.S and like a wildfire, spread to the other parts of the world, in recent years the sky-rocketing expanses in the U.S production branch, has indeed knocked down the American economy and as a result has forced many major producers to transfer their assembly lines moved out the businesses to countries such as China and Taiwan, as well as many other southern eastern Asian counties on the expanse of cheaper labor and reduced costs of production. Therefore, what is generally perceived from the Tea Party, in terms of economic recovery, can be traced back to their emphasis on the regeneration of American economy, in the form of corporate tax cuts and decrease in the government spending.

The Tea Party Activists also tend to oppose environmental restrictions on emissions, and favor repealing the “Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act”. During the congressional debate over the 2010 Patient Protection and Affordable Act (ACA), opponents of this act initiated large-scale attack against it. Tea Party activists charged the ACA as an “unconstitutional infringement” on states’ right and individual liberty (Rosen, 2010).

For decades, leading to the passage of the ACA, advocates argued that the federal government should be responsible in covering the complete expanses of the American people medical bills, therefore considered an active role for the U.S central government in guaranteeing a fundamental right to the citizens’ health care. In 2010 they successfully convinced the lawmakers to initiate similar laws in defining an active and universal role for the government to pay for the American people’s medical bills in the form of Patient Protection and Affordable Act. Among the fierce critics of this universal healthcare system, colloquially known as the “Obamacare”, was the Minnesotan Republican Congresswoman, Michele Bachmann.

On numerous occasions, Michele Bachman has reflected her stance on a number of foreign policy issues. For instance, in October 2011, Bachman stated her opinion on Pakistan and the country’s nuclear arsenal,

These are nuclear weapons all across this nation. And, potentially, Al-Qa’ida could get hold of these weapons. These weapons could find their way out of Pakistan, into New York City or into Washington, DC. We have to maintain an American presence in Pakistan (Diaz, 2011).

More importantly, from time to time, the former Congresswoman from Minnesota has demonstrated her belligerent stance regarding Iran. For instance, in September 2011, she stated that,

The president has not done what he needs to do to keep the US safe. If you look at the biggest issue in the Middle East, it's a nuclear Iran, and the president has taken his eyes off that prize.

He's said to Israel that they need to shrink back to their indefensible 1967 borders. I sit on the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. We deal with the nation's classified secrets. And I firmly believe that the president has weakened us militarily and put us more at risk than at any time (Anon., 2011).

Also, in July 2015 after the P5+1 negotiations resulted in the implementation of the JPCOA with the Islamic Republic of Iran, Michele Bachmann was quick to demonize the agreement, stating that,

With his Iran deal, Barack Obama is for the 300 million souls of the United States what Andreas Lubitz was for the 150 souls on the German Wings flight -a deranged pilot flying his entire nation into the rocks. After the fact, among the smoldering remains of American cities, the shocked survivors will ask, why did he do it? (Preuss, 2015).

It is worth noting that, Michele Bachmann was a strong proponent of attacking the Islamic Republic of Iran with weapons of mass destruction, stating that, “in dealing with Iran, diplomacy is our option, but that other options, including a nuclear strike, shouldn't be taken off the table” (Radio, 2006). The statement clearly shows how radical and hardliner a Tea Party-backed figure could be. She also went a step further and stated that if she was the U.S President,

It would take me half a nanosecond. We would send out our military equipment and do what has to be done. And in eight weeks, the whole discussion would be over. The Iranian program would be done, and the world would be free from it (Kant, 2015).

Michele Bachmann has repeatedly demonstrated ambiguity and the lack of proper knowledge regarding a number of domestic and foreign issues throughout her political tenure, which are well-documented and therefore undermines the very legitimacy of her statements and worldviews. For instance in September 2008, on the issue of cooperating with India as a nuclear power, in the form of “U.S-India Nuclear Cooperation Approval and Nonproliferation

Enhancement Act”, Bachmann voted YES with the aim of integrating India into a global nonproliferation regime, which is a contentious matter since India is not a signatory to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), along with Israel, Pakistan and South Sudan.

