T.C.
ANKARA YILDIRIM BEYAZIT UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

MULTIPLE IDENTITIES IN FOREIGN POLICY OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

PH.D. THESIS

NAZİFE SELCEN PINAR AKGÜL

DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

ANKARA, 2021

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that all information in this thesis has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work; otherwise, I accept all legal responsibility.

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ABSTRACT

MULTIPLE IDENTITIES IN FOREIGN POLICY OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

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The transformation in Iran's state identity that resulted from the 1979 Iranian Islamic Revolution has been reflected in various ways in its foreign policy. Post-revolutionary Iran's new state identity has addressed questions such as "who am I?" and "who are others?"

This study, which creates a theoretical framework from the definition of *self* and *other*, strengthens the post-revolutionary construction of Iran's national, religious and revolutionary identity through the discourses of Iranian elites. The Hostage Crisis that took place in the first years of the revolution; the Iran-Iraq War that started in 1980 and lasted for eight years; the nuclear and Palestine issues that occupied an important place in Iran's foreign policy, and finally the Syrian civil war has been selected as multiple case studies. Using the interpretive research method, the reflections of national, religious, and revolutionary identity on foreign policy will be analyzed. In this respect, the study shows that it is not possible to locate a single and stable state identity that affects Iran's foreign policy. Discursively, identities are defined and redefined by Iran's decision-makers. In the foreign policy reflections of Iran's multiple identities, these identities could be contending, complementary, or competing. The results obtained in this thesis reveal how the aforementioned multiple identities have shaped post-revolutionary foreign policy.

Key words: identity, foreign policy, national identity, religious identity, revolutionary identity

ÖZET

İRAN İSLAM CUMHURİYETİNİN DIŞ POLİTİKASINDA ÇOKLU KİMLİKLER

AKGÜL, Nazife Selcen Pınar

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1979 İran İslam devrimiyle birlikte, İran'ın devlet kimliğindeki dönüşümün dış politikaya çeşitli yansımaları olmuştur. Devrim sonrası İran, "ben kimim? Öteki ya da ötekiler kim?" sorusuna verdiği cevaplar ile yeni devlet kimliğinin sosyal çevresini tanımlamıştır.

Kimliklerin ben ve öteki tanımlamasından kuramsal çerçeve oluşturan çalışma, İran'ın milli, dini ve devrimci kimliğini devrim sonrası inşasını, İran'ın seçkin elitlerinin söylemleri aracılığı ile kuvvetlendirmektedir. Devrimin ilk yıllarında gerçekleşen Rehine Krizi, sonrasında 1980'de başlayan ve sekiz yıl süren İran-Irak savaşı, İran dış politikasında önemli yer işgal eden Nükleer ve Filistin meseleleri, son olarak da Suriye iç savaşı çoklu vaka çalışmaları olarak seçilmiştir. Yorumlayıcı araştırma metodu ile milli, dini ve devrimci kimliğin dış politikaya yansımaları analiz edilmeye çalışılmıştır. Bu açıdan çalışma göstermektedir ki; İran dış politikasını etkileyen tek ve sabit bir devlet kimliğinden bahsedilemez. Söylemsel olarak kimlikler İran'ın karar alıcıları tarafından yeniden ve yeniden tanımlanmaktadır. İran'ın çoklu kimliklerinin dış politika yansımalarında ise bu kimliklerçatışmacı, tamamlayıcı ya da yarış halinde olabilmektedir. Bu tezde elde edilen sonuçlar İran'ın çoklu kimliklerinin İran'ın devrim sonrası dış politikasını nasıl şekillendirdiğini oraya koymaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: kimlik, dış politika, milli kimlik, dini kimlik, devrimci kimlik

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AEOI	Atomic Energy Organization of Iran
APOC	While Anglo-Persian Oil Company
HAMAS	Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiya
IAEA	International Atomic Agency
IRGC	Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps
IRI	Islamic Republic of Iran
IRNA	Islamic Republic News Agency
ISIL, ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant/Syria
ISSG	International Syria Support Group
JCPOA	Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action
LDF	Local Defense Forces
MEK or MKO	Mojahadin-e Khalq
MPRP	Muslim People Republican Party
NAM	Non-Aligned Movement
NDF	National Defence Forces
NPT	Non-Proliferation Treaty
PLO	Palestinian Liberation Organization
QF	Quds Force
SCIRI	Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Ahead of the 12th presidential elections scheduled for June 2017, then-incumbent President Hassan Rouhani used the symbol of two fingers raised to display a "V" sign as part of his election campaign. When he was questioned on the meaning of that symbol, Rouhani stated, *"Dobâreh âmadam. Barâye Iran. Barâye Islam"* (I came back, for Iran, for Islam)[1]. This response corresponded to the main elements of Iran's state identity.

Like any person or state, the Iranian state has many identities constituted of an array of elements, and has changed over time. One of the most formative events in the state identity was the Islamic Revolution of 1979, which birthed the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI). The constitution of any state identity has two main considerations: First, it addresses domestic constituencies and attempts to define who they are. The second aspect of identity building is directed to the external world, and determines the relationship with other nations and states in terms of amity or enmity with them.

The transformation in the identity and agenda of the Islamic Republic came about as a result of the 1979 Islamic Revolution. The revolution significantly changed the state with respect to the beliefs, norms, and perceptions that dominated Iranian politics. In other words,since the revolution, ruling elites in Iranian politics have redefined Iranian state identity to "build or burn bridges" and "define and justify priorities."[2]

The identity of the Iranian state under the Islamic Republic represents the coming to fruition of national, religious, and revolutionary components. As a first point, national identity reflects the *perception* of the Islamic state with regard to the Iranian nation. The rhetoric of national identity after the revolution in Iran is based on two points: The first is the rejection of the term "nation", a concept produced by the West (*external other*) as it involves dividing the Islamic *Ummah.*The second is the rejection of Pahlavi nationalism (*historical other*). However, the

[1] https://www.isna.ir/news/96012510221' see: "Iranian President Rouhani to seek a second term faces hardline challenge", https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-election-rouhani-idUSKBN17G0XU. This V sign and the words of President Rouhani were used as posters in the demonstrations, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/04/world/middleeast/iran-hijab-veils.html

[2] Shahram Akbarzadeh & James Barry, "State Identity in Iranian Foreign Policy", *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 43, No. 4, 2016, p. 613.

endangerment of the country's integrity by another external other has caused Iranian leaders to use multiple identities in foreign policy.

Considering the religious identity, one of the most important aspects of Iranian state identity is associated with pan-Islamism. Besides the pan-Islamic, the Islamic Republic is built on Ayatollah Khomeini's doctrine of *velayat-i faqih*, an interpretation of government in the Shiite tradition. It was portrayed as "an entire system of government" in perfect form,[3] to be exported to the whole Islamic world. Likewise, major narratives in Shia history have become an important component of Iran's religious identity.

The Islamic Republic is the product of a revolution that incorporated anti-imperialism as the most essential part of the revolutionary movement. This component of revolutionary identity refers to the semi-colonial past that touches the "wounds" in Iran's self and includes a continuous struggle with arrogant power. The most obvious component of Iran's revolutionary identity and worldview emerges as "anti-Americanism" in the discourses of decision-makers. In addition; the revolutionary identity handles the problems of the Third World and self-sufficiency for the development of the state.

Considering different components of Iran's state identity under the Islamic Republic, it is puzzling to understand Iranian foreign policy. At different times, different components of identity may come to fore to shape and legitimize foreign policy decisions. This is especially relevant to some cases, in which it requires tracing the influences of different identities in Iranian foreign policy, and to explain the relationship between the multiple identities of the Islamic Republic.

Against this background, this study aims to show how these identities shape what is experienced in foreign policy. In order to achieve this, we have tried to analyze selected cases- "The Hostage Crisis (1979–1980)", "Iran-Iraq War (1980–1988)", "Palestine Issue", "Nuclear Issue" and "Syrian Civil War".

1.1. Research Question

This study assumes that there is a relationship between identity and foreign policy. The nature of this relationship is explored in the theoretical part of the thesis.

[3] *Islam and Revolution Writings and Declaration of Imam Khomeini,* translated and annotated by Hamid Algar, Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1981, p. 137.

The second assumption of this thesis is that Iran's state identity is composed of multiple identities. The thesis attempts to elaborate how these multiple identities affect Iranian foreign policy. An evaluation of the interaction between Iranian identity and foreign policy since the 1979 Islamic Revolution reveals a complex dynamic between the two. The questions posed here form the backbone of this study and the key understanding of identity/foreign policy relations in Iran's Islamic State. To answer these questions, the study focuses on three spheres of identity: the national, religious, and revolutionary. Different configurations of these identities in the Iranian context define and limit Iranian foreign policy.

This question also allows us to realize that state identities implicate multidimensional forces that affect Iranian foreign policy. Thus, the secondary question would be how multi-state identity affects Iran's relations with its regional and international environment. To respond to this question, developments in post-revolutionary foreign policy were evaluated. From this point of view, the study poses other questions: How did the discourses of Iranian leaders reflect on the cases? How are these discourses perceived by the components that make up Iran's multiple identities?

1.2. Research Argument

The establishment of the Islamic state in Iran changed the country's domestic politics, economics, and society, as well as the regional landscape and political debate. The leaders of the various movements that overthrew the Shah reflected this transformation in the new self-definition of state identity with their discourses. Hence, the social relations of the Iranian state were redesigned. This situation made us question whether identity is important in a country's foreign policy. The basic assumption of this study is that Iranian foreign policy is guided by identities.

The main argument of the thesis is that in order to understand the post-revolutionary Iran's foreign policy, it is necessary to look at the identity of the state. This is because the Iranian state identity has undergone a transformation with respect to the perceptions of self versus other in the post-revolutionary period. New *self and other* conceptualizations have also affected Iranian foreign policy discourse.

As well as similarities, there has always been some contrast and competition among the components of Iranian identity. The assumption of the thesis is that multiple state identities coexist and compete with each other to influence Iran's foreign policy. The interaction

between these overlapping, complementary and competing identities shape what Iran is and is not. They have defined Iran's post revolutionary *self and other* conceptualization. As a result, these self and other perceptions provide an understanding of the impact of Iranian identity on its foreign policy**.**

1.3. Literature Review

The existing literature offers different perspectives on Iranian identity. While the nationalist or religious portrayal of Iran is dominant in the media, some studies deal instead with the revolutionary characteristic of Iranian identity.[4]Most scholars working in this field have acknowledged the existence of multiple identities, and discuss various elements of the identity of the Iranian nation and state. While for some, the elements that construct multiple identities are contradictory, for others they are complementary.

According to Vaziri, Iran's three main currents of identity at the turn of the century consisted of Islamism, Iranian and regionalism (ethnic heterogeneity).[5] Holliday added the relationship between the West and historical relations to the side of Iranians (pre-Islamic culture) and Islamism.[6] Mohsen Milani also states that Iran's identity was at once "Shia, Persian, and Western-inspired".[7] Saleh sees Iranian identity as a balanced position between Iran's Islamic ideology and nationalism that derives from Iran's pre-Islamic heritage.[8] So the debate revolves around the harmonious co-existence of those various identities or conflicts, and the contestations among them.

Iran's religious and revolutionary intellectuals look at the approaches to Iranian identity as follows.The ideologues of the Islamic Revolution such as Ali Shariati claims "the terms nations and nationalism were linked to religion, and that Shi'ism is one of the main elements of Iranian identity"; Mortaza Motahhari, who related nationalism with Iranian-Islamic national identity if the former brought "cooperation and social ties among people"; and Mehdi Bazargan, who claimed that "opposing Islam to Iranian nationalism is self-destructive because

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[4]Mahdi Mohammad Nia, "Discourse and Identity in Iran‟s Foreign Policy." *Iranian Review of Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 3, No. 3, Fall 2012, pp. 29–64.

[5]Mostafa Vaziri, *Iran as Imagined Nation: The Construction of National Identity,* New York: Paragon House, 1993. Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi, *Refashioning Iran: Orientalism, Occidentalism and Historiography, New York: Palgrave, 2001.*

[6] S. Holliday, *Defining Iran: Politics of Resistance,* Farnham: Ashgate, 2011, p. 1.

[7]M. Milani, 'The Evolution of the Iranian Presidency: From Bani Sadr to Rafsanjani', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 1, 1993, pp. 83–97, at p. 96.

[8] A. Saleh, *Ethnic Identity and the State in Iran,* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, p. 45.

its denial is the work of the propaganda of anti-revolutionary movements".[9] However, Khomeini saw national affiliation as a product of Western thought, which was inimical to, and used as an instrument to undermine, the 'unity of Islam.' Therefore, after the 1979 Islamic Revolution, differences between the two identities became much clearer than ever before. Khomeini considered the Pahlavis' non-Islamic nationalist orientation to their society and administration to be apostasy. All kinds of identity were to be based on Islam under the new dictatorship. However, nationalism has been strong since the revolution's beginnings, particularly during Iraq's invasion of Iran on September 22, 1980.

According to Bashiriyeh,

> "two competing paradigms of Iranian identity – nationalism and political Islam – have been instrumental in legitimizing the state's political system for both regimes; the ancient ideology of Persians on the part of the Pahlavi Shahs, on the one hand, and on the other hand the Islamic ideology propagated by the Islamic Shia."[10]

At this point, the discussion focuses on the problem of the coexistence of identities or the conflict of multiple identities of the state. Here, the study follows the literature advocating that states can have multiple identities just like a person. Personal or state identity is not singular and straight but a configuration of various identities. For an individual, it can be defined by "race, language, culture, economic and class status, ethnic origin(s), and personal or ancestral religion or ideology".[11] For a state, it can be defined as "the set of beliefs about the nature and purpose of the state expressed in public articulations of state actions and ideals."[12]

According to Hunter, contestation stem from the conflict between Iran's Islamic and Iranian identities.[13] Saleh and Worrall named this contestation the "Persian identity crisis", which oscillates between nationalistic and Islamic discourses and which in turn impacts strongly upon the wider Iranian national identity.[14]In short, Iranian identity has always been contested

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[9] AhmadAshraf, "Iranian Identity", in *Encyclopaedia Iranica,* Vol. XIII, Fasc. 5, pp. 522–530, New York: Columbia University Press.

[10] H. Basiriyeh, "Ideology-ye Siasi va Hoveyat-e Ejtema'I Iran [Political ideology and collective identity in Iran]", *Iran Nameh*, 23, 2003, pp. 271–285, in Saleh & Worrall, "Between Darius and Khomeini: exploring Iran's national identity problematic", *National Identities*, Vol. 17, No. 1 p. 85.

[11] Shibley Telhami & Michael Barnett, "*Identity and the Foreign Policy in the Middle East"*, New York: Cornell University Press, 2002, p. 8.

[12] Marc Lynch, "Abandoning Iraq: Jordan's Alliances and the Politics of State Identity", *Security Studies, Vol.* 8, No. 2–3, 1999, pp. 347–388.

[13] S. Hunter, *Iran Divided: The Historical Roots of Iranian Debates on Identity, Culture and Governance in the Twenty-First Century,* London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014, p. 19.

[14] Alam Saleh & James Worrall, ibid., pp. 73–97.

in certain historical moments, leading to extreme shifts not only in terms of the regime but also in terms of national identity.[15]

A group of scholars argues that Iran or the Iranian elite concealed various aspects of identity to build a coherent and reconciled identity; another group of scholars including Maloney and Hunter underlines the rivalry and competition among the contesting identities. On the contrary, Maloney and Hunter claim the existing rivalry between identities of state. For Maloney, the "prism of competing effects" includes analysis of revolutionary anti-imperialism, as well as Persian nationalism and Islamism.[16]

While the literature discusses that identities conflict or complement each other, these identities do not have an answer to the question of who the Iranian is and who is the other. From this point of view, this study, which looks at Iran's post-revolutionary identity definitions, evaluates Iran's post-revolutionary identity change by making use of Ted Hopf's work on "Identity and Foreign Policies."[17] According to Hopf's definition, the "Other" does not necessarily have to be another state, sometimes a different idea or image or the state's own history can be "other" for that state. In this context, one of the contributions of this study is particularly studying the IRI.

The constant clash of Islamic and nationalist discourses has caused Iran's insconsistency in its self-understanding. These "incongruences" resulting from nationalist discourses in Iran are built upon "the glorification of pre-Islamic heritage, which is consistently portrayed as the authentic source of Iranian identity".The main goal of this discourse was adopted during the Pahlavi period was not only to increase the prestige of the monarchical system but also to strengthen the sense of Iranian nationalism through the widespread use of this ancient past.This process also entailed the adoption of "Iranian/Iranianness/Iraniyat" on the part of the state.[18]

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[15] Saleh & Worrall, p. 74.

[16] Suzanne Maloney, "Identity and Change in Iran's Foreign Policy," in *Identity and Foreign Policy in the Middle East*, ed. Shibley Telhami and Michael Barnett, New York: Cornell University Press, 2002, pp. 88–116. S. Hunter, *Iran Divided: The Historical Roots of Iranian Debates on Identity, Culture and Governance in the Twenty-First Century,* London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014.

[17] Ted Hopf, *Social Construction of International Politics*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002.

[18] Saleh & Worrall, p. 75. Shabnam Holliday, *Defining Iran: Politics of Resistance,* Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2011.

While nationalism and Islamism both claim ideological legitimacy, they do so on theoretically opposing grounds–which explains why they continue to clash – it is also obvious that the two agendas or views of Iran's identity have utilized the existence of the '*other*' to define themselves against and mobilize supporters, a process that has molded much of their rhetoric.

Both discourses have been made to rally the public against external '*others*', which is particularly evident in both "Islamic and nationalist focus on anti-imperialist discourses, which have also tended to stress notions of territorial integrity and national dignity".[19] A similar relationship exists between war and revolution, which have a co-constitutive relationship between the domestic and the international. War serves both external and internal purposes for revolutionary regimes.When faced with the external other, it can show how revolutionary regimes are able to mobilize enough military force to repel an invader, thereby increasing the administrative control of the society, and enabling a large number of people to socialize within the armed forces, and gaining stronger legitimacy and strengthening its position in the interior.[20]

The national, religious, and revolutionary aspects of Iranian identity have influenced foreign policy significantly. In the literature, Brenda Shaffer sees Iran's Shia identity as the only center of foreign policy ideas.[21] Like Shaffer, Soroush frames Iran, with respect to foreign policy, as an "Islamic culture … it is qualitatively and quantitatively the dominant culture of Iran."[22] This stance depends on Iran's *self*-identity because nationalistic and Shia roots accompany Iranians' struggle. Firstly, Shi'i memory mostly surrounds the theme of martyrdom, particularly with reference to Imam Hussain, the third Imam and grandson of the Prophet, who was killed in Karbala in 680.[23] Remembering the sacrifice of Hussain recalls "the struggle against any form of injustice and corruption".

Maloney also adds "anti-imperialism" into competing paradigms of foreign policy. It is related to revolutionary ideas which have constituted revolutionary identity. While "a revolution is, roughly described, a forcible overthrow of a government to establish a new one, revolutionary behavior is the direct outcome of an unchanged and uncompromising belief, of

[19] Saleh & Worrall, p. 91.
[20] Halliday, p. 316.
[21] Brenda Shafer, The Limits of Culture: Islam and Foreign Policy, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006.
[22] Abdulkarim Soroush, "The Three Cultures", in *Reason, Freedom and Democracy in Islam*, trans. Sadri Mahmood and Ahmad Sadri, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.156.
[23] Kamram Scot Aghaie, *The Martyrs of Karbala*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004. Hamid Dabashi, *Shi'ism: A religion protest*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011.

the radical conservative and fundamentalist factions only, in the illegitimacy of international institutions and the prevailing international system in general."[24]While the revolutionary behavior of the Islamic Revolution symbolized a victory over imperialism, ideological anti-Americanism was at the heart of the revolution. Iranian self-identity definition in the religious sense emerges as a protector of the oppressed against the oppressors; this is best manifested in Iran's stance against the West in general and the United States and Israel in particular, which are known as the "arrogant powers."

The Revolution effectively extracted the US and the Shah from Iran, to eliminate America's influence on the region, and to liberate their Arab neighbors from oppression.[25] Iran's anti-imperialist stance was used to strengthen its national unity by exacerbating and thinking of the worst-case scenario of the threats posed to it. Secondly, the revolutionary slogans, "Neither East Nor West" calling for independence from foreign powers, indicate that the struggle to maintain the country's national 'dignity' is arduous and challenging.

This thesis, which examines identity–foreign policy relations, aims to fill at least two gaps in the literature. Firstly, by taking multiple state identities as the main focus, the study expands the understandings in the literature on the identity–foreign policy relationship. Secondly, it has tried to show how identities have been redefined since the Iranian Islamic Revolution, based on discourse of Iranian officials. The research represents the connection between multiple identities and the Hostage Crisis, Iran-Iraq War, Palestine, Nuclear issues and the Syrian civil war.

1.4. The importance of the Study

This thesis aims to examine Iran's post-revolutionary foreign policy from the perspective of the multiple identities of the Iranian state, so the study is important in terms of examining Iran's multiple identities. While existing studies discuss the effect of a fixed identity on Iranian foreign policy, the thesis is important in terms of the idea that no fixed identity affects foreign policy, and that multiple identities are defined and redefined by Iranian authorities. It is important to see the consequences of Iran's change in the definition of self and other after the revolution in foreign policy.

[24] Maximilian Terhalle, "Revolutionary Power and Socialization: Explaining the Persistence of Revolutionary Zeal in Iran's Foreign Policy", *Security Studies*, Vol. 18, 2009, p. 558.

The study also traces how Iran's post-revolutionary perception of self and other has changed in foreign policy. While investigating the self-other relationship for Iran's multiple identities, it establishes the components that construct the identity. The limitation of existing studies on Iranian foreign policy ideas includes that they often do not theorize how multiple identities relate to foreign policy. In addition to this, other literature makes clear that identity is important foreign policy, it does not show how and why they matter. For this reason, the study draws on the existing literature on Iran's current foreign policy discourse, and draws a framework for Iran's state identity. The framework for this study is made explicit through various case studies.

The broad significance of the thesis would be the understanding of Iranian state identity through the notion of self versus other after the Islamic Revolution. Specifically, the self and other definitions of national, religious, and revolutionary identities will make it easier to understand Iranian identity's effects on foreign policy. Further, future researchers could use the components of Iran’s multiple identities for different foreign policy cases.

1.5. Scope of the study

This study analyzes the transformation of Iran's post-revolutionary state identity and its national, religious and revolutionary identities. In doing so, this study aims to show how these identities shape Iranian foreign policy and what is experienced in foreign policy. In order to achieve this, we have tried to analyze the "Hostage Crisis (1979-1980)", "Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988)", "Palestine Issue", "Nuclear Issue" and "Syrian Civil War" through the components of Iran’s multiple identities.