Clearly, there are a number of common grounds that the Tea Party Movement and the Republican conservatism share. Though it is not a national political party and as the movement describes itself as a mix of populist (Halloran, 2010), libertarian, and conservative, in reality it is quite clear that the Party is a GOP platform and even consists of prominent Republican figures, such as Ron and Rand Paul, Michele Bachmann, Sarah Palin, and Steve Scalise to name a few, therefore it would be safe to assume the Party as the endorser of the far-right and conservative republicanism and its political ideologies. For instance, large majorities of self-identified Tea Party affiliates, support restrictions on immigration; therefore organizing large scale rallies in support of stricter immigration policies as a result. It should be noted that Tea Party activists, similar to Republicans, strongly oppose same-sex marriage, the right for abortion, and support racial profiling in airport screenings (Barreto & Parker, 2012). Moreover they demonstrate negative views toward Iran and the recently-signed nuclear Deal that came into fruition in July 2015. For instance, in September 9th 2015, on the eve of the Congressional voting for the Iran Nuclear Deal, the most prominent Tea Party group, the Tea Party Patriots, along with the Zionist Organization of America and Center for Security Studies held a rally in Washington, DC to show their rejection of the peaceful Nuclear Deal. During the rally, prominent Republican and close Tea Party affiliate Senator Ted Cruz from Texas delivered a keynote address and denounced the Deal, respectively.

The Tea Party movement as a whole is a multimillion dollar complex that includes for-profit corporations, non-party non-profit organizations, and political action committees. Collectively they have erased the advantage that Democrats once enjoyed in the arena of internet fundraising and web-based mobilization (Burghart &

Zeskind, 2010). They have resuscitated the ultra-conservative wing of American political life, created a stiff pole of opinion within Republican Party ranks, and they have had a devastating impact on thoughtful policy making for the common good, both at the local and state as well as at the federal levels.

II- Michele Bachmann and the Tea Party Movement

In this section as a part of the findings, the role and influence of Michele Bachmann in the Tea Party Movement will be discussed. It should be noted that the tea Party Movement is a new party which emerged as resentment towards Democratic establishment and its political and political economic ideologies, and points its spear directly towards the Democratic adversaries. Thus it is becoming a new platform for the Republican orthodoxy for promoting their views either politically or culturally.

In the aftermath of a 2008 national electoral defeat of the GOP nominees, when it was thought that the two-term rule of the Republican establishment had been over and everyone assumed that the GOP and its bandwagon have no national credibility left in them the Tea Party was created. The Party, seemingly started from scratch, provided the right-wing activists with a rather new identity; it was financially supported by the Republican business goliaths and conservative corporate billionaires and backed up by right-wing media. This newly reincarnated Party of the original 1773 “Boston Tea Party” established itself among the white middle-class population and soon turned the attention of many toward themselves, nationwide. The group showed their dissatisfaction from the Democratic executive branch and soon marched into the streets of major metropolitans and rallied for the reforms on the issues of budget deficits, taxes, and power of the federal government. They called for the decrease in the size of government and its decentralization. They demanded the federal government not to interfere in what they called “small businesses” and private sector,

thus considered a small role for the federal government in the economic and social scales. The Tea Party activists showed their “concerns” over a number of social and racial issues, and even called the newly-elected U.S. President, “un-American”, and stated that the first African American President Barack Obama is not a “real American”, which indeed directly demonstrates their racial orientation as well. Apparently, more than any social group in the society, Christian nationalists and strict nativists mainly consist of white-middle-class, are attracted to this unorthodox and quasi-political Party; perhaps due to its harsh denunciation of prominent Democratic figures, especially Barack Obama (Barstow, 2010).

If we take a close look at the Tea Party Caucus in congress, led by the Tea Party Queen, Michele Bachmann, and check whether or not the Movement’s political orientation overlaps with the Caucus’ political agenda, we see that the similarities between the two entities is so easy to understand.