The timeline of the cases begins with the Hostage Crisis (1979–1980), which we can see as a reflection of the first years of the revolutionary regime. For the Iran-Iraq War, which was chosen as the second case, the narration of the events was limited to the date it ended. However, the discourses that Iranian elites refer to as a reference to the hostage crisis and the Iran-Iraq War are also included.

A time frame was established to include the Syrian Civil War in this study, which started with the protests in 2011. The pre-revolutionary developments in the cases of the Palestine Issue and the Nuclear Issue, which have a long history, are excluded from the scope of the thesis.

As the thesis will reveal, the way in which multiple identities are handled in Iran, and their reflections on the cases presented, have differed during the different administrations. For example, it is seen that revolutionary discourses were more heavily weighed during the Ahmadinejad period. For this reason, the discourses of some leaders have come to the fore while describing the episodes. The temporal framework of the discourses used while evaluating the cases was limited to the end of the first term of the 12th president, Rouhani.

The study focuses on the multi-state identity of Iran after the Islamic Revolution. For this reason, pre-revolutionary issues related to religious, national and revolutionary identity were not entered in depth, they were only reviewed. Definitely, the reflections of multi-state identity on foreign policy would not be limited to five cases.

1.6. Methodology

In this thesis, the question is about the role and influence of national, religious and revolutionary identities, and their different reflections on foreign policy in general. However, in particular it traces the effects of multiple identities related to five chosen cases – the Hostage Crisis, Iran-Iraq War, Palestine Issue, Nuclear Issue and Syrian civil war.

An interpretative multiple cases design was chosen to answer the research question of how Iran's multiple identities affect foreign policy. Thus, the multiple cases also provide a broad overview of post-revolutionary foreign policy, and to show Iran's multiple identities in different cases. The case studies were not selected with a view to yielding explicitly comparative findings.

I have chosen the Hostage Crisis as the first case for my research. The research seeks to demonstrate the components of multiple identities after the Islamic Revolution in Iran, a case in which the effects of the revolution could be seen very clearly. Despite the dominant revolutionary rhetoric, it is important to demonstrate the Islamist character of the Islamic State of Iran, in which nationalist notions are discursively active.

The Iran-Iraq War as a case provides a case study in which the dominant religious discourse and that of nationalism are conflated, but it also includes elements that reflect the revolutionary identity to foreign policy. The *ummah* discourse that predominated before the war gave way to a rising nationalist discourse in the face of an attack that endangered Iran's

territorial integrity. The reasons behind Saddam's attack on Iran were associated with the imperialist ambitions of the west, especially the USA, discursively.

As for the Palestinian issue, Iran has shown that the Islamic Revolution played a central role in shaping Iranian attitudes towards Palestine.Religious and revolutionary identity helped define the interaction between Iran and Palestine, but the Palestinian issue was chosen to also illustrate the conflict between the components of national identity and religious identity.

By applying the identity–foreign policy relationship to the example of Iran's nuclear issue, a country's foreign policy is shown to be greatly influenced by national identity within the framework of nuclear ambitions and national pride. Moreover, the emphasis on peaceful purposes with the religious leader's fatwa exemplifies how religious identity is discursively introduced. The nuclear issue has been chosen to clearly show how Iran’s leaders emphasized rebellion against imperialism and self-sufficiency in technology.

The Syrian civil war is a selected case study in order to examine Iran’s stance regarding the process that started with the 2011 people’s protests that progressed into civil war, and how these events strengthened its historical alliance with Syria within Iranian official discourses. While Iran explains its presence in the region through the components of religious identity, there is a rising oppositional nationalism against Iran's presence in Syria.

This research takes an interpretive approach to understanding identity and its impact on a country’s foreign policy. Thus, the data collection focuses on primary sources such as interviews, government websites and official news organizations, and the official documents of the IRI. Discourse and content analysis has been applied to key documents and statements that are considered essential in formulating and expressing state identity, such as statements produced by political leaders and institutions. In particular, the official websites *khamenei.ir, leader.ir and president.ir* are the main sources of data reflecting the discourses of Iranian officials.

This study also draws on data from secondary sources: First, there is an extensive literature focusing on Iranian scholars. Second, comprehensive scientific books, newspaper articles and newspapers, reports, and policy briefs produced by research institutions in Iran will be comprehensively evaluated. Finally, Persian and Arabic terms are used in the thesis by giving their English meanings. Typically, the English translation is used when interpreting the

authorities' statements in an effort to ensure the translations are official. Along with these, “common usage” was preferred in the pronunciation of the names mentioned in the thesis.

1.7. Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is composed of five chapters. The following chapter will discuss a theoretical framework to understand the relationship between state identity and foreign policy. It portrays the conceptualization of the state identity in foreign policy decision-making approaches, and explores the role of the norms, beliefs and perceptions in state identity. The aim of this chapter shows a state's identity is formed from the history of its social interactions with other states in the international system. These identities are most easily understood as roles that the self assumes toward the other.

The third chapter traces Iran's Islamic Republic's multiple identities – national, religious, and revolutionary – marked by self and other perceptions of the Islamic Revolution. This section provides a historical overview to understand nationalism, religion-state relations, and revolutionary ideology in pre-revolutionary Iran. This section analyzes the components of identities to evaluate the cases to be addressed in Iran's foreign policy.

The fourth chapter examines selected cases – The Hostage Crisis (1979–1980), Iran-Iraq War (1980–1988), Palestine Issue, Nuclear Issue, and the Syrian Civil War – in Iranian Foreign policy after the Islamic Revolution. This case study chapter firstly provides an overview of the background of the cases. Secondly, it tries to show the components of national, religious, and revolutionary identities. Finally, it discusses how the multiple identities of Iran's Islamic Republic are discursively handled by officials. The purpose of this section is to show that Iran's multiple identities are rediscovered in foreign policy and used in different ways by the Iranian authorities.

Finally, in the last chapter – which is reached by researching the post-revolutionary multiple identities of Iran and their reflections on foreign policy through selected case studies – aims to evaluate the previous chapters and present the key findings of the work.

CHAPTER 2
IDENTITY and FOREIGN POLICY

The aim of this chapter is to assess the importance of identity in enhancing our understanding of foreign policy by focusing on the state identity. Our basic assumption based on the previous literature is that Iran has multiple state identities and these identities compete in Iranian Foreign Policy. This part, which is based on the main assumption of the dissertation, underlines the relationship between foreign policy and identity, and discusses the conceptualization of "*self* and *other*" in state identity. Additionally, this chapter will show howidentity norms play a central role in foreign policy; hence, it is important in this chapter to review what "norms" are, how they function, and how they are accepted and altered by states.

2.1. Identity and Foreign Policy

Most people dealing with international relations are inclined to treat states, next to other influential actors in international politics, as if they are persons. The assessment of states as persons unavoidably necessitates establishing an association between states and identity.[26]
Identity is defined as a relational concept insofar as it only makes sense to talk about the self when a relationship with the other is present. Identities tell actors who they are and who their enemies and friends are, or are central to establishing establish relations with others. This is closely associated with the definition of interest and what interests they have. Identities also provide a framework for guiding action, providing actors who have a way of predicting the behavior of others.

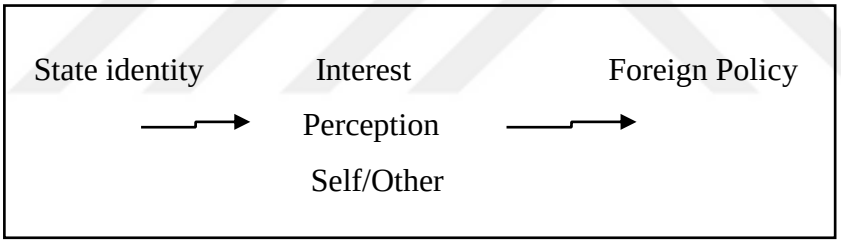
Thus, identities have essential functions: they tell you "who you are, they tell you who others are, and they tell others who you are." [27] With reference to this, a state identity becomes an important symbol of its interaction with and relationship to other states andas well as what it signifies to the outside of the world, as reflected in its foreign policy.

[26] A. Wenth, "The State as Person in International Theory", *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (Apr., 2004), pp. 289–316
[27] Henri Tajfel, *Human Groups and Social Categories: Studies in Social Psychology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981, p. 255.

Corporate identity shapes your feelings, attachments, and interests. Social identity shapes expectations. Again, states treated as persons are also particularly interested in their images, that is social identities, and try to establish a correspondence between their and social identities. States try to project their identity in the form of state identity.

State identity seems like " a function performance conditioned by the absence of authority and community in the international sphere".[28]States are social actors who interact with one another to form a social reality, hence state identities are social creations. State identities attempt to explain themselves in terms that are understandable to other actors. For instance, a state will continue to be an enemy to some, a rival to others, and a friend to others, it believes share its interests and norms. In short, a state's identity determines not only its interests but also its perceptions, which directly affects the kind of foreign policy it will pursue. It also affects perceptions of others and the evaluation of whether their activities are hostile or friendly.

Figure – 1: The process of state identity shaping foreign policy



This also means that states acquire a new identity or protect the previous one through foreign policy. Foreign policy practices are supposed to confirm state identity. In turn, foreign policy practices confirm and reproduce that identity. In the case of differentiation between the projected state identity and foreign policy practices, this is regarded as an anomaly, deviation, or pragmatism. However, repeated deviations eventually result in the construction of a new state identity. In particular, foreign policy is an important tool in the process of decision makers forming and reformulating their identities in order to attain their objectives.

[28]JensBartelson, *The Critique of the State*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

State identity is the process of contesting the meaning of identity within an institutional context.[29] Actually, it becomes defined at the end of a contestation process between a number of possible identities championed by competing political and social interest groups. Those who take the helm of the state apparatus – the decision makers and the ruling elite – designate its corporate identity.

State identity created the decision makers, and designated state institutions play an important role in shaping foreign policy decision making. Decision makers attempt to situate their articulation of identity within a broader historical narrative of their nation's past, present, and future, and to strategically frame the events and problems.[30] Decision makers situate events into frames by employing "specific metaphors, symbolic representations and cognitive cues" to mobilize action and legitimate their policies.[31] Adib-Mohaddam claims that cognitive cues refer to "the intellectual production and processing of categories of the *self* and *other"*; institutional sources denote the formulation of cultural artifacts as authoritative narratives of the state.[32] A social cognitive structure establishes the boundaries of discourse within society including how commonly think about themselves and others. In short, state identity consists of a composite of identities and beliefs on how the state perceives the *self* and other, and what it is supposed to stand for. It is basically about roles that the *self* assumes in relation to the *other*.

2.1.1. Conception of Self & Other and Foreign Policy

Then, how does state identity set boundaries between self and other: who are *we*, and who are they? The concept of identity is related to drawing the boundary between the two. The self is created by the elite through a number of selected narratives, which contain cultural and historical elements of identity.[33] According to Hopf, identities strongly imply a set of interests or preferences with respect to choice of action and actors. They also provide a cognitive

[29]Michael Barnett, "Culture, Strategy, and Foreign Policy Change: Israel's Road to Oslo", *European Journal of International Relations,*1999, Vol. 5, No. 1, pp. 5–36

[30] Barnett, 1999.

[31] Barnett, 1999.

[32]Arshin Adib-Moghaddam, *Iran in World Politics: The Question of the Islamic Republic*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2008, p. 43.

[33] U.S. Urrestarazu, '"Identity' in International Relations and Foreign Policy Theory", in G. Hellmann & K.E. Jorgensen (eds.) *Theorizing Foreign Policy in a Globalized World*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, pp. 126–149.

device, or framework, that allows for the self to interpret the other.[34] According to David Campell, the constitution of identity is 'achieved through the inscription of boundaries, which serve to demarcate 'inside' from 'outside,' 'Self from 'Other,' 'domestic' from 'foreign.'[35]

Firstly, identity is constructed through differences and conceptualized in relation to engagements with others. Differences play a central role in the construction of identity. In the identity construction process, the initial step in defining oneself is making distinctions from others. An identity is established relationally with a range of socially recognized differences. These differences are essential for the existence of identity. If they didn't exist as differences, identity couldn't exist with their authenticity and "otherness".[36] The process of underlining differences is at once intriguing and alluring, frightening and alarming. The response of the self is to assimilate this difference, making it familiar and thus averting the danger of destabilizing what an individual knows about his own *Self.*[37] Otherwise, theorists of identity have treated the relationship between self and other as inherently conflictual. The interesting quality of an *Other* is most associated with its difference, with its lack of similarity to the self. The self, which needs to constitute its identity in regard to an *Other*, feels the danger and vulnerability of that interdependence, and responds with exercises of discursive power in order to restore the illusory monadic Self.

What is the relevance of an other to any state? What is defined as the "*other*" does not necessarily have to be another state. Sometimes it is a different image, and sometimes the states' own past may be the *other*.[38] These identities then categorize people according to common features, providing scripts and schemas with which to inform behavior, and therefore to inform foreign policy decisions.[39] However, Hopf suggests that the producer of identity is not control of what it ultimately means to others, and instead that others' perception is decisive in the formation of social identity.

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[34] Ted Hopf, "The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory", *International Security*, Vol. 23 No. 1, Summer 1998, pp. 174–175

[35]David Campbell, *Writing security: United States foreign policy and the politics of identity*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998, p. 8

[36]William E. Connolly, "Identity and Difference in Global Politics", James Der Derian and Michael J. Shapiro (eds.) *International/Intertextual Relations: Postmodern Readings of World Politics*, New York: Lexington Books, 1989

[37] Hopf, p. 9

[38] Hopf, p. 278

[39] Ted Hopf, *Social construction of international politics: identities & foreign policies, Moscow, 1955 and 1999*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002, p. 1.

Hopf also indicates the existence of various understandings of *Self;* he claims that more than one type of identity may be found in a given period and each of these identities can be found in a different other. He highlights 'three kinds of *Others*: Historical, External and Internal' and identities related to them. These illustrate how the contestation between different identitiescomes to the fore in the making of foreign policy.

Identity – which is constructed through public discourse, rituals, shared myths and history, and ideas about the purpose of the state – is a key component in the articulation of national interests in foreign policy. State identity influences foreign policy in many ways. First, it affects foreign policy practice, such as pursuing the acquisition of a new identity or protecting the previous one. On this point, does what we want follow who we are? State identity is the basis of interest. First, state identity defines the *self* and corresponds its interest and expectation. Additionally, the perception of the other shapes identity and behaviors.

Wendt explains that identity generates the "motivational and behavioral dispositions" of an international actor, and the causality between identity and foreign policy action results from the concept of "interest", resting their argumentation implicitly or explicitly on the identity-interest nexus.[40] Identityhas needs or objective interests linked with it, and actors' interpretations of these form the subjective interests that drive their actions. Additionally, state identities "both generate and shape interests" becauseactors are frequently unable to determine their own interests unless they have a clear understanding of what they are representing – who they are – which is dependent on their social interactions.[41]

Figure – 2: Elements of motivational and behavioral dispositions

Motivational and	Behavioral Dispositions
Interest	Discourse
Perception	Foreign Policy Practice
Norm and Ideational	

[40]Alexander E. Wendt, Social *Theory of International Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 24

[41]Jepperson, Ronald L., Alexander E. Wendt, and Peter J. Katzenstein, "Norms, Identity, and Culture in National Security", *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*, P. J. Katzenstein (ed.). New York: Columbia University Press, 1996, p. 60

Moreover, Wendt mentions that interests are dependent on identity, which in turn influences the foreign policy actions of states.[42] States do not have a 'portfolio' of interests, so their interest is identified through a defining situation.[43] Identities are the basis for interests and therefore fundamental. [44] In other words, the interests and identities of actors emerge only in an interactive process of states taking on identities in relation to others. However, Maja Zehfuss has criticized Wendt's conceptualization. Firstly, she observes that "how either the actors or the ideas about *Self* and *Other* get constituted in the first place is not part of the account".[45] Because Wendt also focuses on the state system rather than state identity formations, he ignores the constitution of states as subject in the first place. Instead, "sense of nation and national identity play a vital role in forming a society's perception of its environment, and is an extremely important, if not driving, force behind the formation of its foreign policy because national identity helps to define the parameters of what a polity considers its national interests at home and abroad".[46]

Behavioral aspects of the state affect foreign policy, as well as motivational dispositions, because state identity shapes states' interests, which in turn guides their behavior. Interests are attached to identities that are themselves embedded in discourse. Discourse is one of the means by which state behavior influences foreign policy. Elites construct the identity of states and they build a corresponding discourse. Foreign policy discourses express and link material factors and ideas to the extent that they cannot be separated. The defined identity of state shapes and constrains the behaviors of practitioners. Theyalso function within a discursive space that imposes meanings on their world and thus create reality.

Self-other perception has a role to play in foreign policy-making – that is behavior. In other words, '*self* and *other*' perception by an international actor plays a vital role in determining their interaction with the surrounding conditions and structures.[47] They state that 'perceptions

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[42] Alexandre Wendt, "Collective Identity Formation and the International State", *American Political Science Review*, 1994, Vol. 88, No. 2: pp. 384–396.

[43] Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy is what states make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics", *International Organization*, Vol. 46, No. 2, 1992, p. 398.

[44] Wendt, p. 398

[45] Maja Zehfuss, *Constructivism in International Relations: The Politics of Reality, Cambridge:* Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 63.

[46] Prizel Ilya, *National Identity and Foreign Policy: Nationalism and Leadership in Poland, Russia and Ukraine*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 14

[47]Ole Wæver, "Identity, communities and foreign policy: Discourse analysis as foreign policy theory", *European Integration and National Identity: The challenge of the Nordic states*, Lene Hansen and Ole Wæver (eds.), pp. 20–49. London: Routledge, 2002. Jutta Weldes, *Constructing National Interests: The United States and the Cuban Missile Crisis*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999.

of the situation define which rules, duties, and obligations are relevant'.[48] The differences in identity and self-other perception of states lead to opening new manners of understanding foreign policy-making. According to scholars, self and other relations are defined by many factors and beliefs that have influenced states' foreign policy. Thus, identity and self-other perception cannot be overlooked in foreign policy-making.

Identity creates some norms in foreign policy-making depending on expectations or appropriate behavior. The "Self and Other" approach seeks to address foreign policy by focusing on norms that constitute international politics. The other process that regulates the relationship between state identity and foreign policy is norms.

2.1.2. Identity and Foreign Policy Norms

Norms provide collective expectations of appropriate behaviour for a given identity. They also involve standards of "appropriate" or "proper" behavior, by reference judgments of a community or a society.[49] In other words, agents having strong opinions about what is appropriate or good behavior in their society actively build norms.

For constructivists, ideational factors like norms become "central to the dynamics and processes of world politics" because they shape the actions of agents. Norms help to build and define material bases, and create actor identities and interests. It should be noted that the relationship is reciprocal: "Identity also can be used to show how states with particular historical and cultural backgrounds adopt particular norms".[50] The concept of norms describes both domestic and international expectations for the proper behavior of actors with a given identity.[51] There is a relationship between international norms and endogenous aspects of identity because institutionalized norms at the international level have shaped the behavior of actors.

For instance, in his study on Japanese security, Katzenstein describes "how Japan's domestic constitutive norms are related to its international security behavior".[52]

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[48] Richard K. Herrmann and Vaughn P. Shannon, "Defending International Norms: The Role of Obligation, Material Interest, and Perception in Decision Making", *International Organization*, Vol. 55, No. 3 (Summer, 2001), pp. 621–654

[49] Martha Finnemore, and Kathryn Sikkink, "International Norm Dynamics and Political Change",*International Organization*Vol. 52, No. 4 (1998), pp. 887–917.

[50]Glenn Chafetz, Michael Spirtas & Benjamin Frankel, "Introduction: Tracing the influence of identity on foreign policy", *Security Studies*, 1998, Vol. 8, No. 2-3, p. 17.

[51] Peter J Katzenstein, *Cultural Norms and National Security: Police and Military in Postwar Japan*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996

[52] Peter J. Katzenstein, "Japan's National Security: Structures, Norms and Policies." *International Security*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (1993), pp. 84–118. Pacifism and anti-militarist norms have been strong in Japanese foreign policy.

How the norms occur before states define them guide and constrain their relations. Like identity, norms are not static; they change and evolve over time. The evolution of norms involves three stages: emergence, cascade, and internalization.[53]Norm emergence is the persuasion of the addressed people by norm entrepreneurs. They try to persuade a large number of states (norm leaders) to accept new norms.As norm leaders strive to socialize other states to become norm followers, the norm cascade is more defined by an imitation dynamic.Norm internalization happens at the far end of the norm cascade; norms acquire a taken-for-granted nature and are no longer a topic of public debate.[54]

States engage in political contestation, and social and strategic interaction to define norms, that is to guide their relations. These negotiation moments are not only for the definition of interstate norms, but also "how those norms are related to their [states'] identity. Thus, distinct types of norms function differently in foreign policy. First, constitutive norms "express actor identities",which in turn define interests and shape behavior.[55]Second, regulative norms and social structures at most constrain the choices and behavior of self-interest states, which operate according to logical consequences. Third, regime norms restrain the behavior of states; they become an explanatory variable that intervenes between main power distributions and outcomes.[56] For instance; Pan-Arabism and Pan-Islamism are perhaps the dominant forces influecing regional norms; however, ancient historical feuds—sectarianism, anti-Westernization, and differences over territory and resources—also contribute significiantly.

State identity has an impact on interstate normative frameworks such as regimes and security communities. It instructs states to pursue specific foreign policies toward one another, as well as to maintain specific relationships such as friendliness, rivalry, or hatred. It also became a means for ruling regimes to express their normative ideals and foreign policy preferences. Moreover, in foreign policy, as multiple norms can influence actors, it is difficult to predict which norms may be most effective. States engage in political contestation, social and

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This resulted from civilian control over the military and the structure of state-society relations in Japan, which isolates the military from the public.

[53]Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, "International Norm Dynamics and Political Change." *International Organization*, Vol. 52, No. 4 (1998), pp. 887–917.

[54] Finnemore & Sikkink, p. 895.

[55] Katzenstein, p. 18

[56] Mark Zacher, *Governing Global Networks: International Regimes for Transportation and Communications*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

strategic interaction to define the norms that guide their relations. In the Middle East, for example, inter-Arab competition was over norms.

In brief, state identity reflects a state's stance in normative debate becausesome norms can be accepted by a state while others are rejected. These sets of state behavior are derived from different identities; some –such as religious or ethnic groups, or transnational identities – have competed with each other.