In fact, the Tea Party is well-adjusted to the political agenda of far-right wing Republicans who seek nothing but the implementation of their political views. This is where Michele Bachmann’s views on a number of subjects such as “Obamacare”, same-sex marriage, the right of abortion for women, environmental issues and nuclear issue become the central issues of the Tea Party Movement. Following section provides a number of issues where the Tea Party Movement and Michele Bachmann meet and embrace each other.

III- Political life of Michele Bachmann

Bachman is the first woman from Minnesota to be elected in both U.S. Senate (from 2001 to 2007) and the House of Representatives (since 2007). She is the founder of the “Tea Party Caucus” (Sherman, 2010) and a strong supporter of this unconventional and mainly conservative political movement which seeks to promote reforms in the U.S. national economy as well a number of other political and social changes. Due to her unorthodox and often controversial political views

on a number of important issues such as abortion, direct or indirect condemnation of Muslims, support for the expansion of American Imperialism through the use of military force abroad, particularly in the middle east, national economy, health care, increasing activity of oil industry and hydrofracking⁽¹⁾ in Alaska (Draper, 2012); and her constant disagreements with Democratic Party politicians, most notably the U.S President Barak Obama over a number of his national and foreign policies, she has attracted many attentions.

Michele Bachmann identifies herself as a devoted and “traditional” conservative Christian who seeks to advocate conservative Christian values and doctrines. She is a strong advocate of anti-abortions laws prohibiting women from performing abortions in specialized medical clinics. In fact according to Michele Bachmann’s own account:

I was naive about abortion. I was 16 at the time of the Supreme Court’s Roe v. Wade decision, and I will admit that I didn’t quite understand what it was all about. But then a Catholic friend explained it to me, the full disastrous dimensions of what the Supreme Court had just done to our culture and to our nation (Bachmann, 2011).

However, during her presidential run in November 2012, Bachmann said a more interesting and made a rather “contradictory” remark on the highly controversial topic of abortion,

What we want is women to be able to make their own choices. We want women to make their own choices in healthcare. We want women to have their own choices, their own money, that way they can make their own choices for the future of their own bodies (Bachmann, 2011).

It is very interesting to mention that earlier and in 2011, Michele Bachmann had vastly different views on the matter of abortion and the women’s right to perform self abortions; according to her sponsored PRENDA (Prenatal Nondiscrimination Act), she believes, certain laws and regulations must be turned into law, in order to

prevent mothers to perform self-abortions (Bachmann, 2011).

Obviously, Michele Bachmann contradicted herself by initially stating that women have to make their own personal decision in regard to their physical well-being; but a few months later, she sponsored a bill that is directly aimed to neglect self-made and personal decisions of women seeking abortion in specialized clinics.

One point (among many) that the general public, mass media, and outside observers have noticed in soon-to-be-retired Minnesotan congresswoman is the inexistence of valid and even slightly credible congressional record during her tenure in the U.S Congress. According to official U.S Congress website, Michele Bachmann has not passed even a single bill in the Congress (Anon., 2007-2015), and none of her sponsored bills have turned into law. In other words, the undisputed “Tea Party” queen has a very thin legislative resume (Links, 2013). To be more detailed, Bachmann has sponsored the total of 58 bills during her tenure, with 53 of them referring to numerous committees for further examination (which means it will not go anywhere near being passed). It is interesting to mention that only one of her sponsored bills (H.R 850) was finally reported by the committee, or in simple terms, got out of committee, to facilitate project in the Lower St. Croix and Scenic River. The only bill, which was heavily sponsored by Bachmann and successfully passed the House, was H.R 45 which is known as “Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act” and was passed in the House in may 16th 2013 (H.R.45, 2013-2014). In fact, this accomplishment was so momentous for Bachmann that she spent nearly \$80000 to promote the vote (Devin, 2013). To be fair, the Minnesotan Republican Representative is not the only member of congress (past and present) who did not even turn a single bill into law; current Senate Majority Leader and senior Republican Senator from Kentucky who has been in the Congress for nearly 30 years (since 1985) has “zero” legislative accomplishment and there is no piece of legislation that bears his name as the sponsor (Anon., 2015).

When asked about Michele Bachmann's thin legislative accomplishment, and whether or not it can have a negative effect and potentially harm Bachmann's 2012 presidential campaign, the Republican Representative from Texas, Louie Gohmert, replied:

I think she's had a profound effect on debate. It doesn't mean you always win. In fact, as we know, [Winston] Churchill lost and lost and was a voice of reason in Great Britain for a long time before people finally realized he was right (Breshnahan & Sherman, 2011).

With regard to Michele Bachmann's obvious unsuccessful legislative record, her defenders, who are almost exclusively conservatives and right-wing affiliates, state that Bachmann's 58 sponsored bills were the victim of Democrats holding the Majority in both the Senate and House during Bachmann's term as a member of congress. In fact, the Republican congresswoman almost spent half her House tenure in the minority as well; therefore her defendants believe that Bachmann could not be effective in terms of legislation record due to being in the minority, both in the House and the Senate (see table below).

Michele Bachmann's Complete Legislative History	
Attempts By Michele Bachmann	Accomplishments By Michele Bachmann
Bills Sponsored	58
Referred to Committee	53
Reported by Committee	1 H.R. 850 (112th): To facilitate a proposed project in the Lower St. Croix Wild and Scenic River, and for other purposes.
Agreed To (Simple Resolution)	3 H.Res. 373 (111th): Expressing support for designation of the month of September as "National Hydrocephalus Awareness Month" H.Res. 923 (110th): Recognizing the State of Minnesota's 150 th anniversary. H.Res. 789 (110th): Honoring public child welfare agencies, nonprofit organizations and private entities providing services for foster children.
Passed House	1 H.R. 45: To repeal the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act and health care-related provisions in the Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act of 2010
Signed Into Law	0

However, what made Michele Bachmann so distinguished from other female congresswomen (perhaps as similar to former Alaska Governor and Vice president Nominee) are her controversial and reckless political views that for nearly 8 years have caught the attention of national and international observers and have made the front page headline of newspapers and magazines, especially regarding the Islamic Republic of Iran and its nuclear activities.

IV- Michele Bachmann, an Anti-Iran Promoter

The former Congresswoman from Minnesota has consistently displayed her hardline views on nearly every issue related to the Islamic Republic of Iran; ranging from promoting belligerence and aggression toward Iran's peaceful nuclear program to encouraging lawmakers and the U.S Government to impose more sanctions against Iran. In fact one would assume that the female voice of the Tea Party Movement reflects the negative views of this reactionary Movement regarding many foreign policy issues, most notably with respect to Iran and its the recently-signed accord.

In the 10th of September rally, sponsored by the far-right Tea Party patriots, Bachmann did not shy away from expressing her antagonism regarding the P5+1 deal with Iran. In an interview with the equally hardline right-wing online news website, World Net Daily, the former Congresswoman claimed that, "bombing Iranian nuclear facilities is called peace, and not war" (Bachmann(b), 2015), which clearly showed her lack of knowledge and national security credentials on most foreign policy subjects, most notably the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Michele Bachmann's foreign policy views overwhelmingly resemble that of the neo-conservatism that existed during both George Bush senior and junior at the highest levels of the government. In other words, it would not be inaccurate to count Bachmann amongst figures such as Dick Cheney, Paul Wolfowitz, William Kristol, Robert Kagan, Micheal Ladeen, Eliot Cohen and