2.2. Multiple Identities and Foreign Policy

States may have multiple identities, and which identity will be more salient depends on the specific social context. Hinnebush, in his book, describes the tensions that exist between states and their identities as "identity incongruence"[57] For him, incongruence reflecting identity and territory may be at variance or conflict with one another. This is reflected in the tensions that exist between states and their national identities, and calls attention to the idea that a state can have an identity not related to national identity and nationalism.

National and state identities are formed in relationships with other nations and states, but they are analytically distinct. While a nation can be defined as a group of people who aspire to or have a historical homeland; their identity includes a common originating myth and historical memories, legal rights and duties for all members, and markers to distinguish themselves from others. State identity can be understood as the corporate and officially demarcated identity linked to the state apparatus.[58]

The distinction between state and national identity is intended to provide more historical and conceptual clarity, as well as to provide analytical nuance.[59] National identity is defined as "collective character and the common will of the polity", and it includes a formative history, ethnic component such as language, and collective political values.[60] State identity, in contrast, is a quality or "set of qualities symbolically ascribed to the state by elites meaningful to the international community, and understood to determine the state's foreign policy

[57]Raymond Hinnebusch, *The International Politics of the Middle East*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003, pp. 54–72

[58] Telhami & Barnett, p. 8

[59] Telhami & Barnett, p. 9

[60]Cris E. Toffolo, *Emancipating Cultural Pluralism, State University of New York Series in National Identities*, New York: State University of New York Press, 2003, p. 46

orientation".[61] According to Karawan, different identities have been constructed and they shape each country's orientation and the identification of its allies and enemies. Even if it is acknowledged that the state's identity is in fact contentious, it is unclear how the state's identity should inform the state's interests. While it is understandable that a dominant identity's ideas can dominate those of other identities within the state, it is impossible to pinpoint exactly how and to what extent such identities impact state identity.

On this point, state identities have a set of principles on which they are built. Firstly, in their dealings with other governments, states prefer to embrace a distinct political identity, which is reflected in their foreign policy. For instance, a state characterizes itself as a "democratic", "guardian of Islam", "anti-imperialist." Secondly, differing domestic groups could have different views for foreign relations and regional order. Thirdly,foreign policy can be used by states with a high level of societal fragmentation to legitimize governmental power and/or increase societal cohesion.[62] Briefly, the formation of state identities is not only a social phenomenon, but also a political process. Finally, political elites of highly fragmented societies may be forced to use strong unifying symbols to ensure their political legitimacy. Additionally, state identities may be manipulated and exploited by political elites for instrumental reasons, such as justifying state authority or specific policies. All levels of society hold multiple identities, and the political elite decides on the predominant identity. Efficient, popular, and strong political leaders enjoy considerable freedom to emphasize one identity or the other to suit their perceptions of the state.[63]

In the view of Dawisha, political leaders choose from a variety of identities that are acceptable to their societies. He believes that political elites play a central role in defining and redefining state identity. The existence of competing identities (sub-national, national and supranational) has afforded the ruling elites countless opportunities to define and redefine the country's identity in accordance with their own interests and the dictates of policy at any given time.[64] For instance, in Egypt's long history as a homogeneous state, it has fluctuated between more Arab and Egypt-centric identities. These have been associated with quite different conceptions of Egypt's interests, and hence different foreign policies via discourse.

[61] Toffolo, p. 47.

[62] Barry Buzan, People, *States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era*, 2nd edition. Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1991.

[63] Ibrahim A. Karawan, "Identity and Foreign Policy: The Case of Egypt", *Identity and Foreign Policy in the Middle East*, S. Telhami and M. Barnett (eds.), 2002, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, pp.167–168.

[64] Adeed Dawisha, "Footprints in the Sand",*Identity and Foreign Policy in the MiddleEast*, Shibley Telhami and Michael Barnett (eds.), Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002, p. 118

Acting Egyptian leaders emphasize one identity or the other to suit their perceptions of Egypt's interest. Gamal Abdel Nasser promoted the idea of Egypt as Arab in opposition to the Egypt-centric identity promoted by the Wafd; later, however, Egypt-centrism helped Sadat to reverse Nasser's Arabist foreign policy.

In other words, the elites in the states with fairly secure alternative identities can choose among, then manipulate identities to suit their foreign policy objectives, as they are constructed make certain foreign policies appropriate and others not.

Competing & Complementary Identities

Individuals, groups, communities, and states can bear diverse and complex identities at the same time.[65] Therefore, identities have a composition; for instance, individuals may be defined by race, language, culture, ethnic origin, or religion. Likewise, the purpose or functions of state identity is formed by the self & other construction, the perception, and the discourse; for example, the state identity may be framed as "national" or "religious".

When states seek to consolidate their power and legitimacy, it is essential for the state to construct an identity, especially when it comes to foreign policy.[66] For this reason, state identity formation can be seen as an organic process; a state may exhibit multiple strands of overlapping, competing, and contested identity.[67] However, these multiple identities can be constructed in a complementary way or competitively frame each other. This depends on how actors choose from among competing identities, and how complementary identities come together. According to Wendt, "many situations call up several identities that may point in different directions." He adds that "there is no way to predict a priori how internal identity conflicts be resolved".[68] In other words, whether identities are competitive or complementary would seem to depend on the particular identities in question.

In such cases multiple identities likely coexist with little friction, and the state can at any given time adopt several of them comfortably.[69] For instance, historically, while the territorial state has been weak, multiple, often competing identity frameworks such as sub-state (tribe,

[65] Bernard Lewis, *The Multiple Identities of the Middle East*, London: Phoenix, 1999, p. 3

[66] Telhami & Barnett, ibid., p. 19

[67]Carl F. Graumann, "On Multiple Identities," *International Social Science Journal,* Vol. 35, No. 2, 1983, pp. 309–321.

[68]A. Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,1999, p. 230.

[69]Stephen Shulman, "Competing Versus complementary identities: Ukrainian-Russian relations and the loyalties of Russians in Ukraine", *Nationalities Papers: The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity*, 1998, Vol. 26, No. 4, pp. 615–632,

sect, and class), territorial (or state nationalism), and supra-state (Pan-Arabism and Pan Islam), coexist in the Middle East. In the contemporary Arab states, leaders determine their own state identity, and they waver between Arab and Islamic. These leaders cannot rely entirely on Arabism or Islam because adherence to Arabism will compromise state interests. Their borders are not aligned with the Arab or Islamic communities, and yet they cannot depend entirely on state identities, which lack adequate credibility.[70]

Hinnebusch explains that nationalism and sectarianism remain viable competing identities bound to impact on state-building in the Middle East.[71] Sectarianism can be defined as a sub- or trans-state religious identity that emphasizes boundaries with the "other". On the other hand, these two identities can overlap, as when versions of nationalism are constructed that reflect the outlook of dominant sectarian groups, such as the Maronite versions of Lebanese nationalism or the Iraqi Shias' current appropriation of ownership of Iraqi identity.[72] Another example, as Hinnebush explains, is the Sunni-inflexed Bahraini nationalism in which Bahraini Shia are depicted as fifth columnists of the "national" enemy, Iran.[73]

2.3. Conclusion

This chapter explored a range of theoretical approaches to the identity foreign policy relationship. It has been tried to form a framework with examples from the multiple identities of the states in the Middle East. Briefly, state identity is critical to understanding the foreign policy of a state, and states are actively engaged in forming and redefining their state identity. The socialization process that produces international or regional norms, friends, and enemy perception, "self and other" constructions and the discourse of leaders are factors involved in the construction of multiple state identities. Hence, the state identity becomes an important symbol of what the state is about and what it means to the outside world and this is manifested in a state's foreign policy. In the next section, IRI's multiple identities—national, religious, and revolutionary—will be discussed.

[70] Hinnebusch, ibid., p. 57.

[71] Raymond Hinnebusch, "Identity and State formation in multi-sectarian societies: Between Nationalism and Sectarianism in Syria", *Nations and Nationalism*, 2020, Vol. 26, p. 140.

[72] Fanar Haddad, *Sectarianism in Iraq*, London: Hurst, 2011.

[73] Hinnebush, ibid, pp.140-141.

CHAPTER 3
MULTIPLE IDENTITIES OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

In Sophocles' tragedy about Oedipus Tyrannos, Oedipus was on a quest for his identity and was discovering his sense of self through a quest to "know who I am".[74] As social entities, political or social institutions seek to answer a similar question, and they also have multiple identities that complement each other or struggle with each other. These multiple institutional identities generate complex behaviors. Moreover, those identities have a complicated relationship among themselves. They shape foreign policy in many causal ways by affecting a state's perception, relations with regional others, interpreting historical events, motivating the state for specific purposes, or creating subjective comments on power. While multiple identities may complement and reinforce each other on certain occasions, at other times they may conflict and compete with each other. At the same time, these behaviors among multiple identities are products of various intervening variables, such as the discourse of intellectuals.

In this chapter, multiple identities of the Islamic Republic, national, religious, and revolutionary identities will be explored, and their relationship with each other and their implications for Iranian foreign policy will be discussed. The first part of the study is designed to address the Islamic Republican elite's puzzling approach to 'nationalism', and to discuss their attempts to define national identity. It will seek answers to the question of how the Islamic Republic has countered "Iranian nationalism" and constructed its national identity.

3.1. National Identity

Since its establishment in 1979, the IRI has reflected multiple identities that shaped and motivated Iranian foreign policy after the Islamic Revolution. As a result of the revolution, the national identity of Iran was reconstructed and its perception of *"self"* and "*other*" fundamentally changed. While under the Pahlavis, national identity was presented through the Persian ethno-linguistic characteristics of Iranian society, and amounted to a kind of

[74]See Anthony D. Smith, "*National Identity*", London: England, 1991.

nationalist chauvinism; the early elite[75] of the IRI, in contrast, replaced the ethno-linguistic framework with a religious and universalist identity.[76] However, for different reasons that are not part of this study,[77] 'national identity' continued to be active and effective in Iranian politics, which posed new challenges both for decision-makers in Iran, and for analysts attempting to understand its foreign policy. Against the common sense that Iranian national identity has been replaced by a religious one, national identity has remained, but its content has considerably changed by putting emphasis on its religious-Islamic-Shiite aspects rather than its pre-Islamic and secular characteristics.

3.1.1. An Overview of Iranian Nationalism

In Persian, the term "nation" is rendered by the Arabic word *mellat*, and this term includes the nationality and religion of the people. At this point, the main question is how Iranians using the historical-Islamic term *mellat* in order todefine the modern concept of nation.[78] Although the ethno-cultural identities of nations are defined in predominantly secular terms, it may include a religious element. Concerning Iran, the conception of "nation" in Persian cannot be detached from the religious content because Iranians cannot "imagine" themselves as a political community in purely secular terms. However, the imagination of Iranian national identity emerged in the nineteenth century with the efforts of the ruling elites, the intelligentsia, the state, and the clerics to homogenize people into nationhood.[79] These Iranian intellectuals "played vital roles in mediating the encounter between Western culture and Iran's (pre)Islamic heritage".[80] Additionally, nationality and religiosity have an intricate relationship, being mutually reinforcing at some times in conflict with the Western experience

[75]See, E. Patricia Rakel, "The Political Elite in the Islamic Republic of Iran: From Khomeini to Ahmadinejad," *Comparative Studies of SouthAsia, Africa and the Middle East*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (2009).

[76] Meir Litvak, "The Construction of Iranian National Identity: overview", in *Constructing Nationalism in Iran,* ed. Meir Litvak, Routledge, 2017.

[77] The international system is based on nation states, and has a strong ethnolinguistic identity. Ethnic differences are seen as being part of the nation. National identity is primarily a form of political-territorial identity. The modern political concept of Iranian identity is at odds with both traditional religious identity and Iran's old idea embodying cultural, religious, and even a specific sense of political identity. See, Ahmad Ashraf, "The Crisis of National and Ethnic Identities in Contemporary Iran", *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 1/2 Winter-Spring, 1993, pp. 159-164.

[78] Ludwing Paul, "'Iranian Nation' and Iranian-Islamic Revolutionary Ideology", *Die Welt des Islams*, New Ser., Vol. 39, No. 2. (July 1999), pp. 183–217.

[79]Mostafa Vaziri, *Iran as Imagined Nation: The Construction of National Identity*, USA: Paragon House, 1993, pp. 1 – 11.

[80] Mehrzad Boroujerdi, *Iranian Intellectuals and the West*, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1996, p. 14.

of nationalism developed through competing and fighting against religion at others. In Iran, religion came to the aid of nationalists.

Earlier instances of Iranian nationalism could be seen through the Tobacco protest (1891) and the Constitutional Revolution (1905), which emerged as a reaction to the imperialist penetration into the "imagined community".[81] The Tobacco protest as a "nationalist movement" was triggered by a concession to a British citizen, who was granted a monopoly on the purchase, sale, and manufacture of the tobacco yield of Iran for 50 years.[82] These developments led to mass protests of "many ulema, modernist, merchants and ordinary townspeople" against concession in 1891.[83]

While most of the ulama supported the campaign against the concession, two figures who played important roles in the opposition movement were Jamal al Din Afghani and Hajj Mirza Hasan Shirazi.[84]Al-Afghani wrote a letter to Shirazi calling on him to denounce the Shah's attitude of surrender to imperialism. A fatwa, attributed to Shirazi, and which urged all Iranians to desist from selling or using tobacco, galvanized opposition across Iran and led to a successful nationwide boycott.

The Constitutional Revolution (1905–11) launched a political movement that served as a turning point in the evolution of Iranian nationalism. One of the main goals of the movement was to build a strong state to protect the local economy from the European invasion. The other goal is an elected assembly and a Western-style constitution, which is forced by political intellectuals. They were impressed by the idea nationalism and attempted to reconstruct and rebuild a coherent Iranian national identity.

The intellectuals had offered a notion of an Iranian nation immemorial, and redefined the nation as a potent entity. These thinkers benefited from the reformist clerics through the double articulation of *mellat*. The designation of these movements as national over Islamic represented the tension between the different poles of collective identity, or between two

[81] Richard W. Cottam, *Nationalism in Iran*, Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1964, p. 5

[82] Charles Issawi, "European Economic Penetration," in *Cambridge History of Iran* ed. Peter Avery, Gavin Hambly and Charles Melville, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

[83]John Foran, *Fragile Resistance: Social Transformation in Iran from 1500 to the Revolution*, USA: Westview Press, 1993.

[84] Homa Katouzian, *The Persians: Ancient, Medieval and Modern Iran*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010, p. 178

"imagined" communities, national or religious.[85] While the Tobacco movement was led by a "clerical vanguard"[86] who used a religious language, the 1905–1911 constitutional movement was grounded in "Islamist" language and was led by political intellectuals.[87]

Under the Pahlavi dynasty (1925-1979), two different nationalisms emerged, firstly a nationalism which is chauvinist, secular, and ethno-linguistically and Persian centered, and secondly an oppositional nationalist movement that challenged the authority ofthe state withthe emergence of National Front in the 1940s.

The "national identity" was reinterpreted and brought to the agenda and nationalism; it also served as a state ideology that accompanied the transition from empire to modern nation-state under Reza Shah (1925–1941).[88] Shah implemented the reconstruction of historical narrative and memory with emphasis on Iran's pre-Islamic Persian past, through the expanded and reformed educational system, imposing of the Persian language, and the organizations of ceremonies and commemorations. Such reforms emphasize the secular and pre- or non-Islamic elements of Iranian history at the expense of Islam. Particularly, it highlighted secular national symbols.[89]

Reza Shah established a modern bureaucratic state, as well as nationalist and secularist reforms. He invested enormous resources into reconstructing the meaning of Iran, along with radicalized notions of cultivating ethnolinguistic characteristics rather than a religion-centered anti-imperialist future.

Reza Shah was forced to abdicate by the allied forces in 1941, which occupied Iran during the Second World War; his son, Mohammad Reza, took the throne as his successor in 1941. During Mohammad Reza Shah's period, the national identity of the state was used as an

[85] Meir Litvak, *The construction of Iranian national identity: an overview, in Constructing Nationalism in Iran*, London: Routledge, 2017, p. 13

[86] The clerics and the religious class played an important role in the constitutional revolution that people such as Sayyid Mohammad Tabatabai, Shaykh Fazlollah Nuri, Sayyid Abdollah Behbehani, and Ayatollah Na'ini. See M. Bayat, *Iran's first revolution: Shi'ism and the Constitutional revolution of 1905*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1991, pp. 257–258.

[87] Arfshin Marashi, "Paradigms of Iranian Nationalism: History, Theory, and Historiography", in *Rethinking Iranian Nationalism and Modernity,* ed. Kamran Scot Aghaie and Afshin Marashi, Austin: University of Texas Press, 2014, p. 8

[88] Ahmad Ashraf, "The Crisis of National and Ethnic Identities in Contemporary Iran", *Iranian Studies*, 26/1–2, 1993.

[89] Afshin Marashi, *Nationalizing Iran: Culture, Power, and the State, 1870–1940,* Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008, pp. 49–85.

instrument of modernization and legitimization. Modernization is a part of maintaining the unity of Iran under his rule, and legitimates the notion of Iranian nationalism's attempt to create separation between Iranian-national tradition and Islamic-religious tradition to minimize the importance of religion.[90] Additionally, he continued the discourse of Aryanism and the pre-Islamic Persian empires. In his speeches, he emphasized "the symbols and imagery of ancient Persia, the memory of Darius, Cyrus, and Xerxes".[91] During the opening speech of the festivities at Persepolis in 1971, he declared "O Cyrus, great King, Kings of Kings, Achaemenian King, King of the land of Iran, I the Shahanshah of Iran, offer thee salutations from myself and my nation."[92]

Considering the nationalist discourse and implementation, the Pahlavi dynasty identified themselves with Iran and nationalism, making it difficult to separate nation and dynasty.[93] In the context of identity,the content of nationalism is defined by the basic demands of modern politics, not by language, great history, or ethnicity.[94]

With the emergence of the National Front (1949–1953) and the attempt to nationalize Iran's oil under the leadership of Mohammad Mosaddeq, Iran experienced an oppositional nationalist movement.

The nationalist opposition movement had two purposes: to eliminate colonial domination and to struggle with the despotic state.[95] In short, while Mosaddeq's national identity in Iran was being built into another model, openly known as "sovereignty and imperialism", it also had a built-in relation to an "other", something related to the Shah and its "arbitrary rule".[96]

Firstly, the Iranian nationalists took an anti-colonial stance: oil bought new meaning as a symbol of Iranian national resources. Mosaddeq, as a prime minister, embarked on the implementation of oil nationalization. While the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (APOC) embarked on an economic boycott with other major international oil companies, the British

[90] Marashi, ibid.

[91] Arshin Adib-Moghaddam, "Global Grandeur and the Meaning of Iran: From the Shah to the Islamic Republic", in Regional Powers in the Middle East, ed. Henner Fürtig, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, p. 48.

[92] Mohammad Reza Shah, 12 October 1971, http://www.persepolis.nu/persepolis-cyrus.htm (last seen 25.01.2020)

[93] Richard Cottam, *Nationalism in Twentieth-Century Iran*

[94] Zelal Özdemir, *A Historical Sociology Approach to Iranian Nationalism (1921-1979): An IR Perspective*, PhD Dissertation at Middle East Technical University, p.126.

[95] Pınar Arıkan Sinkaya, *Discursive Continuity of Political Nationalism as a Form of Opposition Politics in Modern Iran*, PhD Dissertation at Middle East Technical University, 2015, p. 141

[96] Shabnam J. Holliday, *Defining Iran: Politics of Resistance*, Ashgate Publishing Company, 1988, p. 49

government launched an aggressive campaign against the Mosaddeq regime. The United States also stepped into the dispute, joining the operation to topple Mosaddeq from the office. The coup in August 1953 was staged with the joint action of the US and British intelligence agencies.

Secondly, the movement was also galvanized against the Pahlavi state's autocratic politics.[97] Mosaddeq redefined the core true nationalism in terms of "national development and progress" instead of the state-building nationalism and modernization of the state.The material and cultural reforms of Mohammad Reza Shah aimed at transforming a traditional state and society into a modern state with Iranian state nationalism. As opposed to this nationalism, the National Front aimed social justice and protection of the constitution and the formation of a national government by ensuring free elections and freedom of thought.
Two results emerged after this nationalist movement in Iran: firstly, Iranian nationalism redefined *other* and the anti-colonialism discourse became the main discursive framework of the time. Secondly, Iranian popular nationalism problematized monarchical rule as the facilitator of imperialism. Particularly, the increasing influence of the US over the military and politics of the Iranian state was an indicator of this.

In addition, the 1962 'White Revolution,' which featured a historic land reform introduced by Shah Reza Pahlavi requiring the distribution of land to landless tenants and peasants, did little to improve the status of the poor. The fundamental issue in Iran by 1979 was the buildup of discontent among the lower strata of society, who had been disadvantaged by the state's modernization. As a result, they chanted for equality, justice, and independence from foreign rule. During the 1979 Revolution, "strong anti-colonial, anti-authoritarian, and Islamic sentiments" fueled and legitimized Iranian revolutionary discourse as it faced the West.

The nationalist discourse espoused by the Shah promoted the "glorification of pre-Islamic heritage, ties the notion of Iran to specific territory, a specific sense of '*self*' and a knowledge of former greatness". This paradigm gave way to the identity politics of the Islamic Republic,

[97] Pınar Arıkan Sinkaya, *Discursive Continuity of Political Nationalism as a Form of Opposition Politics in Modern Iran*, PhD Dissertation at Middle East Technical University, 2015, p. 141.

which included the pivot of the "vanguard" of Islam and the legitimate pivot of "Muslim nation."[98]

3.1.2. *Self &Other* in the Iranian National Identity projection of the Islamic Republic of Iran

The message of the IRI involves the construction of a homogeneous enemy other against the self. While the self was created collectively, it became the most potent shaping force of Iranian history, domestic, and foreign policies. With the Islamic revolution, the construction of the other consequently led to the transition of power and the transformation of national identity projection in the IRI. Thus, the self-identity of the state constructed the historical other.

The formation of *the self* in the national identity of Iran was facilitated by three major episodes. Firstly, it is widely acknowledged that historically Iranian identity is closely associated with Islam. Many people especially underlined the role of anespecial form of Islam, Shi'ism in the formation of Iranian identity.[99]However, this dimension of identity was mostly marginalized under the Pahlavis, who promoted pre-Islamic civilization and the culture. After the Islamic revolution, the Islamic past and part of the Iranian identity was revived, either because of the self-understanding of the revolutionary elite, or as part of their attempt to compromise their religious approach with 'the reality of nation', both a socio-historical reality and a political fact imposed by the contemporary international system.

Shia Islam has been a pier of modern territorial nationalism in Iran. Iran's national identity has been affected profoundly by Shiism ever since the Safavid dynasty made Shiism the state religion. It became the identity-creating element which defined *self.* Based on the Shii claim to authority over political power, its myth of martyrdom, and its messianic expectations, Shiism became a significant symbol of Iranian national identity after the revolution.[100] Shiism as a state religion emphasizes the uniqueness of "*self*" as it formally separates them from Sunni "*others.*"

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[98]Arshin Adib-Moghaddam, *Psycho Nationalism: Global Thought, Iranian Imagination*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018, p. 65

[99] Shahram Akbarzadeh and James Barry, "State Identity in Iranian Foreign Policy", *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 43, No. 4, 2006, pp. 613–629.

[100] Abbas Amanat, "Iranian Identity Boundaries: A Historical Overview", in *Iran Facing Others*, ed. Abbas Abamant and Farzin Vejdani, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, p. 13.

Shiism served as a mobilizing ideology during the revolution, in its aftermath the Islamic state constitution subordinated the state to Shiism. Articles based on Shii beliefs were put into the Iranian constitution to produce ideological harmony between the state and Shiism.Thus, in all governmental institutions and positions, along with the administration of the country, the principles of Shiism become dominant andthe Iran constitution establishes the *self* of the state based on Shiism. According to Article 12 of the Constitution, the official religion is "Islam and the Twelver Ja'fari School of [shi'i] religion and this principle shall remain eternally unchangeable"[101]

Secondly, interaction increased between the Iranian and the "*external other*" – colonial powers. According to the established literature,[102] Iranian identity is historically related with imperialism. Imperial penetration into Iran and the reaction it unleashed nationalism and a new form of Iranian identity. This imperial domination was a historical process mostly negated by the Pahlavis, who preferred to focus on selective glories in history. But this subject was reinvented by the Islamic Republic of Iran rulers, who tended to define Iranian people as suffering under imperialism under different guises. Accordingly, the imperial attempts to dominate Iran/the Iranian people continued after the revolution, which posed Iranian identity as it is contimously against the 'global arrogance'.

This was relying on the interpretation of the national history of Iran. "The fear of foreign meddling"[103] emerged as a strong component of Iran's national identity. From the 16th century until the early 20th century, several "*external others*" were encountered by Iranian dynasties, particularly the Russians and British. Forming the modern Iranian national self against the "external other" – Great Britain – was even more consequential. British imperialism has driven "the mobilization of local actors, including tribes, the *ulama*, and nationalists" against an "*External Other*", starting with the 1905 Iranian Constitutional Revolution.[104]

Iran's confrontation with Britain and the United States in the early 1950s on oil expropriation and economic sovereignty made Iran sense the intangibles of shared national destiny. It was

[101] Iran-constitution Article 12 https://www.wipo.int/edocs/lexdocs/laws/en/ir/ir001en.pdf

[102] Look at Richard W. Cottam, *Nationalism in Iran*, Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1964. Mostafa Vaziri, *Iran as Imagined Nation: The Construction of National Identity*, USA: Paragon House, 1993. Afshin Marashi, *Nationalizing Iran: Culture, Power, and the State, 1870–1940*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008. Ali M. Ansari, *The Politics of Nationalism in Modern Iran*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

[103] Ehteshami, Anoushiravan. "The Foreign Policy of Iran", in *The Foreign Policies of Middle East States*, eds. A. Raymond Hinnebush and Anoushiravan Ehteshami, Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002, pp. 283–309.

[104] Abbas Amanat," Iranian Identity Boundaries: A Historical Overview", in *Iran Facing Others*, ed. Abbas Abamant and Farzin Vejdani, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, p. 13

as if the "West", a concept with enormous power and allure, came to embody the ultimate *Other*, supplanting all of the Iranian past's earlier ghosts.[105]The British-US-orchestrated coup against Iran's most adored national leader, Mossadeq, is the clearest example of a historical experience that is regarded as a national cause against foreign meddling. This resulted in strong opposition to the US in Iran as a whole.[106]

With the coming of the Islamic Revolution, the official historical narrative presented the "oppressed Iranian nation" as fighting to maintain its political independence against Western colonialism. Article 154 of the constitution says that the "IRI completely abstains from intervention in the internal affairs of other nations".[107] These also were symbolized by "a sense of victimization" and "a culture of resistance."[108] The constitution says that it supports the struggles of the dispossessed for their rights against the oppressors anywhere in the world. The notion of "the righteous *Self* versus the wicked *Other*" emerged in the Islamic revolution. This notion is fed by a "martyrdom paradigm" and "sacred defense", especially in the Iraq war, which was referred to as defending the "Islamic motherland."

Thirdly, there was the transformation of the Iranian national identity with the Islamic revolution and the construction of the "*historical other*"[109]the Pahlavi dynasty.Similarly, The Islamic Republic of Iranidentified itself through the past, a Pahlavi past, the *Historical Other*. In this respect, self-other approaches depend on the two frames of Hopf's models of "Others". The Islamic Republic saw the only threat to its *self-own* identity as coming through the resurrection of this past.

The Western *other* brought the conspiracy andexploitation to the Iranian "*bio-ontology*"[110] and emerged as "the Great Satan" with words of the leader of Islamic Revolution. After the revolution in 1979, a new rhetoric constituted the *bio-ontological* re-engineering of Iran. Jalal al-e Ahmad and Ali Shariati, who are Iran's prototypical revolutionary intellectuals, have affected the re-engineering process through influential writings.

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[105] Amanat, ibid., p. 23.

[106] Mahmood Sariolghalam, "Understanding Iran: Getting Past Stereotypes and Mythology", *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 26, No. 4, 2003, p. 74.

[107] Iran-constitution Article 154 https://www.wipo.int/edocs/lexdocs/laws/en/ir/ir001en.pdf

[108] Mahdi Mohammad Nia," Discourse and Identity in Iran's Foreign Policy", *Iranian Review of Foreign Affairs*, Fall 2012, Vol. 3, No. 11, pp. 29–64

[109] Ted Hopf, *Social Construction of International Politics*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002. Hopf sees the Soviet Union as the *Historical Other* of the Russian Federation in his work.

[110] Arshin Adib-Moghaddam, "Global Grandeur and the Meaning of Iran: From the Shah to the Islamic Republic", in *Regional Powers in the Middle East*, ed. Henner Fürtig, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, pp. 43–58.

In this regard two narratives were especially hegemonic. First is "westoxification" (*gharbzadegi*), a term that has been a popular metaphor for the debilitating effects of Western lifestyles, institutions, and values. It was maintained through the discourse of 'cultural onslaught' under the Islamic Republic.[111] Second is the "return to the *self*" (*bazgasht be khish*), the strong positioning of the wider anti-colonial struggle, not least to find a way back to the country's "true" self. These two narratives indicate the importance of interpretation of the national history of Iran by its political intellectuals.

In the rhetoric of the Islamic Republic, to find "*self*" could be a result of cleansing the country of the Western plague, and the vices and impurities of secularism with "true Islam". It was seen as an ideal to be installed in the hearts and minds of a new generation of Iranians by Islamic Republic intellectuals. The Islamic Republic began a prolonged and systematic struggle against the "*Historical Other*" and "re-Islamizing Iran through education and propaganda".[112]

However, four decades after the revolution, *self* in national identity found a new tone. The new nationalist discourse depends on opposition to the state's definition of national interest. This discourse criticized "political priority over the interests of the Islamic *umma* and its unity".[113] This policy is based on the image of an Islamic Republic that fights against imperialism, not only in Iran but other oppressed Muslim societies. For instance, the Islamic Republic stepped up its support for Palestinians and Lebanese resistance to Israel.

3.1.3. National Identity Construction under the Islamic Republic

Along with the changing political and social values with the Islamic revolution, the national identity also changed. Although there was a revolutionary ideology dominated by the Khomeinists,[114] this was not crystal clear in terms of national identity. Moreover, there were different social political forces that joined the revolution with different ideas, motivations and expectations, which started to compete with each other not only in terms of seizing political power, but also for giving new meaning to national identity. Hence, depending on unfolding

[111] Nikkie Keddie, ed., "Introduction", *Religion and Politics in Iran,* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983, p. 11.

[112] Adamant, ibid., p.25

[113] Pınar Arıkan Sinkaya, *Discursive Continuity of Political Nationalism as a Form of Opposition Politics in Modern Iran*, PhD Dissertation at Middle East Technical University, 2015

[114] Edvard Abrahamian, *Khomeinism: Essays on the Islamic Republic*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

events and balances between different social forces, the process of construction of national identity evolved through two phases.

As it is analyzed in detail below, in the first phase, the Islamic regime took a stance against ethno-linguistically centered nationalist tendencies and symbols – including the concepts of national identity and culture, among other things – framing them as non-Islamic traditions. This phase featured a radical reaction against Pahlavi-style nationalism, which became a "historical other".

The second phase witnessed a process of compromise between Khomeini-led Islamism and nationalism in the definition of Iranian identity. For instance, the Iraq attack in 1980 galvanized the Iranian "sacred" defense and shattered the new government's touted idea of Islamic unity.

First phase

The ideology of the Islamic revolution presented a collection of new identities and "*self*" cognition. Here, the basic idea was to transfer power to Islamists, and to exclude liberals and leftists from power.[115] There was Islamism for the emergence and growth of alternative identities and *self*-cognition. Thus, from the perspective of the Khomeinists, "religious self-cognition" became a suitable public and social doctrine.

Khomeini opposed both the Pahlavi nationalism, originating from European-style nationalism and the National Front and Liberation Movement's suspiciously 'liberal' nationalism, but indigenous religion-based nationalism was quite legitimate in the eyes of Iran's leader.

Fundamentally, national identity projected by the Khomeinists was based on religious principles in the perception of social issues and a return to an Islamic solution. In the discourse of political elites, achieving this goal could only be possible by emphasizing the importance of cultural and ethical issues, education, cleansing the community of Western values, and strengthening economic and spiritual values.[116] This is seen in the rhetoric of the Islamic Revolution Leader; Khomeini assesses the national identity as an "effective

[115] Hussein Bashiriyeh, "The Changes of Political Identities and Self-Awareness in Iran", Discourse, Vol. 5, No. 1, Summer 2003, pp. 31–42.

[116] Afsaneh Najmabadi, "Return to Islam, from modernism to the moral order", trans. Abbas Keshavarz, *Shokri Journal Matin*, 1998.

otherness" in the political approach. In collection of his speeches, *Sahife-ye Noor*, he stated that,

> "Those who claim that they intend to revive the nation are confronting Islam. Islam is coming to eradicate these false notions. For us, nationalists are of no use … the meaning of nationality is that what we want the nation, not Islam."[117]

For Khomeini, "Iranian nationalism was no exception to other nationalisms, and pre-Islamic civilization and history were part of the pre-Islamic *jaheli* world". Iranian nationalism refers to "Pahlavi apostasy";[118] this was another reason for his hostility towards 'Iranianism' and nationalism.[119] Addressing a group of students and educators, he stated,

> "Before Islam, the lands now blessed by our True Faith suffered miserably because of ignorance and cruelty. There is nothing in that past that is worth glorification. We will break all the poison pens of those who speak of nationalism, democracy, and such things."[120]

Khomeini's Islamic ideology constituted the Iranian past as an era of "monarchical despotism" and "oppression" instead of a "glorious past." Thus, the discourse of identity distanced the country from pre-Islamic Iranian nationalism and emphasized Islamic solidarity.[121]

In other words, nation-building like that of the shah was meaningless. This type of nation-building was against the arena of the Islamic revolution and purpose of Islamic unity. Hence, it is necessary to read the national identity with religious principles that coincided with the understanding of the *Umma* by religious and political intellectuals. The main discourse that emerged after the revolution was to see the national identity as the identity of Iran's Islamic *Ummah*.

The revolution was not only national but also transnational based on the Islamic unity. For this reason, the reference to the Islamic "Ummah" was intended to emphasize that the official state identity of Iran was transnational. The preamble of the constitution stated that,

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[117] Ruhollah Musavi Khomeini, Sahifeh-ye Noor (in Persian), Tehran: Islamic Revolution Cultural Documents, 1990, Vol. 12, op.cit., p. 110, quoted in Seyed Hussein Valipoor Zeroomi, "National Identity, and the Sacred Defence", Discourse*: An Iranian Quarterly*, Vol. 8, No. 2 Winter 2009, pp. 109–132.

[118] Alam Saleh & James Worrall, "Between Darius and Khomeini: exploring Iran's national identity problematique", *National Identities*, Vol. 17, No. 2, pp. 73–97.

[119] Shireen Hunter, Iran, "Islam and the Struggle for Identity and Power in the Islamic Republic of Iran", *ACMCU Occasional Paper Series*, July 2004.

[120] Ruhollah Khomeini, remarks students and educators in Qom, 13 March 1979 http://www.mideastweb.org/Middle-East-Encyclopedia/ayatollah_khomeini.htm (Last seen 28.01.2020)

[121] Ansari, ibid.

> "The constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran sets forth the cultural, social, political and economic institutions of Iranian society based on Islamic principles and norms, which present an honest aspiration of the Islamic Ummah."[122]

While the power of the ideology of Islam increased, political intellectuals viewed the nationalism concept as the source of calamity, with nationalist neighbors chanting nationalist slogans like in Arab countries, and the Pahlavi regime was exploited by Western countries. This had resulted in constant humiliation, separation, and defeat of Muslims against the Western countries.[123]

According to Khomeini, "We accept the concept of nationhood … including that of Iranian nationhood as long as it is within the boundaries of Islam."[124] "Muslim countries and defending of these countries are part of religious commandments but not in a way that marginalizes their Islam and then we hear nationalist tunes of pan-Islamism".[125]

Ayatollah Mutahhari was considered as one of the leading aides of Khomeini, who served as his representative at the time of revolutionary upheavals in Tehran, was a supporter of Islamic universalism. In his view, "Persian nationalism" as a philosophy propagated by the agents of the imperialist countries, meant Iran would be separated from other Islamic societies.[126] Mutahhari's idea was premised as: "Love your country without humiliating other nations."[127] Article 11 of the Iranian Constitution reflected this idea as follows:

> "According to the Qur'an: "Verily, this brotherhood of yours is a single brotherhood. And I am your Lord and cherisher: therefore, serve me, all Muslims form a single nation and the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran is required to base its overall politics on the merging and unity of the Muslim nations. It must continuously strive to achieve the political, economic, and cultural unity of the Muslim world".[128]

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[122] Preamble, Iran constitution https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b56710.html

[123] Seyed Hussein Valipoor Zeroomi, National Identity, and the Sacred Defence, *Discourse: An Iranian Quarterly*, Vol. 8 No. 2 Winter 2009, pp. 109–132.

[124] Khomeini, *Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declaration of Imam Khomeini*, trans. Hamid Algar, Mizan Press, 1981.

[125] Khomeini, ibid.

[126] Mahmood T. Davari, *The Political Thought of Ayatullah Murtaza Mutahhari*, New York: Routledge, 2005, p. 165

[127] Davari, p. 165

[128] Iran constitution, Article 11 https://www.wipo.int/edocs/lexdocs/laws/en/ir/ir001en.pdf

Here, “all Muslims” refers to the “one nation” and the government must exert “continuous effort” to realize "the political, economic and cultural unity of the Islamic world. The main element of religion and belief was considered to be the basis and axis of nationality and Iranian national identity by the Islamic Revolution ideology.

The Supreme Leader, Ali Khamanei, succesor of Khomeini, emphasized the Islamic umma very clearly:

> “Unfortunately, during the past two centuries, the plots of the enemies and inefficiency and lack of competence of some Islamic states have brought the Islamic ummah to a deplorable condition. The global arrogance, motivated by its discriminatory and biased attitude toward mankind and using its political, military, economic and scientific capabilities, has played a major part in creating the present condition for Muslim nations. An instance of this neo-colonialism can be seen in the present political, economic and even military campaign of the global arrogance led by the United States against the Islamic ’ummah’.”[129]

Islamic forms of nationalism as dominant discoursedefined as a belief system and culture – was regarded as a constitutive basis for Iranian identity. This is outlined in speeches by Khamanei:

> “Islam is the most important pillar of our national culture. Today, the Iranian nation is proud of the fact that after the passage of fourteen centuries its culture, language and customs intermingled with Islam. Islamic culture, customs, and practices are part of our culture and in this regard, being national is tantamount to being Islamic and these two aspects never confront each other.”[130]

The religious approach became so prevalent in the first decade after the Islamic Revolution that national identity was regarded inextricably linked to religious identity.

According to Dehghani Firouzabadi, the Islamic state was redefined as “a traditional nation-state operating in conformity to the existing Westphalia order externally and entertaining ‘religious nationalism’ internally”.[131] “Religious nationalism" emerged as the rhetoric of Khomeini in exile before the 1979 Revolution, and is integral to the Revolution and the national identity construction of the Islamic Republic. His idea depends on establishing an Islamic state of unity could be possible only by Islamicizing the nation and defined the

[129]Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, opening address to the 8th Organization of the Islamic Conference, Tehran, 9 December 1997, in Shabnam J. Holliday, *Defining Iran: Politics of Resistance*, Routledge, 2011

[130] Ayatollah Ali Khamanei, *The Cultural Viewpoints of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution of Iran,* Tehran: Center for Cultural and International Studies, Islamic Culture and Relations Organization, 2000, p. 7

[131] Sayyed Jalali Dehghani Firouzabadi, “Iran's Foreign Policy Principles, and Priorities”, *Iran Review*, November 12, 2017, www.iranreview.org/content/Documents/Iran-s-Foreign-Policy-Principles-and-Priorities.htm (last seen 21.12.2019.)

modern world and democratic way of life as its *'other*' and foe, bringing all manifestations of Western modernization and nationalism inter alia, under attack.[132]

However, this rhetoric from Khomeini has not transferred to post-revolutionary religious-nationalists because their strategy was to Islamize the nation through the democratic process. According to them, republicanism would "Islamicize Iranianess"[133] For instance, Ebrahim Yazdi, once deputy prime minister and foreign minister under the direction of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, explains the situation in 1995:

> "I want the Islamic Republic, not the government of clergy. They are two different things. As a matter of fact, before the revolution, the leadership of the revolution, very openly, stated that we didn't want to create a government of the turban and the sneakers. But later on, the government took another route, so we had to disassociate ourselves."[134]

During its first years, the Islamic Republic tried to erase any remains of the old order, both on the personal level, with the exile or execution of many former officials from various ministries and government agencies, and on a public level by removing symbolic traces of the Pahlavi regime. These efforts also included destroying monuments to the royal family and renaming streets and squares. All the names that evoked the Pahlavi regime and the monarchic system were changed. To reflect the Islamic worldview, streets and public buildings were renamed after the main events of Islamic history, the names of the prominent figures of the Islamic Revolution and the Iraq War. The name of Pahlavi Street in Tehran changed initially to Dr. Mosaddeq Street, however when the relations between Islamists and the National Front deteriorated, the street was renamed once again and became *Vali-e Asr*. The streets named Takht-e Jamshid and Cyrus the Great by the Pahlavi dynasty were renamed as Ayatollah Talegani and Dr. Ali Shariati.[135]

The Islamic Republic appeared determined to eradicate all aspects of the Iranian culture that were viewed as contrary to Islamic values, or as a challenge to the preeminent position of Islam in Iran. Hence, the Iranian culture portrayed in some of the seminal works of Persian literature, including those of those Ferdowsi, Khayyam, and Hafez were marginalized. The ancient celebration of Norouz, which was symbolically and explicitly pre-Islamic, was

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[132] Ahmed Sadeghi, Genealogy of Iranian Foreign Policy: Identity Culture, History, The Iranian Journal of International Affairs, Vol. XX, No. 4, Fall 2008, p. 19.

[133] Majid Sharifi. *Imagining Iran: The Tragedy of Subaltern Nationalism*, Lexington Books, 2013.

[134] A seminar with Ibrahim Yazdi, *Middle East Policy*, April 1995, Vol. 3, No. 4.

[135] Peter Chelkowski and Hamid Dabashi, *Staging a Revolution: The Art of Persuasion in the Islamic Republic of Iran*, New York: NYU Press, 1999.

attacked by clerics.[136] The Islamic Republic designated that day instead to its Islamic discourse.

Additionally, changing school textbooks and reviewing university education has also been part of this change. According to the Islamic leadership, the pre-revolutionary education system's major goal was to diminish Iranian students' religious convictions. [137] This view led to the extraction of pre-Islamic elements and even symbols representing Iranian identity from Iranian school books. For instance, Firdawsi poems were not included in the 1986-87 edition of Persian elementary textbooks.[138] Additionally, the university education in the Pahlavi period also was criticized by Ayatollah Khomeini, who emphasized that

> "The professors who are in contact with the East or the West will be purged, and so that the universities may become healthy places for the study of higher Islamic teachings. The false teachings of the former regime should be abruptly stopped in universities throughout Iran because all the misery of the Iranian society during the reign of this father and son was due to these false teachings."[139]

Although all Islamists attempted to refashion Iran in an Islamic style after the start of the revolution, it became clear that much of the Islamic Republic did not lose the national identity, with emphasis on the ethnolinguistic identity.

The Islamists adopted Islamic principles and saw the "ummah" as a priority, while "nation" and "nationalism" remained the ideological stance of the opposition. However, while the supranational ideology of the Islamic Republicasserts "no difference between Muslims anywhere, neither ethnically nor with regard to Shi'i or Sunni affiliation, according to the Iranian constitution only Shi'i of Iranian origin can hold office as president of the Islamic Republic of Iran".[140]

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[136] Saleh and Worrall, ibid., p. 87

[137] Bahram Mohsenpour, "Philosophy of Education in Postrevolutionary Iran", *Comparative Education Review*, Vol. 32, No. 1, pp. 76–86.

[138]Patricia J. Higgins & Ghaffar Pirouz Shoar, "Women's Education in the Islamic Republic of Iran", in *In the Eyes of the Storm: Women in Post-revolutionary Iran, ed. M. Afkhami and E. Friedl, Contemporary Issues in the Middle East,* Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1994, pp. 19–43

[139] Khomeini: "We Shall Confront the World with Our Ideology", *MERIP Reports*, No. 88, Iran's Revolution: The First Year, Jun 1980, p. 24.