other so-called neo-conservative foreign policy figures who view any subject through the distorted lens of military aggression and belligerent behavior. It is no wonder that Michele Bachman had employed persistent voice of Republican radicalism. In fact, according to her biography, when she was younger she was a “fair-minded Democrat”, and had also worked for former one-term President Jimmy Carter’s campaign (Libit, 2008). However, after reading a book, she suddenly realized that she was not a liberal anymore, switched sides shortly and embraced a particular type of Republican Ideology that Ronald Reagan synthesized, by combining religious right, neo-conservatism, and traditional conservative values into one single package called the Republican Party (Kristol, 2010). In fact, one surprising facet of today’s modern Republican party -which is adopted and endorsed by a number of politicians such as Ted Cruz, Marco Rubio, Jeb Bush, John McCain, and Mitt Romney and Michele Bachmann- is those who identify with the Republican Party must be for instance, against abortion, favor big business and industry, display hard-power in spending large amount of federal budget on military, embrace religious right, in favor of cutting federal taxation, pro gun rights and second amendment, and pro-Israel and Zionism. In other words, he or she must fully adopt every aspect of the Republican package if he or she wants to stay relevant in the Party. Michele Bachman had been the prototypical modern day Republican politician who embraced all those values and ideologies with closed eyes.

Michele Bachmann has been on the forefront of many actions and measures of the U.S government against the Islamic Republic of Iran, and has never ceased to display her negative stance toward the country. In April 30th 2009, Bachmann signed (HR. 2194) Iran Refined Petroleum Sanctions Act imposed on Iran regarding its peaceful nuclear program and prohibited foreign exchange, banking, and property transactions.

In October 2011, Bachmann opposed the \$500 billion reduction in the military budget by condemning what she called, “Barack

Obama's failed policies" in the Middle East and asked for stronger American presence in the region through increasing the number of soldiers to be deployed in the region, despite the Obama administration's decision to withdraw 5000 troops from Iraq (Anon., 2011). Besides rejecting the idea of military budget reduction, she believed that the U.S government should increase the defense budget even more in order to counter what she called the Iranian influence in the region.

In August 2011 during the Presidential debate in Ames, Iowa, she said

Iran is the central issue in the Middle East and their capacity to become a nuclear power. They're one of the four state sponsors of terror in the world. I sit on the House Select Committee on Intelligence. I can't reveal classified information, but I can say this: As president of the United States, I will do everything to make sure that Iran does not become a nuclear power (Anon., 2011).

In August 2015, in an interview on the evangelical radio program "Understanding the Time", Bachmann stated her opposition to the P5+1 deal with Iran and said, "we should all feel very privileged to live in the End Times, which are currently upon us now that Obama's negotiating a nuclear deal with Iran" (Bachmann(a), 2015). It is not shocking to hear such bizarre statements from the former Congresswoman, who never misses a chance to appeal to pro-Israel and Zionist groups and institutions through a variety of means, such as considering herself, "Jewish by root" or "attacking Iran with weapons of mass destruction (Ahmed, 2014)" or more recently displaying her opposition to the nuclear deal with Iran. On one occasion, Michele Bachmann's radical Republican views toward the Islamic Republic of Iran went so far to the point that she even criticized the American Jewish community for supporting Barack Obama (Lachman, 2014), whose policies, she believes, have not had enough enthusiasm from the Likud-dominated administration of Benjamin Netanyahu (Keck,

2015), who is known to have had “unfriendly” relationships with former American Presidents and high-ranking politicians.

Conclusion

Since her very first day at the Capitol Hill, Michele Bachmann has always embraced controversy at its fullest scale. The number of times, Michele Bachmann has made headlines, whether it was regarding the vaccines in her view caused serious diseases in children or her lack of even the slightest knowledge about Iran. In one case and in a bizarre statement during her 2011 presidential debate, in front of millions of viewers nationwide and around the world, she declared that she would close the U.S. embassy in Tehran. Despite that, it is quite fascinating, considering the fact that she was elected as member of “Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence” which was given the sensitive task of overseeing the intelligence agencies’ activities by the congress. She is also known for her constant denunciation of Barack Obama’s national and foreign policies such as “Protection and Affordable Care Act” and immigration policies; for instance, she heavily criticized the Obama’s 2010 visit to Asia, which according to her personal calculation, cost nearly \$200 million of tax payers money a day. Her unorthodox and biased attack on a number of high-ranking government officials such as Huma Abedin⁽²⁾ and Keith Ellison resulted in criticism from a number of prominent U.S. political figures such as House Speaker, John Boehner, and Arizona Senator, John McCain, who called her accusations “specious and degrading”.