[140] Iran constitution, Article 115, The President of the Republic must be elected from among the religious and political elite who meet the following qualifications: Iranian origin, Iranian nationality, administrative leadership, clear past record, honesty and piety, believing in the fundamentals of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the official religion of the country. https://www.wipo.int/edocs/lexdocs/laws/en/ir/ir001en.pdf

Additionally, the reflection of national identity was also visible through IRI officials' insistence on the name Persian Gulf. While the leader of the Islamic Republic abhorred national division within Islam, he insisted that it must be called the "Persian Gulf".[141]

The history and pre-Islamic cultural heritage of Iran as a symbol of "Iranian nationalism" are not ignored and sacrificed because of the reaction of local populations to erase the pre-Islamic symbol. In 1979, Ayatollah Sadegh Khalkhali called for the destruction of Persepolis; he mounted a bulldozer and threatened to start toppling the walls and monuments. Ayatollah Khalkhali even planned to destroy Persepolis at the height of the Islamic Revolution until he gave up that plan when Marvdasht's residents, led by Mahallati, opposed such a move. Answering a journalist's question on this matter, Ayatollah Mahallati said, "[Persepolis] is the oldest, strongest symbol we have".[142]

Despite the Islamic Republic attempts to purge, the symbols of national identity have remained a major force in Iranian culture. The revival of nationalist sentiments in post-Pahlavi Iran was particularly noticeable after the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq War in 1980.

Second Phase

This phase shows that the "territorial defense" causes the appeal of nationalism to expand, and to unite adherents. According to Ansari, the relationship between religion and nationalism remained an equitable balance, but the developments, particularly the Iran-Iraq War, seems to indicate that the debate between national and religious identity was shifting toward national identity.[143]

Iraq invaded parts of Iran in 1980, shortly after the Iranian Revolution. The assault of Iraq on Iran began to mobilize elements that nurtured nationalism, such as the sense of patriotism and the protection of its border. Indeed, the nationalist Islamic intellectuals evoke their view of "*a country with certain boundaries*", "*homeland*", and "*Iran*." In spite of these views, in some

[141] Ayatollah Khomeini rejected Ayatollah Sadeq Khalkhali's proposal to name it the "Muslim Gulf", *Kayhan* 29 May 1979. Prime Minister Muhammad Ali Raja'i issued a statement saying that the "Persian Gulf" was the correct historical and original name. He gave instructions for that appellation only to be used in all official documents and speeches. Radio Tehran, 9 May 1981. David Menashri, "Khomeini's Vision: Nationalism or World Order" in *The Iranian Revolution and the Muslim World. Boulder*, ed. David Menashri, San Francisco: Westview Press, 1990, p. 48.

[142] Elaine Sciolino, *Persian Mirrors: The Exclusive Face of Iran*, Free Press, 2001, p. 165.

[143] Ali M. Ansari, *The Politics of Nationalism in Modern Iran,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, p. 232.

cases “nationalism”, “homeland”, or “Iranian boundaries” clashed with the values or behavior of political elites.

The reconciling attitude of Iran's first prime minister, Mehdi Bazargan, between religion and nationality, is based on the statement that Iran’s own welfare should be the primary concern. He wrote a letter to Khomeini, and declared, “we think ourselves as primarily responsible and duty-bound defenders of Iran, which is our place of birth … Our concern outside our *home* and *homeland* and the nation is clearly secondary.”[144]

Despite this call by Bazargan, Khomeini used universalist revolutionary Islam terminology in his speeches. It is the confrontation between 'Iran firster' and 'Islam firster' perspectives.[145] Bazargan said, “I believe in the service of Iran employing Islam while Khomeini 'believes in the service of Islam through Iran”.[146] However, near the end of the Iraq war, the priority of preserving territorial integrity was a turning point in Khomeini's approach to a nation-state. Khomeini had to reconsider these ideas of what constitutes the basis of Iranian identity and the dilemma between an Iranian nation and the *Umma* under the influence of internal and external realities:[147] “One cannot say anything against the love of one’s nation, the people of that nation, and the preservation and protection of that nation.”[148] Here, nationalism refers to a movement for “guarding a nation's independence and freedom in the face of external aggressor”.[149]

Article 3 of the Islamic Republic's Constitution points out the importance of strengthening "the foundations of national defense for the sake of safeguarding the independence, territorial integrity and the Islamic order of the country”, all principles of state-based nationalism.[150] According to Article 152, it also makes the "safeguarding" of the independence and integrity of the Iranian territory the basis of Iranian foreign policy. In addition to this, school textbooks

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[144] Quoted in F. Ajami, “Iran: The Impossible Revolution,” *Foreign Affairs* (Winter 1988–89): 138–139.

[145] Zeroomi, op.cit., p. 118

[146] R. K. Ramazani, “Iran’s Foreign Policy: Contending Orientation”, in *Iran’s Revolution*, ed. R. K Ramazani, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990, p. 51

[147] Shireen Hunter, “Iran, Islam and the Struggle for Identity and Power in the Islamic Republic of Iran”, *ACMCU Occasional Paper Series*, July 2004, https://issuu.com/georgetownsfs/docs/shireen_hunter_iran__islam__and__th

[148]What Is the Opinion of Imam Khomeini on the Issue of Nationalism?” *Islamic Thought Foundation,* available from www.islamquest.net/en/archive/question/fa12858.

[149] Hamid Enayet, *Modern Islamic Political Thought*, I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2005, p. 112.

[150]*The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran*, available from www.iranonline.com/iran/iran-info/government/constitution-1.html.

also highlighted the necessity of a country's independence from foreign rule.[151] Nationalism, previously hated by the Islamist regime, was progressively employed using religious rhetoric in an attempt to mobilize volunteers to go to the frontlines.[152] State-controlled television and radio began periodically to air a previously banned pre-revolutionary nationalist anthem.[153]

The national identity, as defined through the homeland, gained a "*special sacredness*" in combination with ideological elements, and "preserving every corner of the country" became a part of existence in the Islamic Republic. Based on the historical evidence, "*sacred defense"* had a unique characteristic in the national identity definition of Iran. Khomeini stated at the beginning of the Iraq war,

> "Our most honored country, which is dearer than our life, is now ready to prepare its children for the fight against evil. We will relentlessly defend our country at the cost of losing all of our warriors."[154]

In his statement about the primacy of 'Islamic' in the idea of the state, the homeland is seen not only as compatible with faith but indeed an Islamic duty.[155] However, nationalism has been referred to concerning achieving the Islamic Revolution's objectives.

Iranian government leaders commonly referred to the Iran-Iraq War and the Supreme leader as the foundation of sacred defense and national identity relations. For instance, addressing war veterans in 2006, Khamenei emphasized the centrality of the national identity and sacred defense:

> "The Iran-Iraq war was a defensive and unequal war. During the eight-year sacred defense, all the Western and Eastern powers lined up against Iran in the political, military, economic, and propaganda spheres. It was, in fact, a war of international powers against the Islamic Republic … but when it comes to protecting national identity and sacred causes the resistance of the Iranian nation can serve as a model for the world."[156]

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[151]Golnar Mehran, "Socialization of Schoolchildren in the Islamic Republic of Iran," *Iranian Studies,* 1989, Vol. 22, No. 1, pp. 40–42.

[152]Mohammad Ayatollahi Tabaar, *Religion Statecraft: The Politics of Islam in Iran*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2019, p. 177.

[153] Tabaar, p. 177

[154] Musavi Khomeini, Sahifeh-ye Noor, quoted in Seyed Hussein Valipoor Zeroomi, ibid.

[155] Ansari, *The Politics of Nationalism in Modern Iran,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, p. 232.

[156] Ayatollah Ali Khamenei speech, Iran proved its non-aggressive nature during Sacred Defense, October 22, 2006, https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/129995/Iran-proved-its-non-aggressive-nature-during-Sacred-Defense (last seen 28.01.2020)

"Islamic internationalism" has been gradually replaced by a "resurgence of nationalist themes" in the Islamic Republic's ideology and action, especially in the wake of the Iraqi invasion that gave rise to the growing emphasis on nationalism in war propaganda.[157]

The Islamic Republic in its post-war phase of "reconstruction" had thus rediscovered and reinvigorated debates on national identity. The approaches of government go on for cultural issues in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and the "Iranian" aspect increased its impact on the country's culture.[158] According to Vaziri, "the regime attempt[ed] to exalt religious culture within the political boundary of Iran" and "to solidify a national identity with a more complicated definition of identity" in Iran.[159]

Following the end of the Iran-Iraq War and with the rise of Hashemi Rafsanjani as president, the country pushed towards restoration and renovation that forced the redefinition of Iranian identity.[160] The dream of the "Islamic Utopia" without national boundaries was preferred to produce Islamic solidarity policies that also cared about national borders.[161] Rafsanjani highlighted Iran's pre-Islamic past, which during Khomeini's time had been rejected outright.[162]

The controversy over the balance between the different components of Iranian identity came to fore during the presidency of Mohammad Khatami (1997–2005). Indeed, Khatami defined the national identity as a balance between the "Iranist" and "Islamist" lines of thought. The "*Iraniyat*" (its pre-Islamic culture) and "*Islamiyat*" (its Islamic culture) both were now integral and authentic to Iranian national identity in his thought.[163] According to him, although Iranians "had a civilization and things to be proud of" in the pre-Islamic period, they insisted that Islam constituted "the basis" of Iran's national identity. "Islam was responsible for the greatness of the Iranian nation, and "the most important basis of our cultural identity

[157] F. Halliday, 'Iranian Foreign Policy since 1979: Internationalism and Nationalism in the Islamic Revolution', in *Shi'ism and Social Protest*, ed. J. R. Cole and N. Keddie, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1986, p. 107

[158] Shireen. T. Hunter, *Iran after Khomeini*.New York & London: Praeger, 1992, p. 93

[159] Vaziri, ibid., p.200

[160] Javad Haghgoo, Z. Ghaffari Hashjin & M. Aghaei, "A review of the Turnaround in Iranian Foreign Policy during Hassan Rohani's Administration", *Journal of History Culture and Art Research*, 2017, Vol. 6, No. 3, pp. 245–263.

[161] Mahmood Alinejad, "Coming to Terms with Modernity: Iranian Intellectuals and the emerging public sphere", *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, Vol. 13, No. 1, 2002.

[162] Vaziri, p. 200.

[163] Shabnam Holliday, "Khatami's Islamist-Iranian Discourse of National Identity: A Discourse of Resistance", *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies,* 2010, Vol. 37, No. 1, pp. 1–13.

whether Muslim or non-Muslim, is Islamic culture." In his words, he expresses this viewpoint,

> "Who are we? We are a great nation. We have civilization. Only four or five nations have created human civilization, we are one of the distinguishable civilizations among them. … We are Iranian Muslims and Islam is a resource that gives us identity."[164]

Khatami refered to the uniqueness of every nation that comes to the fore in its culture, so he made the idea of a new national identity culture. However, the idea of designing a new culture contradicted Islam and the compulsory concept of Islam.[165] He insisted that Iran became an integral part of Islam's culture because it helped the growth and development of Islamic civilization and emphasized the idea that "Islam in Iran is Iraniyat." Because according to him, "despite our natural differences and tendencies, is our pride in Iranians and Muslims."[166]

At this point, Although Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei started talking about the distinctive character of Iranians, he continued to associate its nature with Islamic values. He pointed out that "Islam is the most important pillar of Iran's national culture."[167]In 2006, he addressed at a meeting of Semnan province scholars:

> "When I say "national identity", I do not mean to contrast it with religion. On the contrary, every nation's identity consists of a set of cultural norms, beliefs, wishes and behaviors. Piety and religious faith are among the things that define the culture and identity of a pious nation that follows the Holy Prophet's (s.w.a.) household. Therefore, national identity includes religious characteristics as well, and we should preserve these characteristics."[168]

Additionally, Khatami tried to redefine "*self*" within the concept of "dialogue among civilization" and "independent nation" beside the balance between *Iraniyat* and *Islamiyat*. As his words suggest,

> "To assert our identity it is necessary to be present in all world forums and to defend Islam and Iran effectively in all tribunals and conventions. But we cannot ultimately flourish and make our weight felt in the international scene – who rules are by our opponents unless we maintain our unique idealism."[169]

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[164] Quoted in Alam Saleh.

[165] Holliday, ibid.

[166] Khatami's speech, Salam, Apr. 10, 1997

[167] Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, The Cultural Viewpoints of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution of Iran, Tehran, 2000.

[168] http://english.khamenei.ir/news/1647/Leader-s-Speech-to-Academics-of-Semnan

[169] Mohammad Khatami, "Islam, Dialogue and Civil Society", *Centre for Persian and Central Asian Studies*, 2003

His speeches focus on "the presence of proud, cultivated and independent Iran at the heart of the world community is the dream of noble and responsible Iranians".[170]He expressed a new political discourse on Iran's cultural heritage, emphasizing the country's pre-Islamic background and attempting to alleviate tensions in the official. The period between pre-Islamic Persian history and the Islamic era is the center of Khatami's dialogue of civilizations, following it thus:

> "Some tried to present the memory of Cyrus and the recognition of his greatness as an alternative to Islamic values. This was done out of animosity to the Islamic Republic in the wake of the revolution which brought it to existence … It is a great mistake to try to describe the national heritage as opposed to religion and its values."[171]

Additionally, the importance and political sensitivity of the "Persian Gulf" issue emerged; it was seen as the symbol of "national identity". In 2004, Iran banned the distribution of atlases and expelled all journalists working for the publication *National Geographic*. This measure resulted from the magazine's publication of an updated atlas of a region in which under the name "Persian Gulf" there appeared in parentheses its alternative name "Arabian Gulf".[172] According to Khatami, the "Persian Gulf" is a symbol of the national identity of Iran and he stated that,

> "The Persian Gulf is a historical issue and fortunately the magazine has amended its mistake." The issue was naturally brought up in bad faith, but everyone knows the Persian Gulf is Persian and we insist upon that."[173]

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, a conservative non-cleric, was elected president of Iran on August 3, 2005. After becoming the president, Ahmadinejad and his conservative cabinet advocated a discourse based on the sense of "nationalism and historic pride", and especially the national banner also was used by Ahmedinejad as an asset, and he refered pre-Islamic symbols.

On September 11, 2010, the Cyrus Cylinder was transported from the British Museum to Iran for exhibition. Ahmedinejad referred to 2500 years of Iranian history in his visit to the National Museum.

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[170] Mohammad Khatami speeches, BBC Monitoring Summary of World Broadcasts, August 6, 1997 in Christin Marschall, *Iran's Persian Gulf Policy*, London: Routledge Curzon, 2003, p. 22.

[171] Musa Mir Mudarris, *Kurush va Zu al-Qarnayn az didgah-i tarikh va ayin*. Tehran: Markaz-i Nashr-i ʿUlum-i Danishgahi va Maʿarif-i Islami-i Fazil, 1373 (1994). Menahem Merhavy, "Religious Appropriation of National Symbols in Iran: Searching for Cyrus the Great", *Iranian Studies*, 2005, Vol. 48, No. 6, p. 943.

[172] https://en.mehrnews.com/news/9907/President-says-Iran-on-threshold-of-great-developments

[173] President Khatami spoke in parliament, https://en.mehrnews.com/news/9907/President-says-Iran-on-threshold-of-great-developments.

> "As for the Cyrus Cylinder … What is the story behind this? 2500 years ago, there was a dictatorship in Iraq that imprisoned people, maimed them and tortured them … One of our kings replaced the dictatorship with just a regime. His name is Cyrus … Cyrus conquered Babylon and freed the people from the brutal regime of Babylon."[174]

Ahmadinejad continued his nationalistic rhetoric in which he emphasized the pre-Islamic grandeur of Iran. He began stressing nationalistic Iranian themes. In March 2011, the Norouz ceremony was held at Persepolis. Since the establishment of the Islamic Republic, it was the first state-sponsored ceremony after the revolution.[175] A key point here, while Ahmadinejad focused on the pre-Islamic heritage, he defined a new "*self"* through Iranianism as also advocating solidarity and the reunification of Iranian peoples living on the Iranian plateau. He also supported that "*Iranianism* is not a racial ideology, but it is a culture and perspective on the world of creation and humanity".[176]

The reinvention of a pre-Islamic Iran referred to the glorious past and promoted a regenerative desire for a better future.[177] By the time of the revolution, one side stood for pre-Islamic symbols and autocracy while the other side stood for the people and Islam. By ideologizing the past, "the temporal divide separating pre-Islamic and Islamic Iran" further deepened the tension between identities.[178]

In the last four decades, those in power have tried to define Iranian national identity by referring to cultural and religious elements which are seen as complementary. President Hassan Rouhani also contributed to these definitions of national identity. According to Rouhani,

> "National identity is one of the most potent causes of national solidarity, unity and cohesion. Fortunately, in this country our religious and national identities are so intertwined that it could be said that our national identity is our religious identity. Even the Persian language and national conduct and customs, as well as the teachings of Islamic culture, are mixed together in a way that the masterpieces of the Persian language are largely rooted in the rich teachings of Islam."[179]

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[174] Juan Cole, "Ahmadinejad as Cyrus the Great?" *Informed Comment,* Sept 19, 2010, https://www.juancole.com/2010/09/ahmadinejad-as-cyrus-the-great.html

[175] https://english.khabaronline.ir/

[176] President Says "Iranianism" Is a Culture, Rather Than a Race', *IRIB* 7 March 2012.

[177] Mohammad Tavakoli-Targhi, *Refashioning Iran: Orientalism, Occidentalism and Historiography*, New York: Palgrave, 2001, p. 135

[178] Farideh Fahri, "Crafting a National Identity Amidst Contentious Politics in Contemporary Iran", Iranian *Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 1, (Mar. 2005), pp. 7–22.

[179] Rouhani speech: Iran always open to dialogue but not accepting pressure, Mehr Newsagency, 13 February 2019, https://en.mehrnews.com/news/142483/Iran-always-open-to-dialogue-but-not-accepting-pressure-Rouhani

Rouhani has also expressed concern about Iran's past experience, especially the Iran-Iraq war and a longer-term perception that Iran is surrounded by *other* (enemies) and has no natural allies. According to him, "wars, warriors and resistance are parts of every nation's history which shape their identity."[180] "Since the constitutional revolution till the victory at the Islamic Republic and the epic of the "sacred" defense and the political elections you imposed your wills on tyrants and aggressors and enemies".[181] Based on past experience, he emphasized the necessity of "cultural revolution" and defined reformist ideals such as "national unity" as part of opposing America and Israel.

This part of the chapter has tried to look back with a historical review of nationalism and has attempted to analyze the national identity construction after the Islamic Revolution through discourse. The evolution of Iranian state nationalism is determined by *self* and *other* definitions. The goal was to comprehend the formation of national identity following the Islamic Revolution. The religious approach to national identity was so popular that it was considered synonymous with national identity, based on an almost collective agreement during the first decade following the Islamic Revolution's victory, and other aspects of national identity were marginalized. At the end of the war with Iraq, the country moved toward reconstruction and renovation to redefine the national identity of Iran. The remaining part of this chapter will present the religious and revolutionary identities, which will be explored and their relations with each other will be discussed through the foreign policy implications of Iran.

3.2. Religious Identity

Ali Shariati said that "the cultural archetype of Greece is philosophical, Rome's is artistic-militaristic, China's is gnostic, India's is spiritual and that of ours [Iranians] is religious."[182]According to him, Iran is a civilization where religion and Islam are internalized such that identity is constructed on it. In this context, looking at Iranian history, the political orientation of the *ulama* did not originate with the Iranian Revolution in 1979. Religion had

[180] Rouhani speech: Martyrs associated with no political parties, Mehr News Agency, 10 March 2014, https://en.mehrnews.com/news/102340/Martyrs-associate-with-no-political-parties-Rouhani

[181] Rouhani speech: the US seeks discord, division in Iran, Mehr News Agency, 10 November 2015, https://en.mehrnews.com/news/152102/US-seeks-discord-division-in-Iran-Rouhani

[182] Ali Shariati, *Mashine dar Esarat Machinism, The Machine in the Captivity of Machinism*, Tehran, 1977 quoted by Merhzad Boroujerdi, p. 269.

political value in Iran long before the establishment of the Islamic Republic, and the religious identity has been one of the identities used to manage the foreign policy of Iran.[183]

In this part of the study, the association of religion and the state in Iran will be briefly reviewed, and then how the IRI has constructed self and other through its religious identity will be examined. Along with this, the transformation of Iran's religious identity will be discussed, with particular emphasis on understanding, ummah, revolutionary shiism, *velayet-e faqih*, mahdism.

3.2.1. An Overview of Religion and State Relations in Iran

In Iran, historically, the state has been the main axis of political interaction, while the power of religion has continued to function consistently. The ongoing interaction between the state and institutionalized religion increased the importance of the ulama (clerics) in the Iranian political structure.

A powerful clergy emerged when the Safavid dynasty turned Shi'ism into the 'official' religion. In other words, Safavid Shiism "gave birth to something like an official clergy, exclusively concerned with legality and jurisprudence to such a point that original Shi`ism".[184] These religious authorities developed close relationships with the political system and cooperated with the secular leaders.

However, during the Qajar period (1785–1925) the position of the ulama changed due to some initiatives of the state. While the Qajars failed to modernize and centralize the state, the ulama used its inefficiency to its own advantage to consolidate their power.[185] Thus, the clergy increased in popularity and began to actively participate in socio-economic and political issues due to the weakness of the state in delivering certain services and the inability of the shahs to meet "the economic, social, political, and cultural needs of the population".[186]

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[183] See: Said Amir Arjomand, *Authority, and Political Culture in Shi'ism*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988. Shahrough Akhavi, *Religion and Politics in Contemporary Iran* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1980).Hamid Dabashi, *Theology of Discontent: The Ideological Foundations of the Islamic Revolution ın Iran*, New York, 1993.

[184]Eranos-Jahrbuch (Zurich) XXIX, 1960, quoted in Hamid Algar *Religion and State in Iran: 1785–1906, Berkeley and Los Angeles:* University of California Press, 1969, p. 5

[185] Marvin Zonis, "The Rule of the Clerics in the Islamic Republic of Iran", *ANNALS, AAPSS*, Vol. 482, No. 85, 1985, p. 88.

[186] Elaheh Rostami-Povey, *Iran's Influence: A Religious- Political State and Society in its Region*, London: Zed Books, 2010, p. 90

When the involvement of the clergy in politics is reviewed throughout Iran's modern history, it appears that the ulama's relationship with the state primarily revolved around their opposition to the ruling governments on the basis of their challenge against colonialism and tyranny. First, the stance against colonialism was aimed at non-Muslims, mainly European imperialists' political and economic penetration into Iran. This was a part of the traditional role of the *ulama* as upholders of religious values, namely, fostering *Dar ul Islam's* territorial integrity vis-à-vis the *Dar al-Harb*.[187] For instance, they played a pivotal role particularly during times of political crises such as the Tobacco movement (1891) and the Constitutional revolution (1905–11). Second, the anti-tyrannical opposition resulted from losing the social and economic independence of the ulama, and the separation of religious and secular power.[188] The state has gradually tried to curb the significance of religious courts, to slash the rates of state pensions to the ulama.

Through the constitutional revolution in 1906–1907, the clergy joined the opposition of bazaaris and new intellectuals, which Foran called a populist alliance that succeeded in limiting the despotic authority of the shah.[189] Shiism was recognized as the the official religion in the constitution that also stipulated[190] the creation of a specific body, the *Mujtahids* committee appointed to ensure that no law violated the norms established by Islam.[191] In other words, the constitution gave the mujtahids the power to define the scope of sharia law.[192]

However, the constitutional movement resulted in the victory of secular forces as evidenced by the fact that the above-mentioned religious body was never realized. The clergy, who had an active role in the constitutional movement, withdrew from politics after realizing that secularism had triumphed.[193]

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[187] Hamid Algar, *Religion and State in Iran 1785–1906, The Role of the Ulama in the Qajar Period*, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969, p. 259.

[188]Said Amir Arjomand, The Shiite Hierocracy and the State in Premodern Iran: 1785–1890. *European Journal of Sociology*, 1981, Vol. 22, pp. 40–78

[189] Mehdi Khalaji, "Iran's Regime of Religion", *Journal of International Affair*, Fall 2011, Vol. 65, No. 1, p. 134. John Foran, *Fragile Resistance: Social Transformation in Iran from1500 to the Revolution*, Westview Press, 1992.

[190] Iran Constitution 1906, Article 1. See: 101 British & Foreign State Papers 534 1907–1908.

[191] Ibid., Article 2.

[192] Ibid., Article 27, 71.

[193]For a detailed discussion see: "Two Clerical tracts on Constitutionalism"*, trans.* H. Dabashi, in *Authority and Political Culture in Shi'işm, ed. Amir Arjomand*. Sadri. M. M. Farzaneh, *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution and the Clerical Leadership of Khurasani,* Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2015.

During the early Pahlavi period, Reza Shah not only reinforced his control over the state apparatus, but also strengthened the state apparatus' control over and penetration into society. Then, the ulama took an ambiguous position towards Reza Shah that oscillated between supporting his state-building efforts, but also frightened and marginalized by that process. Especially the 'modernization' project, along with growing authoritarianism with a secular agenda, led the ulama to being sidelined. Thus, the early and tacit alliance between Reza Shah and the ulama soon turned into the former's subjugation over the religious bodies.[194]

The forced remise of Reza Shah in favor of his son, Mohammad Reza, returned new competitive politics to the country after the Allied invasion of Iran in 1941. In this period,"the ulama's orientation toward the state was not a predominantly oppositional one".[195] Additionally, a sort of state-ulama alignment was formed, and the conservative ulama[196] supported the new shah, and they illustrated their support for the regime by participating in the religious ceremoniesheld by the court or the army to honor the Shah and pray for his health. In political developments that started withthe decision to nationalize the oil, the attitude of the ulama against Mosaddeq was controversial. Firstly, the stance of the ulama against Mossadeq's policy was not in line with anti-colonialism. The nationalization of oil by Mosaddeq was a struggle for national and economic independence, but Mosaddeq was seen as a secular figure by the ulama. Despite this fact, Ayatollah Abolqasem Kashani[197] was an important ally of Mossadeq – at least for a while. Kashani organized the traditional merchants, shopkeepers, the lower middle class, and many others for the Mosaddeq nationalist government, until he broke with him in late 1952.[198]

There was the role of the Mosaddeq's program on this divergence between them. The ideas of Mosaddeq, such as giving voting rights to women, refusing to ban the consumption of alcohol, and favoring state enterprises over the Iranian bazaar led to losing the support of

[194] Shahrough Akhavi, *Religion and Politics in Contemporary Iran,* Albany: State University of New York Press, 1980

[195] Mansoor Moaddel, "The Shi'I Ulama and the State in Iran", *Theory and Society, Vol.* 15, 1986, p. 536.

[196]Ayatullah Sayyid Mohammad Behbahani, Shaykh Baha-uddin Nuri, Shaykh Mohammad Ali Lavasani, and Falsafi, see: Shahrough Akhavi, *Religion and Politics in Contemporary Iran,* Albany: State University of New York Press, 1980. Agah Hazır, 'Beyond Religion: Ulama and Politics in pre-Revolutionary Iran', *Iran Çalışmaları Dergisi*, 2018, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 39–57.

[197] For Abol-qasem Kashani powerful Shi'a Ayatollah, known for anti-British and anti-communist stances. Nationalist Founder of the Warriors of Islam in the Majlis. See: Fariborz Mokhtari, "Iran's 1953 Coup Revisited: Internal Dynamics versus External Intrigue", *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 62, No. 3 (Summer, 2008), p. 460.

[198] H.E. Chehabi, "Religion and Politics in Iran: How Theocratic Is the Islamic Republic", *Religion and Politics,* Summer 1991, Vol. 120, No. 3, p. 70.

Kashani.[199] At the same time, the spread of the so-called threat of communism increasingly alarmed most of the ulama, including *Marja-yi taqlid* (source of imitation) Ayatollah Boroujerdi.[200] Thus, they drew closer to the shah.[201] Even Kashani abandoned Mossadeq for the shah because like the other ulama, he thought thatMossadeq lacked the power to defend the country from the communist danger.

Fromthe coup that overthrew Mossadeq in August 1953 to the White Revolution, a relatively harmonous relationship existed between the government and most of the ulama despite the Shah's increasing despotism and totalitarianism. According to Zonis, "the oppositional stance of the ulama to the Pahlavis did not blossom until the death of the leading *mujtahid*, Borujerdi."[202] After his death, the ulama became more critical of the Shah[203] due to the state-initiated land reform and other reforms launched in 1963as part of the White Revolution. The protests took place during the Shah's White Revolution of economic and social changes, which failed to benefit the merchant class and eroded the ulama's position.

Additionally, Ayatollah Khomeini rose to the position of *Marja,*[204] and he adopted an oppositional stance to the Shah. According to Algar, Khomeini's "hostility began to be openly expressed in 1963." He criticized not only the autocratic rule and violation of the constitution but also the Shah's pro-American and Western policies. He consistently criticized,

> "The proposal to grant capitulary rights to American advisers and military personnel in Iran and their dependents; the contracting of a $200 million loan from the United States for the purchase of military equipment; and the maintenance of diplomatic, commercial and other relations with Israel, a state hostile to Muslims and Islam."[205]

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[199] Agah Hazır, "Beyond Religion: Ulama and Politics in pre-Revolutionary Iran", *Iran Çalışmaları Dergisi*, 2018, Vol.1, No. 2, p. 46.

[200] See: Hamid Algar, "The Oppositional Role of the Ulama in Twentieth Century" in *Scholars, Saints, and Sufis,* ed. Nikki R. Keddie, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972, p. 244.

[201] Said Amir Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown: The Islamic Revolution in Iran*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988, p. 85.

[202] Zonis, op. cit., p. 89.

[203]Ayatullah Borujerdi, who arranged a huge conference in Qum in February 1949 in an attempt to keep the ulama out of politics, invited over 2,000 ulama to the session, which was held in the city's largest *madrasah*, the Fayzieh. The members took a rigorous non-interventionist stance, barring all ulama from joining political parties and engaging in political trade. See: Akhavi, ibid., p. 63

[204] Literally meaning 'authority to be followed' or religious reference. For Marja-e taqlid, see. Encyclopedia Iranica, https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/search/keywords:marja-e%20taqlid

[205] Algar, ibid., p. 246.

However, both Shah Reza and his son did not hesitate to flirt with the ulama when it deemed to be appropriate. While Shah Reza used "strengthening the foundations of religion"[206] in his discourses, Mohammad Reza Shah strongly referred to the religious identity of the state. By his reign, a military order was designated as Zulfiqar, named after the legendary sword of Imam Ali, in 1925.[207]Mohammad Reza Shah from time to time continued to emphasize Iran's religious identity. For instance, in an interview with Oriana Fallaci in 1973, he said, "I saw our Prophet Ali [in his dream], he who according to our religion disappeared to return the day he would save the world."[208] He also defined himself as a religious person, saying, "I have been chosen by God to perform a task." Thus, the Shah tried to warm the relationship between the state and the ulama by attributing holiness to himself and his task.

However, the Shah implemented several policies that eventually led to the Islamic Revolution beginning in 1975.[209] These policies included the attacks on the ulama and the merchant classes, attempting to penetrate and undermine their organization. All these events led to a series of demonstrations, deaths, and memorial ceremonies that mobilized the country by opposing the Shah. The demonstrations took a particularly religious tone in September 1978 after making the call for the Islamic Republic, *Hukumat-i İslami.*[210]

In short, the Shiite ulama played an active role in the country's politics. From the first half of the twentieth century, particularly the influence of the American presence on Iranian society, the stance of the state on modernism and secularism has determined the course of the relationship between religion and the state. Anti-monarchic rhetoric from Khomeini was added to the conflicts between the ulama and the state. The social and political movements were reinterpreted through the roots of Shia tradition. Thus, this interpretation constructed the identity of the Islamic state.

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[206] Shahrough Akhavi, *Religion and Politics in Contemporary Iran,* Albany: State University of New York Press, 1980.

[207] Rocky Pendergrass, Mythological Swords, 2015.

[208] The Shah of Iran: An Interview with Mohammad Reza Pahlevi, December 1, 1973, https://newrepublic.com/article/92745/shah-iran-mohammad-reza-pahlevi-oriana-fallaci

[209] Heather Selma Gregg, *The Causes of Religious Wars: Holy Nations, Sacred Spaces, and Religious Revolutions*, PhD thesis in Political Science at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2003, p. 371.

[210] Khomeini's major statement on Islamic Political Theory. It was first delivered as a set of lectures in Najaf during 1969–1970, and later collected and published in book form. Hamid Algar ed., *Islam and Revolution, Writings and Declarations of Imam Khoemeini,* Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1981.

3.2.2. *Self & Other* in the Religious Identity Projection of the IRI

Besides the role of the ulama in Iranian politics in general, and in the revolution in particular the Shiite faith was an influential force in mobilizing the Iranian masses for the revolution. However, the Shiism that served as the ideology to mobilize people was not a simple repetition of traditional Shi'ism. It was actually a revised and revolutionized form of the religion. Traditionally Shiism was regarded as a passive religion based on regrets over the martyrdom of Hussain and waiting for the return of Mahdi.

This transformation was seen at two points.The first is owed more to Shia popular culture's expanding influence particularly the proliferation of stories about imams Ali and Hussain.[211] Second is Imam Mahdi's *ghaybah* (occultation), an expectation for a new age of justice for those who are oppressed. This expectation was the reinterpretation of religious identity. Shias believe that the Hidden Imam is alive and will eventually return as the Mahdi, "the one guided by God",[212] who will usher in the End of Days "to fill the world with justice and equity."[213]

The Karbala tragedy is the single most important occurrence in Shii the religion's early burgeoning.[214] This event told of the martyrdom of the third imam, Hussain ibn Ali, and his followers on the tenth day (*Ashura*) of the Muslim month of *Muharram*, AD 680, at Karbala, in an extremely uneven battle against the army of the Umayyad caliph Yazid ibn Mu'awiye.[215]

According to Helm, this tragedy illustrated the "big bang" that created "the cosmos of Shiism and brought it into motion".[216] Traditional Karbala narratives historically focused largely on personal expressions of grief that affirm group cohesion founded on 'shared sorrow and suffering', and emphasize individual experiences of redemption rather than collective political

[211] Kathryn Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs and Messiahs: Cultural Landscapes in Early Modern Iran*, Cambridge: MA: Center for Middle Eastern Studies of Harvard University, 2002.
[212] David Pinault, *The Shi'ites: Ritual and Popular Piety in a Muslim Community,* New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992, p. 6.
[213] Roger M. Savory, ''The Export of Ithna Ashari Shi'i sm: Historical and Ideological Background,'' in *The Iranian Revolution and the Muslim World*, ed. David Menashri, Boulder: Westview Press, 1990, pp. 13–39
[214] Marshall G. S. Hodgson, "How Did the Early Shi'a Become Sectarian?" *Journal of the American Oriental Society Vol.* 75, No. 1 (1955), pp. 1–13.
[215]Haggay Ram, "Mythology of Rage: Representations of the 'Self' and the 'Other' in Revolutionary Iran", *History and Memory*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (Spring-Summer, 1996), p. 69
[216] Heniz Halm, *Shi'a Islam: From Religion to Revolution,* Princeton: Markus Weiner Publishers, 1999, pp. 15–16.

or social activism.[217] The traditional interpretation of Karbala was considered as a war against corruption and evil, emphasizing the persecution, exclusion, and pain of the prophet's family or *Ahle-Bayt*.[218]

In the process leading up to the revolution, a different interpretation was brought to the traditional form of Karbala, andit was associated with the active rebellion movement against unjust rulers like the Pahlavi regime. The Iranian revolution was described as "the ultimate passion play of the Karbala paradigms".[219] The success of the revolution followed a transformation in the understanding of the central meaning of Shi'i Islam among the Iranian masses. In other words, "the spirit of the past" was conjured and modified concerning contemporary political and social discourse. Many intellectuals[220]and clerical figures tried to rebel against the Pahlavi regime more effectively by using the Karbala myth. Two figures worth mentioning within this context are Ali Shariati and Ayatollah Khomeini.

Shariati developed an entirely new interpretation of Shiism, inspired by Frantz Fanon. Fanon's writings had a particular effect on Shariati, so much so that he translated Fanon's *Les Damnes de la Terre* into the Qur'anic term *mostazafin* to refer to the exploited and oppressed mousses.[221] He also argued that true Islam was vested in the struggle of the oppressed, and his rhetoric linked social and political grievances with the traditional sanctification of martyrdom and sacrifice.[222]

Ali Shariati interpreted the Karbala narrative that Imam Hussain's struggle with the Umayyad Dynasty at Karbala as a struggle between an oppressive ruler and a resistant religious leader.[223] In describing this struggle, the metaphor of Hussain's *shahadat* was used as an inspiration for the Shias. He defined "the *shahadat* as sacrificing one's entire being or

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[217] Bizaa Zeynab Ali, "Contemporary Karbala Narratives and the Changing Gender Dynamics in Shi'i Communities",https://academiccommons.columbia.edu/doi/10.7916/D87S7WZ3

[218] Zeynab Ali, ibid., p. 2

[219] Michael M.J. Fischer, *Iran: From Religious Dispute to Revolution*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003, p. 183

[220]Also see Salehi Najafabadi (1923–2006), a religious scholar who studied with Khomeini in the 1960s. He was the first person to attempt a revision of the Karbala narrative. In Kamran Scot Aghaie, *The Martyrs of Karbala: Shi'i Symbols and Rituals in Modern Iran*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004.

[221] Behrooz Ghamari-Tabrizi, "Contentious Public Religion: Two Conceptions of Islam in Revolutionary Iran", *International Sociology,* December 2004, Vol. 19, No. 4, p. 509.

[222] Ali Shariati, *İran ve İslam*, trans. Kenan Çamurcu, Fecr Yayınları ,2012.

[223] Kamran Scot Aghaie, *The Martyrs of Karbala: Shi'i Symbols and Rituals in Modern Iran*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004.

character for a cause or concept. If the cause is holy, the martyr's entire essence becomes holy."[224] Shariati formulated the discourse of the "historical victim" that called for "resistance against the unjust attacks of the other(s)."[225] This showed the construction of a homogenized hostile *other*, poised against an injured *self*.[226] He discussed that Hussain's movement was to promote good and discourage evil, and as stated above, to revitalize the spirit of Islam that was in danger of extinction.[227]

Khomeini also used early Islamic history to reinforce these populist notions, and reinterpreted the massacre in Karbala to mobilize the people. The transformation in Khomeini's discourse occurred in the 1970s when he arguably borrowed concept, language, and imagery from Ali Shariati's terminology of *mostazafin*. Ayatollah Khomeini believed that the world was the scene of an unceasing battle between good and evil. He asserted that this conflict was manifesting itself in the form of a *mustakbirin*[228] and *mostazafin*[229]confrontation.He also associated the separation of the *mustakbirin* and *mostazafin* with Islamic ideology. Thus, the pillars of Shia Islam were reinterpreted by Khomeini. He turned the conventional image of the imam from a passive, abused, victim of injustice to a revolutionary martyr who gave his life to fight against tyranny and oppression.[230] This reinterpretation brought an "activist", instead of "quietist", approach to religion.

The success of the revolution followed a transformation in the understanding of the fundamental meaning of Shia Islam among the Iranian masses.[231] Firstly, the Shah was

[224] Aghaie, p. 105

[225] Boroujerdi, p. 151

[226] Hamid Dabashi, *Theology of Discontent: The Ideological Foundation of the Islamic Revolution in Iran*, New York and London: Routledge, 1993, p. 5

[227] Ali Shariati, *Husayn varis-i Adam*, 4th ed., Tehran: Intisharat-i Qalam, 1991, p. 112, quoted in Ali Rahnema, *An Islamic Utopian: A Political Biography of 'Ali Shari'ati*, London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 1998. Peter Chelkowski and Hamid Dabashi, *Staging a Revolution: The Art of Persuasion in the Islamic Republic of Iran*, New York: NYU Press, 1999.

[228]The Arabic term *Mustakbirin,* which is the plural of *Mustakber*, derives from the verb *Karaba*, and means to be proud, haughty, and arrogant. See. Kamran Taremi, "Iranian Strategic Culture: The Impact of Ayatollah Khomeini's Interpretation of Shiite Islam", *Contemporary Security Policy*, Vol. 35, No. 1, 2014, pp. 3–25.

[229]The Arabic term *Mustazafin*, the plural of *Mustazaf*, comes from the verb *Zafa*, and means deemed weak, powerless, and oppressed. In the Koran, the term is used to refer to those who are feeble because they have been exploited and kept in a state of ignorance. See. Taremi, p. 7.

[230]Javier Gil Guerrero, "A Stage for the Revolution: Muharram and the Paradigm of Karbala in the context of Khomeini's Struggle with the Shah", *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies*, 2017, Vol. 40, No. 2.

[231] Mary Hegland, "Two Images of Husain: Accommodation and Revolution in an Iranian Village", in Religion and Politics in Iran: Shi'ism from Quietism to Revolution, ed. Nikki Keddie, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983, p. 219.

compared to Yazid, and the martyrdom of Hussain came to symbolize the struggle of the Iranian people against the oppression and corruption of the regime. The Iranian people were portrayed through the idea that "we are all Hussain." Khomeini used "deprived people", those who have been oppressed, when referring, directly and indirectly, to the Iranian people.[232] Therefore, the Karbala paradigm has made the fight between the wounded "*self*" and the cruel "*other*" a constant fact in the collective self-consciousness of the Shia.[233]

Secondly, religious rituals turned into a mass mobilization mechanism. Ayatollah Khomeini described the *shahadat* of Hussain as a "manual of action."[234] The focus changed from passive witnessing of weeping to vigorous witnessing of resistance and overthrowing injustice.[235] Thus, *Moharram* ceremonies became a stage where different political groups and the government violently clashed.[236] The mourning rituals of *Ashura* – passion plays and "Muharram processions marked by weeping and self-flagellation – became occasions for anti-Shah mobilization, with Imam Khomeini calling upon his followers to keep alive the message of Karbala through mourning sessions":[237]

> "This year, the commemoration of the fortieth day after the anniversary of the Imam's martyrdom has come in the midst of a whole series of fortieth-day commemorations of the martyrdom of the followers of that great Islamic figure. It is as if the blood of our martyrs where the continuation of the blood of the martyrs of Karbala … Just as the pureblood brought to an end the tyrannical rule of Yazid, the blood of our martyrs has shattered the tyrannical monarchy of the Pahlavis … With marches and demonstrations all across the country, our great people must bury once and for all this stinking carrion of monarchy."[238]

The traditional mourning *Ashura* has become a central component of religious activism.The religious rhetoric in the run-up to Muharram reminded Iranians of their duty: "The silence of the Muslims is a betrayal to the Quran […] Islam is an eternal tree, needs the blood of martyrs to grow."[239] One of the most popular slogans of the revolution, Ali Shariati's slogan "every

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[232] Shadi Gholizadeh and Derek Hook, "The Discursive Construction of the 1978–1979 Iranian Revolution in the Speeches of Ayatollah Khomeini", *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, Vol. 22, 2012, p. 180

[233] Haggay Ram, "Mythology of Rage: Representations of the "Self" and the "Other" in Revolutionary Iran", *History and Memory*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (Spring–Summer, 1996), p. 70

[234] Khomeini, *The Ashura Uprising, Tehran, 2000,* p. 7.

[235] Fischer, *Iran: From Religious Dispute to Revolution*, p. 183.

[236] Kamran Scot Aghaie, p. 83

[237] Ravinder Kaur, "Sacralising Bodies: On Martyrdom, Government and Accident in Iran", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Third Series, Vol. 20, No. 4, (October 2010), p. 450

[238] Ruhollah Khomeini, speech 15 January 1979, Algar, 1981

[239]Amir Taheri, *The Spirit of Allah: Khomeini and the Islamic Revolution,* Bethesda: Adler & Adler, 1986, pp. 321–322, Javier Gil Guerrero, *The Carter Administration & the Fall of Iran's Pahlavi Dynasty,* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), p. 145.

day is *Ashura* and every place is *Karbala*" radically invoked Hussain's martyrdom as a challenge with any forms of injustice, cruelty, and despotism in the present.

Thirdly, this particular aspect was maintained and emphasized as a part of an attempt to forge an anti-Western identity. Khomeini adopted *mustakbirin* as two blocks which consisted of the capitalist, imperialist Western countries, and the monarchical allies of the West in the Middle East. According to him,"the *mustakberin's* desire to exploit and dominate the *mostazafin* of the world to their defiance of God and their lust for power, domination, and superiority, all of which stem from their love of self as distinct from the love of God".[240]

In other words, "imperialism, particularly that of the US and Israel, is the main enemy of Iran, the Muslim world, and the Third World".[241]These hegemonic powers' goals were centered on politically, economically, and culturally subjugating underdeveloped nations, exploiting their resources, and robbing them of their territorial independence according to Khomeini. He stated,

> "The will of almighty God, may He be praised, decreed the release of this oppressed nation from the yoke of the tyranny and crimes of the satanical regime and the yoke of the domination of oppressive powers, especially the government of the world-devouring America, and to unfurl the banner of Islamic justice over our beloved country. lt is our duty to stand up to the superpowers and we have the ability to stand up against them, provided that our intellectuals give up their fascination with Westernization or Easternization and follow the straight path of Islam."[242]

The preamble of the Islamic Republic's constitution confirmed this purpose, stating that the revolution intends to bring the *mustazafin* victory over the *mustakberin*. This worldview of struggle, according to the constitution, provides the necessary base for securing the Revolution's continuity at home and abroad.