The U.S. political community often compares her to the former Alaskan Governor and 2008 vice president nominee, Sarah Palin, who was also a very controversial figure. What both women have in common, apart from being identified as the classic far-right Christian Republicans, is their highly vocal and sometimes senseless statements that have made them noticeable- yet somewhat unsuccessful- politicians in the U.S. political community. What Michele Bachmann lacks in political skills, she makes it up with bizarre loudness and

controversial statements. Throughout the American history there have been similar characters and politicians who did not have the necessary pedigrees to become prolific politicians. Similar figures within the American political history from the past until present have emerged, such as Joseph McCarthy, Former Alabama Governor and anti-Civil Rights figure, George Wallace, and even more recently, the outspoken billionaire Donald Trump. It is not surprising that figures like Michele Bachmann, Scott walker, Ted Cruz, Tim Scott and Tom Cotton have overwhelmingly appealed to a significant proportion of Tea Party followers, specifically those who are the most radical and outspoken in revealing their hardline stances on many domestic and foreign issues. If one takes a sample from those politicians who are funded, supported and even in the cases of Marco Rubio, Tom Cotton and Tim Scott, directly endorsed by the TPM affiliates such as the Tea Party Express, and Tea Party Patriots, he/she would notice that they all share the same political views with little or no difference from one another, supplemented by the support from the radical anti-Iran proportion of the Tea party Movement. For instance, all three mentioned senators, have shown strong anti-Iran stances that equals or even rivals those mentioned by the former Representative, Michele Bachmann.

Returning to the concept of bizarre demagogy which Michele Bachmann fully employed during her short tenure in the U.S Congress, the best example that comes to mind is Joseph McCarthy who in many ways resembles Michele Bachmann. McCarthy was loud, reckless, highly controversial, and politically short-lived. However, he was not a forgettable figure, and as of today, his name, method of “interrogation” and often demagogic rhetoric is known as “McCarthyism” which has made a permanent mark in the U.S. political history. However, Is Michele Bachmann capable of leaving a permanent mark on the U.S. political history? Did Michele Bachmann leave enough legacies to be considered as a “prominent” figure in the U.S. history? In terms of legislation success, she certainly was

disappointing, and unsuccessful. Perhaps it was her lack of triumph during her tenure as the Minnesotan Congresswoman in the U.S. congress which guaranteed her early elimination in the 2012 Iowa Caucus, despite the fact that she was ahead of her opponents in terms of fundraising, with nearly \$4.5 million dollars. Or maybe it was her “unawareness” in addressing the people of New Hampshire of the locations of the two prominent battles of “Lexington and Concord” which took place in the towns with the same names in state of “Massachusetts” not New Hampshire.

To be fair, it should be noted that Michele Bachmann was the first Republican woman to be represent Minnesota in the Capitol Hill. But the question is “would it be sufficient to consider a place for Michele Bachmann among notable American politicians such as Abraham Lincoln, Theodor Roosevelt, and John F. Kennedy to name a few or not?” Only the future generation can answer the question. The only thing we can do is to sit back and ask ourselves whether people will remember Michele Bachmann or she will be soon forgotten like thousands of other past political figures who are only mentioned in the dusty congressional records and history books at the Library of Congress.

Note

1. It is a well-stimulation technique in which the bedrock is fractured by a hydraulically pressurized liquid. This technique is commonly applied to wells for shale gas, tight gas, tight oil, and coal seam gas. As of 2012 there are over one million hydrofracking drills operating in the U.S. Environmentalists believe that hydrofracking is harmful to the environment and damages nearby wildlife as a result. (Source: www.investopedia.com/terms/f/fracking.asp)
2. An American political staffer; She has been a long-time aide to Hillary Rodham Clinton; as well as being the U.S. Secretary of State Clinton's Deputy Chief of Staff at the State Department. (Source: www.state.gov)

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