Illustrated under the Qur'anic verse "Verily,this Brotherhood of yours is a single Brotherhood, and I am your Lord and Cherisher: therefore serve Me (and no other) (21: 92), to also assure that the continuous struggle for the emancipation of the deprived and oppressed nations of the

[240]Ruhollah Khomeini, *Dar Justojuy-e Rah az Kalam-e Imam: Mustazafin va Mustakberin*

[241] Imad Salamey and Zanobia Othman, "Shia Revival and Welayat Al-Faqih in the Making of Iranian Foreign Policy, Politics", *Religion & Ideology*, 2011, Vol. 12, No 2, p. 201.

[242] Khomeini: "We Shall Confront the World with Our Ideology" *MERIP Reports*, No. 88, Iran's Revolution: The First Year (Jun., 1980), p. 22

world is strengthened."[243] … "[we] will strive with other Islamic and popular movements, to prepare the way for the formation of a single world community".[244]

The other important factor in Iran's religious identity is "the expectation of the return of the Hidden Imam Mahdi". Shias cannot know exactly when the Twelfth Imam is to appear. Meanwhile, the responsibility of leading Muslim nations cannot be entrusted to corrupt and tyrannical rulers like the shah, who simply aggravate the situation because they are deeply, corrupt themselves.[245] In this view, as Imam Hussain's martyrdom at Karbala, while not bowing to the submission was the most important aspect, it was appropriate to try the justice of the leader who would save them from the cruelty of the Shah without question. This symbolized the millenarian struggles between the 'oppressed' and the 'oppressors', and with the return of Mahdi, this injustice would end. In this context, The Islamic republic incorporated the idea of millenarianism into its complex system of governance. Under Khomeini's concept of the *velayat-e faqih*, Khomeini became the guardian of Muslims and representative of the Mahdi on the earth. Thus, millenarianism successfully integrated the state religious identity and foreign policy. The exporting of revolution would enable propelling Muslim and other oppressed nations to carrying out similar revolutions in their soil.

In short, early events in Shia history, especially those involving Imam Ali and Hussain, and the constant expectation of the return of the Hidden Imam, not only formed the basis of the Shia religious tradition but also became the center of contemporary Shia politics and activism. The events in Karbala used to describe virtually any conflict affecting the Shia world, thus it constructed the battle of self and other just like that of good versus evil or justice against injustice. In times of political or social upheaval, religious figures, politicians, and laypeople have evoked the picture of Hussain battling against all odds at Karbala to inspire the Shiite community into practice. In this sense, the Shia religion's defining events shaped the response to imperialism; they also represent various perspectives on what was endangered by Western dominance and what was required to oppose it.

[243] Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran
[244] Adib-Moghaddam, p. 57
[245] Hamid Dabashi, *Shi'ism: A Religion of Protest*, Harvard University Press, 2011, p.274.

3.2.3. Religious Identity Construction under the Islamic Republic

Shia struggles for liberation constituted a "pool of shared knowledge that informed the foreign policy culture of the Iranian state after the Islamic Revolution in 1979".[246] The confrontations between "good and evil" were dragged from a mythical-religious context to a socio-political 'confrontation of world arrogance.' "This formulated the essence of public support for a foreign policy developed 'towards challenging the international status quo that was perceived as intrinsically unjust and overbearingly hierarchical."[247] In this context, the Islamic Republic regime has constantly used Islamic symbols while constructing its "religious identity", used Islamic discourse, and addressed public religious feelings to justify the current distribution of the power and structure of state institutions.[248]

Khomeini and his clerical associates embarked on a remarkable project to capture the revolution as an 'Islamic event'[249] – a task pursued not only to fulfill a particular worldview but desperately designed to legitimize the new regime and outmaneuver its rivals.[250] This approach essentially transformed Iran's international policy, economy, and society, and restructured the regional landscape, the geostrategic balance in the region and the foreign policy discourse of its main players.

Khomeini believed that Islam remained the basis of any governing order, which meant that the ulama were the only ones capable—and legitimately able—to govern. This ultimately gave the ulama control of the foreign policy of the Islamic republic as well. While this "Iranian-style Islamism" was constructing "self" in foreign policy, it used the "transnational appeal of Islamic identity", the "*velayat-e faqih* doctrine" and "export the revolution".

Firstly, "Khomeinism" offered a politically sharp unitary view of the faithful, above the fact that invoking sectarian differences had long been considered by many Shi'is as an effort to divide them, and even as part of an imperialist conspiracy to promote discord in Islam.[251] Hence, the religious, political, and cultural unity of all Muslims can be regained only by submission to Islam as the sole source of moral and political authority.

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[246]Arshin Adib-Moghaddam, *Iran in World Politics: The Question of the Islamic Republic,* London: HURST Publishers Ltd, 2007, pp. 77–78.

[247] Arshin Adib-Mohaddam, *Iran in World Politics: The Question of the Islamic Republic*, op. cit., p. 78.f

[248] Bahman Baktiari, *Iran: Shari'a Politics and the Transformation of Islamic Law*

[249] Peter Chelkowski and Hamid Dabashi, Staging a Revolution, p. 29

[250] Suzanne Maloney, "Identity and Change in Iran's Foreign Policy", in *Identity and Foreign Policy in the Middle East*, ed. Shibley Telhami and Michael Barnett, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002, p. 104.

[251]M. Kramer, "Introduction, in *Shi'ism, Resistance, and Revolution, ed. Martin Kramer, Boulder and London:* Westview Press; Mansell Pub. Ltd., 1987a, p. 5.

Khomeini called for "all Muslims to unite under the banner of Islam to repel the colonial assault: Islamic unification",[252] he argued, would make it possible for believers to destroy the world's corrupt and tyrannical gods and symbols. Khomeini stated,

> "We must do our best to help Muslims and oppressed people with their problems and we must consider this a pillar of our foreign policy. We declare that the Islamic Republic of Iran will remain a haven for Muslims of the world for good and ever, and Iran, as an invincible fortress, will supply the needs of soldiers of Islam and make them familiar with ideological and educational bases of Islam as well as principles and values of fighting infidels and unreligious governments."[253]

Similarly,in February 1987, then-Prime Minister Mir-Husayn Musavi remarked that the revolutionary movement is an integral part of the global battle of the downtrodden and is inextricably linked to the fate of all Muslims.[254]

Although the ruling elite adopted a discourse that emphasized the universality of Islam and Islamic unity, the state identity was not regarded as independent of the Shiite belief in the quest for justice, anti-tyranny, and millenarianist. According to Keddie, this dominant discourse of the Islamic Republic demonstrated that serving Islam through Iran and its talents and resources would have resulted in the pursuit of justice and the leadership of all oppressed peoples, particularly in the Third World.[255]

Secondly, the supranational tendency was most conspicuous in the doctrine of *velayat-e faqih*. This was the Islamic leadership to be united within the one supreme leader – *Al-Faqih* – with the vested power to guide the Muslim world and achieve Islamic rule and expel the infidels.[256]Thus, Khomeini established *velayet-e faqih*which authorizes jurists to provide legitimate governance based on the interpretations of Islam that constructed the religious identity of the state.

Khomeini argued that during the occultation, a just *faqih* should act in place of the Twelfth Imam, thereby assuming all political and religious duties pertaining to the infallible Imams.

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[252] Quoted in Latife Reda, "Origins of the Islamic Republic's Strategic Approaches to Power and Regional Politics: The Palestinian-Israeli Conflict in Khomeini's Discourse", *Middle East Critique*, 2016, p. 18.

[253]*Entekhab newspaper*, February 2, 2001.David Menashri, *Iranian Revolution and the Muslim World*, Oxford and Boulder: Westview Press, 1990.

[254]*Ettala'at,* 7 Feb. 1987, in Haggay Ram, "Exporting Iran's Islamic revolution: Steering a path between Pan-Islam and nationalism", *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 8:2, 7–24,

[255] Mary Hegland, "Two Images of Husain: Accommodation and Revolution in an Iranian Village" in *Religion and Politics in Iran: Shi'ism from Quietism to Revolution*, ed. Nikki Keddie, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983, p. 166

[256] Salamey & Othman, p. 201.

The *faqih* is referred to as the Representative of the Imam (*nayeb-e Imam*) in the constitution and the official press; by claiming that he "takes refuge with God and his miracle; and through his insistence that the country's aspiration is for the emergence of the Hidden Imam". According to Articles 5 and 107 of the Iranian constitution, "the Government of Iran is the Islamic Republic requires placing supreme control over the country's affairs in the hands of a member of the clergy recognized by the majority of the people as their leader".[257]

However, the transformation of Shi'ism into the state identity by the regime of the Islamic Republic and Shiite-based fiqh rules have led to the opposition of different centers of authority. Especially, the monopolization of all religious and political authority under the title of the *velayet-e faqih* encountered the reaction of traditional Shiite authority. For instance; Ayatollah Mahmud Taleqani stated his opposition to the Velayet-e Faqih before his death in September 1979, suggesting that the 1979 constitution [would be] worse than the constitution of 1906; he was reportedly said, "may God forbid autocracy under the name of religion".[258]Likewise, Ayatollah Morteza Mottahari, one of the leading figures of the revolution, explicitly stated that "the Velayet-e faqih does not meet that the Faqih himself heads of the government. The Faqih's role in an Islamic country is one of being an ideologue, not a ruler."[259]

Ayatollah Kazem Shariatmadari had articulated the most rigorous opposition to the regulation of *velayet-e faqih* in the constitution. According to him, the new constitution meant "the moving from one monarchy to another."[260] Because "the principle of *velayet-e faqih* could be applied only in cases where *sharia* had not provided an authorized agent, and then only when it was a matter of dealing with unavoidable issues."[261]

Another religious opposition to the *velayat-e faqih* came from Seyyid Mohammad al-Shirazi and his supporters, known as the *Shiraziyyen*[262] or *Shirazists*. After the Islamic Revolution,

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[257] Bahman Bakhtiari, *Iran: Shari'a Politics and the Transformation of Islamic Law*.

[258] Misagh Parsa, Social Origins of the Iranian Revolution, New Brunswick and London, 1989, p. 294.

[259] Michael Axworthy, *Revolutionary Iran: A History of the Islamic Republic*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 156.

[260] Quoted from an interview with Shariatmadari in Qom on 12 December in Dilip Hiro, *Iran Under the Ayatollahs*, Routledge Revivals, 2011, p. 139.

[261] Asghar Schirazi, *The Constitution of Iran: Politics and the State in the Islamic Republic*, London: I.B. Tauris, 1997, p. 48.

[262]The group was named the "Shiraziyyin" because of its close association with the al-Shirazi family of the Karbala *hawzas* and more particularly the figure of Seyyid Mohammad al Shirazi (1926–2001) and his younger brother Hasan al-Shirazi. They came to Iraq from Shiraz in southern Iran over the course of the nineteenth century. The first to leave Shiraz for the shrine cities of Mesopotamia was Mirza Hasan Shirazi in 1838, the

Seyyid Mohammad al-Shirazi arrived in Qom from Kuwait. Initially, he criticized Khomeini's conception of Islamic governance, namely the idea of rule of a single cleric as supreme leader. In fact, his argument was very similar to Khomeini's doctrine of the *velayet-e faqih*. He agrees on the concept of clerical government, however in place of *velayet-e faqih*, he advocated a government led by a council of jurists (*shurat al-fuqaha*).[263] According to him, collective political leadership would prevent the creation of a dictatorship.[264]

After the death of Ayatollah Khomeini in June 1989, the clerical opponents of the *velayet-e faqih* continued to challenge Ayatollah Khamanei, who replaced Khomeini as the new Supreme Leader. In particular, Ayatollah Husseyin Ali Montazeri became a vocal critic of the politics of the Islamic republic. Once one of the leading advocates of the *velayet-e faqih* theory, Montazeri believed that the government could be Islamic if the faqih had the power to confirm in office and to supervise the president and the other prime office-holders of the state.[265] However, until 1988, Khomeini's favorite, Montazeri, subsequently found himself under criticism for the regime's "betrayals."[266]

At the same time, Mohammad Al-Shirazi refused to recognize the supreme leadership of Ali Khamanei. According to him, Khamanei lacked the religious credentials to hold high office, and pressed the necessity of revision to the constitution of the Islamic Republic. Al-Shirazi, who took this opportunity, continued to press for a consultative system of clerical leadership to lead Iran.[267] In December 1995, Khamanei compromised with Qom's scholars, but al-Shirazi refused to see him. Moreover, Murtadha Shirazi, the son of Mohammad al-Shirazi published a book entitled *Shurat al-Fuqaha*.[268]

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successor of Murtadha Ansari at the head of the *hawza* and the enforcer of the famous tobacco fatwa in 1891. See: Michael M. J. Fisher, *Iran: From Religious to Dispute*, Madison: University Wisconsin Press, 1980.Laurence Louer, Transnational *Shia Politics: Religious and Political Networks in the Gulf*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2008.

[263] This doctrine was formulated before the Islamic Revolution as the government of the jurisprudents (*hukumat al-fuqaha*). See: Laurence Louer, Transnational *Shia Politics: Religious and Political Networks in the Gulf*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2008.

[264] Louer, ibid., p. 188.

[265] Michael Axworthy, Revolutionary Iran, p. 165.

[266] Laurence Louer, Sunni's *and Shia: A Political History of Discord*, trans by Ethan Rundell, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020, p. 59

[267] Jeffry R. Halverson, Searching for a King, Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2012, p. 95.

[268] Halverson, ibid.

The administration, which placed the *velayat-e faqih* at the center of the religious identity of the state, did not hesitate to liquidate the opposition movements towards this institution. Like Shariatmadari and Montazari, Mohammad Al-Shirazi was put under house arrest in Qom and saw his activities severely restricted. In this context, the religious authority and legitimacy of Khamenei to rule and the theological discussion of the validity of the *velayet-e faqih* doctrine was a decisive political stance.[269] In addition to this, an approach emerged that saw the *velayet-e faqih* as a part of faith.

While the religious identity of the Islamic Republic is constructed on the centrality of *velayat-e faqih*, the "internal other" is associated with the "external other" and reflected in the discourses of the Supreme Leader. While the Shirazists are defined by the terms "extreme" and "superstitionist", Ayatollah Khamanei began calling this movement the "British Shiite" in his discourses. Although the Supreme Leader did not mention specifically Sadiq al-Shirazi, who took over the movement after Muhammad al-Shirazi, he implied that the Shirazists are "British collaborators."[270] Furthermore, Ayatollah Khamanei labeled the religious *other* as an "American Islam" in his discourse. In fact, this rhetoric was used by Khomeini for Saudi Arabia, which had backed Iraq in the eight-year war. He was derided as "bloodthirsty" and its Wahhabi religious institutions as promoting the same dreaded "American Islam".[271] According to Ayatollah Khomeini, *"*American Islam means ceremonial Islam, an Islam that is different in the face of oppression".[272] In this regard, Khamenei stated,

> "We do not believe in the kind of Shia which is supported by London. We do not consider those Sunnis who are supported by the US and Israel as Muslims. We do not consider them Muslims in any way. Islam is that which is opposed to kufr, to oppression, and arrogance."[273]

The Islamic Republic, along with the new concept of "self," tried to establish its new identity with strategies such as "export of revolution" and "support for Islamic revolutionary

[269] Olivier Roy, The Crisis of Religious Legitimacy in Iran, *Middle East Journal, Vol. 53, No. 2,* p. 93.
[270] Quoted in Hadi Khodabandeh Lou, "The Conflict of Authority in Political Shi'ism: The Shirazists Against Velayat-e Faqih", Analysis, IRAM, April 2018.
[271] Iran's Greatest Fear: "American Islam" January 1, 2015, https://nationalinterest.org/feature/irans-greatest-fear-american-islam-11951
[272] Iran's Greatest Fear: "American Islam" https://nationalinterest.org/feature/irans-greatest-fear-american-islam-11951
[273] Shia supported by British gov. are not even Muslims, March 11, 2018, https://english.khamenei.ir/news/5528/Shia-supported-by-British-gov-are-not-even-Muslims

movements" to regional and extra-regional states.[274] WithIran is attempting to give shape to its aim of increased regional influence by identifying itself with universal principles of social promotion and resisting oppression through Shiism of the 'Iranian brand'. In this context, under the banner of 'exporting the revolution', it supported successful opposition movements among Shia populations in the region.

Since 1979, Iran's clerical rule has been based on *velayat-e faqih*, which has institutionalized the clerical position in politics and the legitimacy of their activism. Therefore, *velayat-e faqih*became the Iranian brand of Shia political activism, and a model of radical political Islam to be exported to prominent Shia movements across the world. Its importance was underlined in a number of articles relating to the issue of exporting the revolution, and the duty to assist oppressed Muslims wherever they may be in their struggle against abusive forces. For instance, in paragraphs 15 and 16 of Article 3, the Iranian constitution assigns the Iranian government with "The expansion and strengthening of Islamic brotherhood and public cooperation among all the people", to "regulate Iranian foreign policy based on Islamic criteria, fraternal commitment to all Muslims and stintless support of the world downtrodden people."[275]

On the one hand, Iran's Islamic identity became prone to isolation from Western powers and regional adversaries, while on the other, it became immensely dedicated to the export of its ideas to fellow Muslims around the world. Ayatollah Khamenei, the current Supreme leader of Iran once stated that, "exporting the revolution" is indeed a divine responsibility on the promotion of revolutionary values and informing other nations on the mischief of global tyrants and oppressors.[276]

On the other hand, the Iran-Iraq War undermined the "universal Islam" dream of the newly founded regime and undermined its attractiveness among the predominantly Sunni Arab masses. For this reason, Iran focused its efforts on exclusively exporting the Islamic revolution to Shia communities around the world in the aftermath of the war. The appeal of Khomeini's revolution both mustered popular support among the Shia *hawzas*, and there was also opposition and reaction. There was an important ulama at the center of the *hawzas*. The Iraqi Dawa Party's founders, Ayatollahs Muhsin al-Hakim and Mohammad Baqir al-Sadr, and

[274] Mahdi Mohammad Nia, Discourse and Identity in Iran's Foreign Policy, p. 39
[275] Constitution of the Islamic Republic, https://www.wipo.int/edocs/lexdocs/laws/en/ir/ir001en.pdf
[276]Quoted byAhmad Sadeghi, "Genealogy of Iranian Foreign Policy: Identity, Culture, and History", *The Iranian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. XX, No. 4, Fall 2008, p. 22.

the Lebanese Hezbollah spiritual leader Al-Sayyed Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah, who were an important supporter of Imam Khomeini since his days in Najaf, and would actively export the Iranian Revolution during the 1980s. After the Revolution, the Damascene shrine complex Sayyida Zaynab – who had been the daughter of Imam Ali – became a transnational center of Twelver Shiism, where Iran established the second-largest *hawza* in Damascus, and the Syrian and Iranian regimes encouraged pilgrimage as a religious aspect of their strategic alliance.[277] The network of relations between the Shia hawzas has established political ideas and mechanisms to achieve common ideals while strengthening the discourse of "resistance".

The discourse of resistance has become an inseparable part of Iranian religious identity and foreign policy. It is based on not allowing the domination of infidels over Muslims, and the ways are closed to foreign hegemony over Muslims. The argument is known as Islamic rule, *Nafy-e Sabil.*[278]Thus, the Islamic government in its foreign affairs should behave in such a way that it won't be dominated by other powers.[279] As a state ideology, this idea referred to resistance against "arrogant powers."

The Sepah-e Pasdaran (Revolutionary Guard) was seen as the institutional extension of the resistance discourse, and it reflects the religious identity of Iran. The ideological outlook of Revolutionary Guards as part of religious identity is based on "the centrality of religion/Islam".[280]The outcome of the Islamization of the revolutionary IRGC ideology depends on Islamic values and Shii tradition. For instance, the most important criterion for the volunteers of the Revolutionary Guards was determined to believe in Islamic ideology. Besides, these volunteers should have taken a stand against Eastern and Western imperialism.

Likewise, the ideological structure of this institution resembled the struggle of Hussein in the Karbala Battle. This ideological structure symbolized the belief that the Revolutionary Guard was a continuation of Imam Hussain's epic struggle against injustice. In this context, the birthday of Imam Hussein was declared by Khomeini as the day of an annual celebration of

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[277]P. G. Pinto, "Pilgrimage, Commodities, and Religious Objectification: The Making of Transnational Shiism between Iran and Syria", *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East*, Vol. 1, 2007, p. 112.

[278]"Islam is so that it gains supremacy and isn't dominated by others". See: Muhammed Rida Dehshiri, Principles and Fundamentals of Islamic Diplomacy From Imam Khomeini's Viewpoint**,** 2006, pp. 1–33. https://iqna.ir/en/news/2283752/%E2%80%9Cnafy-e-sabil%E2%80%9D-verse-quran%E2%80%99s-view-of-political-independence ; http://csiw.qom.ac.ir/article_1430_en.html; http://pnmag.info/article-1-603-en.html

[279] Asghar Eftekhari, "The fixed principles of the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic", *The Iranian Journal of International* Affairs, Vol. XIX, 2007, p. 34

[280]Bayram Sinkaya, *The Revolutionary Guards and the Iranian Politics*, Ph.D. Thesis at Middle East Technical University, 2011.

the IRGC, called Guard's Day. Supreme Leader Khamenei referred to the ideological structure of the Revolutionary Guard, as Khomeini did, and associated their struggle with the myth of Karbala.

> "This was how Imam Hussein acted as a guardian. By selecting Imam Hussein's (a.s.) birth anniversary as Revolutionary Guards' Day, the Islamic Revolution's Guards Corps is, in fact, subtly suggesting that it will tread the path of Imam Hussein (a.s.)This is auspicious and truly important."[281]

In the years after the revolution, Iran's foreign policy was about more than developing national interests or competing for regional hegemony. As revolutionary export often did in Khomeini's era, ecumenical politics thereafter aimed to encompass Sunni-Shia rapprochement within a religiously defined hierarchy of Shiite leadership. As a part of this policy, Iran continued its mission towards the Islamic world through pan-Shiite organizations.

However, while "the religious quality of the 'Islamic nation' remained—by definition transnational, the political articulation that became more pronounced prioritized it for Iranians within the state borders".[282]In 1990, a World Conference on the people of the Prophets House in Tehran announced the creation of two international institutions: *Majma'-e taqrib* and *Majma-e Ahl-e beyt.*

Majma-e Taqrib was established and presented as an important institution ofthe Iranian regime. Firstly, it aimed to reduce Iran's isolation after the Islamic revolution, particularly from the Sunni-Arab World, while aspects of its organization made this objective unlikely to succeedbecause of total financial dependency based on the Supreme Leader.[283] Its activities involve the publication of the *Risala at-Taqrib* periodical, transsectarian education, and the organization of seminaries and conferences on Islamic unity.*[284]*

Majma-e Ahl-e beyt, as a new organization for Islamic Message Propagation, had been founded, dedicated to 'spreading Shii Islam', and it aimed to establish foreign ties on an explicitly Shiite basis. The Majma-e Ahl-e Beyt's main goal was to gain influence over the

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[281]http://english.khamenei.ir/news/5612/Why-Iran-chose-the-birthday-of-Imam-Hussain-as-as-Revolutionary

[282]Matthijs van den Bos, "The balance of ecumenism and sectarianism: rethinking religion and foreign policy in Iran",*Journal of Political Ideologies*, 2018, Vol. 23, No. 1, p. 37.

[283]W. Buchta, "Tehran's Ecumenical Society (*Majmaʿ al-Taqrīb*): A Veritable Ecumenical Revival or a Trojan Horse of Iran", in *The Twelver Shia in Modern Times. Religious Culture & Political History, ed. Rainer Brunner and Wener Ende, Leiden: Brill, 2001,* p. 349. See: https://www.taghrib.org/fa

[284] Jelle Puelıngs, *Fearıng a 'Shıite Octopus'*, Egmont Royal Institute for International Relations, January 2010, p. 25.

political, social, and religious affairs of Shi'i groups worldwide, and centralize them under the leadership of Iranian *vali-ye faqih* Ali Khamenei.[285] The organization declared that it has worked 'for the international dissemination of the Shii fiqh, whose superiority to that of the Sunnis it wishes to prove by peaceful propaganda.[286]The universalist approaches of these organizations cannot be considered independently of sectarian motives. Unlike Iran's rhetoric of resistance, trans-sectarian goals aim to increase the power of Shiite Iran.

In short, looking at the components that construct Iran's religious identity, first of all, the *ummah* was an effective tool in Iran's post-revolutionary foreign policy. The second is *revolutionary Shi'ism*; benefiting from the historical narrative of Shiite tradition, it provided the self-definition and redefinition of state identity. For this reason, Iran's Shiite identities have almost dominated the foreign policy discourse, which is built on the protection of the *mustazafin*, who suffer at the hands of the oppressors, the Western great powers. Thirdly, the influence of the doctrine of *velayat-i faqih* was particularly evident in Iran's post-revolutionary foreign policy. Iran's approach to its neighbors and its assessment of specific challenges and opportunities has been affected by the trend toward an Islamic vision of the state and the employment of an allegedly religious rationale in institution-building. The export of the revolution within the framework of the *velayat-e faqih* doctrine turned the so-called transnational Islamic movement into the trans-sectarian resistance movement. The revolutionary identity of the IRI will be discussed in the next section.

3.3. Revolutionary Identity

Revolutions aim at transforming internal structures of societies, and try to influence international relations. They have their values and ideologies such as freedom, independence, proletarian power, the sensitivity of peoples, or "true Islam" regardless of their origins specific to a particular country or nation.[287]In this context, the Islamic Republic's identity has often been depicted as a binary device that oscillates between Iranian nationalism and Islam. On the other hand, the revolutionary aspect of state identity has been effective inside the post-revolutionary period, andparticularly visible in some instances since 1979.

[285] Buchta, p. 351.
[286] Ibid.
[287] Fred Halliday, *Revolution, and World Politics,* Duke University Press, 1999, p. 73

The revolution in Iran was inherently anti-monarchical, which led the monarchical political system to be rapidly transformed into a republic. The values that the monarchy tried to bring to Iran and intimate relations with the West and the USA were criticized. The major features of the Islamic revolution of Iran are inclination toward the Third World, resisting imperialism and uneven development, maintaining independence, and opposing the global system.[288]

In this part, the focus will be the revolutionary identity of Iran, and state behavior will be discussed through discourses of decision-makers on anti-imperialism, Third Worldism, self-sufficiency, and social justice.

3.3.1. An Overview of the Revolutionary Ideology of Iran

The intellectual climate of the 1960s and 1970s affected the emergence of the revolutionary ideology of Iran. After the coup d'etat of 1953, many young people and intellectuals needed alternative ideologies because of the decline of secular ideologies. Iran failed to establish democracy and socialism. Additionally, "left and liberal/social democratic forces and their institutions were hounded and banned by the Pahlavi state".[289] Intellectuals and many young people particularly turned toward political Islam in this period.The "broad umbrella" of Islam, such as "networks of mosques, seminaries, and lecture halls, the publication of religious journals and books", provided a degree at least of immunity from the repression of the Shah. Additionally, Shiite centers such as Karbala and Najaf in Iraq that feed political Islam were beyond the Shah's control. In this context, while a diminution of secular political discourse, the hegemony of Islamic revolutionary ideology increased.

This period was especially shaped by the ideas of intellectuals who criticize the West morally.[290]The West was criticized for its past colonialism and imperialism, admiration for excessive technology and raging atheism, materialism, passion for consumption, and abandoning moral convictions and justice. For this reason, thoughts based on the sense of moral and cultural superiority of the Eastern civilizations were dominant in Iran; Jalal Al-e Ahmad and Ali Shariati were well-known intellectuals and outspoken critics of Westernism. In his landmark book named *Gharbzadegi*, Jalal Al-e Ahmad claimed the Shah had offended

[288] Mohsen Khalili, "Characteristics of a Revolutionary Foreign Policy from the Viewpoint of Constitution Experts", *Discourse: An Iranian Quarterly*, Vol. 6, No. 3–4, (Winter-Spring 2005), p. 97.
[289]Said Amir Arjomand, *The Turban For the Crown: Iran's Islamic Revolution,* NewYork: Oxford University Press, 1988, p. 91.
[290] See: Merhrzad Boroujerdi, *Iranian Intellectual and the West*, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1996.

"the culture of people" by imposing Western concepts and practices in Iran.[291] It particularly caused the dependency of Iran on the West. However, "*gharbzadegi* is a worldwide disease", hardly limited to Iran alone.[292] Thus, the cultural and economic dependency of the Third World was a part of this disease. In other words, *gharbzadegi* represented a precursor to a discussion of West versus East.

Unlike Jalal Al-e Ahmad, who could not offer the solutions for the problems of attaching blindly to everything that comes from the West, dictatorship, and injustice, Ali Shariati was engaged in finding theoretical offers and practical remedies. Thus, the *bazgasht be khish* (Return to self) narrative of Shariati picked up Al-e Ahmad's theme accentuating cultural authenticity and the wider anti-colonial struggle at the head of which Iran should position itself not least to find a way back to the country's true self, which Shariati defined in socialist and Islamic terms.[293]

Adopting a socialist ideology with a modern and Islamic interpretation, Shariati declared that the goal of his doctrine was the construction of a modern Muslim who was breathing in an intellectual and cultural environment dominated by "socialism, existentialism and theological lore triangle.[294] According to Rahnema, Shariati wanted to see his own "Islamic socialism" practiced in Iran.[295] It was the reconciliation of Islam with Marxism against anti-capitalism and exploitation, based on social classes.

According to Shariati, Shi'ism, which was essential in his Islamic ideology, was "superior" to Marxism, humanism, and existentialism. For this reason, Shariati looked at what he regarded as Shi'a Islam's true spirit, arguing that Shi'ism was simply a revolutionary ideology marrying Shi'ism to Marxist methodology.[296] Shi'ism was seen as a revolution against all forms of oppression, feudalism, capitalism, and imperialism in Shariati's approach.[297] In short, the

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[291] Jalal Al-e Ahmad, *Plagued by the West (Gharbzadegi), translated by Paul Sprachman*. Delmor, NY: Center for Iranian Studies, Columbia University, 1982.Vakil Moghadam, "Socialism or Anti-Imperialism? The Left and Revolution in Iran", *New Left Review*, 1987.

[292] Brad Hanson, "The 'Westoxication' of Iran: Depictions and Reactions of Behrangi, al-e Ahmad, and Shariati" *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 1, 1983, p. 1–23.

[293] Arshin Adib Moghaddam, *Psycho-Nationalism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018, p. 59.

[294] Ali Shariati, *Collected Works No. 16*, p. 77, see Ali Rahnema, *An Islamic Utopian: A Political Biography of 'Ali Shari'ati,* London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 1998.

[295] Ali Rahnema, *An Islamic Utopian: A Political Biography of 'Ali Shari'ati,* London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 1998.

[296]Ali Ansari, *The Politics of Nationalism in Modern Iran*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

[297] Ervand Abrahamian, "Ali Shariati: Ideologue of the Iranian Revolution", *MERIP*, Vol. 12 (January-February), 1982.

independence-from-the-West approach of Al-e Ahmad in *gharbzadegi,* and the anti-imperialist approach of Shariati reflected in *bazgasht beh-khish* symbolized the deification of the "Third-Worldist" socialist and "revolutionary" Islamic zeitgeist in Iranian society during the 1970s.[298]

Shariati's lectures at the *Hoseiniyeh-e Ershad*[299] provided ideas that a change in direction was coming for many young people. Expressing Islamic ideology was the first and most important step in social change in the opinion of Shariati. "Islam, he taught could be a viable alternative to the ideologies of fatality and despair that emanated from the West."[300]

Meanwhile, the ulama wanted to strengthen their role in Iran, especially Khomeini and the radical ulama used the content of Islam as a revolutionary ideology. However, the revolution was not only a religious resistance but also aroused "multiple overlapping political cultures of opposition and resistance, including middle-class liberals, students of varying political persuasions, oil workers, and a recently migrated urban working class, who experienced."[301] In fact, Khomeini's ideology took shape early in the 1970s, when he began emphasizing class division and oppression. Firstly, he used the ability to arouse the public emotionally by advocating social justice. Secondly, his pre-revolutionary public statements focused on imperialism and the pillage of national resources and moral decadence. In particular, the imperialist powers such as the United States, Britain, and other foreign powers penetrated the Islamic World and divided its nations into oppressed and oppressors. Thirdly, he criticized the rulers of Muslim nations for their lack of unity in resisting the agents of imperialism and therefore being on the side of oppressors. In time, Khomeini's rhetoric came to reflect the ideas popularized in Iran by Shariati and Al-e Ahmad.

In short, the intellectual contributions organized the revolutionary ideology. This intellectual movement attempted to overcome the Shah's cultural and political orientation to the West with the idea of returning to Iran's 'true identity'. Islamic-socialist discourse created the socio-political movement that brought the revolution.

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[298] Arshin Adib Moghaddam, *Iran in World Politics.*

[299] The Hoseiniyeh Ershad had been set up as a charitable institution for the exchange of ideas and the application of Islamic principles to contemporary issues.

[300] Massoumeh Ebtekar, *Takeover in Tehran: The Inside Story of the 1979 US Embassy Capture*, ed. Fred A. Reed, Vancouver 2000.

[301] J. Foran, "Theories of Revolution Revisited? Towards a Fourth Generation." *Sociological Theory, Vol.* 11, No. 1 (1993), pp. 1–20.

3.3.2. *Self* and *Other* in Revolutionary Identity of IRI

The most overt characteristic of Iran's revolutionary identity emerged from its search for "an end to foreign intervention", which it perceived as a characteristic of the political psyche of Iran.[302] In the first place, in the Marxist–Leninists, the communist TudehParty,[303] and, more importantly for the revolution's trajectory in 1979, in the influential writings of Jalal al-e Ahmad, Ali Shariati, and the clerical revisionists supporting Ayatollah Khomeini, the revolution attained its ultimate revolutionary politico-cultural significance.[304]

In this context, the ideas already affected the Iranians who rebelled in the late 1970s. These beliefs and experiences, together with millions of Iranians, especially educated youth and the middle classes, have contributed to the struggle for a new social order. A new round of effort was made by writers and political and religious ideologies to express their anti-shah ideas, mostly indirectly, through the media available to the public. Consequently, the revolutionary identity formed by both radical and revolutionary characters used "political prowess", the ability to channel passion into political action.

The revolutionary identity defined its "*self*" through the history and national narratives. In this process, identity was affected by "prototypical" revolutionary intellectuals and particularly Iranian history. Islam was reinterpreted in general to serve as the foundation for a credible and uncompromising discourse that was overtly and explicitly revolutionary. The revolutionary self has been associated with acommitment to "golden age of justice, a classless society, social equality and triumph of the oppressed masses against their oppressor".[305]

One of the fundamental characteristics of the revolutionary ideology was anti-imperialism. Iran encountered Western modernity first through the political-economic effects of imperialism and then through pressure from the developmental state.[306] Therefore, the revolutionary *self* in Iran resists Western imperialism and domination. Hence, an important dimension of Iran's *anti-imperialist* characteristic of revolutionary identity demonstrated itself as the quest for true sovereignty, cultural authenticity, and economic independence.

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[302]Mahmood Sariolghalam, "Understanding Iran: Getting Past Stereotypes and Mythology", *Washington Quarterly,* Vol. 26, No. 3, Autumn, 2003, p. 71.

[303]The oldest political party in Iran and associated with the Soviet Union, the Tudeh Party had a major following, especially within the bureaucracy. See: Ervand Abrahamian, *Khomeinism: Essays on the Islamic Republic*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

[304]Arshin Adib-Moghaddam, "What is radicalism? Power and Resistance in Iran", *Middle East Critique* Vol. 21, No. 3 (Fall 2012), pp. 271–290.

[305] Moghaddam, ibid., p. 279.

[306] Ibid., p. 286.

The second pillar of the revolutionary ideology was self-sufficiency. Revolutionary identity initially constructed a causal relationship linking scientific advancement, *self-sufficiency*, and independence. For instance, the period between the revolution and the end of the Iran–Iraq War (1980–88) was characterized by the country's isolation, with an economic policy of *khodkafai* (self-sufficiency). It was assessed as a way to reach economic independence.

Additionally, in the post-revolutionary period, the new curriculum of primary schools became related to revolutionary changes, views, and ideas regarding the role of the state.[307] The objective of post-revolutionary education policy was set to achieve independence from foreign dominance, economic self-sufficiency, social justice for the oppressed, and strength against colonial intimidation.[308]

The country's new constitution in Article 43 charged the government with providing self-sufficiency to prevent foreign economic domination, assuring economic independence of the society.[309] From an economic point of view, it has enhanced not only the anti-imperialist stance adopted by revolutionary identity but also the importance that is attached to *social justice* and the struggle against capitalism.

Thirdly, the idea of self-sufficiency was also closely related to another principle of the revolutionary ideology that is social justice. Pahlavi Iran had an upper class that included a comprador bourgeoisie, an anti-imperialist middle class, an urban working class, and rural migrants. Khomeinism was against "the entrenched power-holding classes, including the comprador bourgeoisie".[310] For this reason, it wanted to strengthen the state by extending its reach throughout society and providing social benefits to the lower classes.
In particular, when the revolutionary ideology came to discuss the goals and structure of an ideal Islamic economy, it emphasized the desire to help *mostaz'afin* and achieve social justice. The revolutionary foundations (*bonyads*) were set up in the immediate aftermath of the 1979 Revolution with funds obtained by the expropriation of the wealth and properties of those

[307] Amir Hossein Mirfakhraie, "Curriculum Reform and Identity Politics in Iranian School Textbook: National and Global Representations of 'race', ethnicity, social class and gender", Ph.D. thesis, University of British Columbia, 2008, p. 22.
[308] Golnar Mehran, "Ideology and Education in the Islamic Republic of Iran", *A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, Vol. 20, No. 1, 1990, p. 54.
[309] Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Article 43, https://www.wipo.int/edocs/lexdocs/laws/en/ir/ir001en.pdf
[310] Ervand Abrahamian, *Khomeinism: Essays on the Islamic Republic*, p. 38.

affiliated with the old regime, and it was then that they were given the mission of carrying out "good deeds" and supporting Iran's poor and disadvantaged communities.[311]

The other component of revolutionary identity on the worldviews of IRI is *anti-Americanism*. "Hostility to the United States has been the central plank of a revolutionary platform and appears to be the revolutionary policy."[312] The revolutionary process pushed *anti-Americanism* to the center of the regime's ideology and mass consciousness.[313] During the post-revolutionary period, the concerns of the United States were a powerful feature in decision-makers' worldviews. Particularly, they found it useful to manipulate anti-American sentiment in their discourse. This discourse expanded to the "Great Satan", and it has aimed to expel the United States from the region.[314]

After the victory of the revolution, Khomeini adopted a deliberately confrontational and strongly anti-American line.[315] Khomeini, in his first speech at Tehran's Behest Zahra, used a reminiscent tone of nationalization of the oil industry in 1953, and plainly displayed deep-rooted antagonism against the United States:

> "They [the Shah's regime] have given it to Americans and non-Americans, and in return, they have taken weapons to set up a [military] base for them . . . With trickery . . . America has taken our oil and in return, it has built a base for itself. It brought us weapons that our army cannot use, that require the help of their advisors and their experts. And this is what we get in return for our oil that, if the monarchy had continued for a few more years in this fashion, would have soon been fully depleted."[316]

IRI has strengthened its revolutionary identity through the impact of US relations as the hostage crisis, the Iran-Iraq War, the case of Iran Air Flight 655. In particular, the hostage crisis was seen as a symbol of the imperialism of the US on Iranian soil.[317] This also demonstrated that the identity of Iran no longer accommodated the US, as it had under the Shah.

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[311] Evaleila Paseran, Iran's Struggle Economic Independence, London: Routledge, 2011, p. 35.

[312] Shahram Chubin and Jerrold D. Green, "Engaging Iran: A U.S. Strategy," *Survival, Vol.* 40, No. 3 (Autumn 1998), p. 163.

[313] Alvin Z. Rubinstein and Donald E. Smith, "Anti-Americanism in the Third World", *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and SocialScience*, 1988, p. 43.

[314] Maximillian Terhalle, "Revolutionary Power and Socialization: Explaining the Persistence of Revolutionary Zeal in Iran's Foreign Policy", *Security Studies*, Vol. 18, 2009, p. 561.

[315] Mahdi Mozaffari, "Revolutionary, Thermidorian, and Enigmatic Foreign Policy: President Khatami and the 'Fear of the Wave'," *International Relations*, Vol.14, No. 9 (1999), p. 13.

[316] *Ettela'at* 14 Bahman 1357/February 3, 1979

[317] W. Beeman, "*The Great Satan Vs. the Mad Mullahs": How the United States and Iran Demonize Each Other,* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, p. 139

Finally, another facet of IRI's revolutionary identity is *Third Worldism.* It was considered a part of the revolutionary identity of the IRI against the "Western" *other*. The Third World in its different interpretations was considered an area where colonial powers disputed each other for centuries. Imperialist effects caused the "underdevelopment and backwardness" of the Third World. According to the Third Worldist idea, "the solution to underdevelopment and colonialism in the Third World is to reject the imperialistic system through liberation movements and revolutions, rejecting uneven development and refraining from implementing American and Western modernization theories improving their conditions depends on severing their links with the West."[318]

Begun with the 1979 Revolution, an "Islamic utopian romanticism" was accepted as the basis for Iran's strategic choices that inspired the revolutionary generation of Iran. The idea emerged that independence from both superpowers would start a process at the end of which the existing world order would be transformed.[319] At the same time, revolutionary leaders assumed that non-alignment would meet the foreign policy aims of the Islamic Republic as a Third World state, whereas an alliance with either the East or the West would not fit the Iranian religious, cultural, or historical context.[320] As a result, the regime's slogan of "neither East, nor West, only Islamic Republic", and its ceasing of membership in Cold War institutions such as CENTO, its prolonged war with Iraq, its support for the Palestine Liberation Organization, its sympathy for leftist movements in Latin America reflected this revolutionary idealism on its foreign policy.

Third worldism in Iranian foreign policy has institutionalized and taken its place in the constitutive dimension. The Iranian Constitution emphasizes the revolutionary aspects of the state identity.[321] It stands out as being "to assure the continuation of the struggle for the liberation of all deprived and oppressed people in the world" in the preamble of the constitution.[322] Similarly, Article 154 "supports the just struggle of freedom fighters against

[318]Mohsen Khalili, "Characteristics of a Revolutionary Foreign Policy from the Viewpoint of Constitution Experts", p. 97.
[319] Adib-Moghaddam, "Islamic Utopian Romanticism and the Foreign Policy Culture of Iran", *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 3, 2007, pp. 265–292.
[320]Houman A. Sadri, "Trends in Foreign Policy of Revolutionary Iran," *Journal of Third World Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Spring 1998), p. 14.
[321] Asghar Schirazi, *The Constitution of Iran. Politics and the State in Iran,* London and New York, 1997.
[322] The preamble of the Iranian Constitution
https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Iran_1989.pdf?lang=en

the oppressors in every corner of the globe." Here, the Iranian constitution justifies the IRI's goal of "the happiness of people in all of human society".[323]

In conclusion, Iran under the influence of revolutionary identity components redefined "self"and perceptions of "other". The reflection of revolutionary identity on the rhetoric of leaders clearly demonstrated the construction of state identity.

3.3.3. Revolutionary Identity Construction of IRI

Khomeini blended a religious and revolutionary goal with a firm political awareness of how to achieve it. The purpose of the revolution was quite clear for him. It was not economic or material. Khomeini delivered a speech defining IRI state identity a year before his death in 1989 as he saw it:

> "Some persons of dubious motives accuse us of pursuing a policy of hostility and disdain in international forums. With their pretended sympathies and childish objections, they contend that the Islamic Republic has incited enmities and lost prestige in the eyes of the East and the West. They should be asked: at what point did the Third World nations and Muslims, especially the nation of Iran, enjoy any esteem and credit with the East or West so that they should lose them now? . . . If the Iranian people should set aside all Islamic and Revolutionary principles and norms and demolish with their own hands the house of honor and credibility of the Prophet(s) and the pure Imams, then it is possible that the world-eaters accord to them official recognition as a weak and poor nation devoid of culture. . . . That will not be an Iran with an Islamic identity, but an Iran whose identification card grief of lamentations of the US and USSR, of the East and West, are for this reason, that Iran has not only gone out of their patronage but invites others to escape from the domination of tyrants."[324]

He urged Muslims to conduct a dialogue among themselves first, and to form alliances with Third World nations in accordance with Khomeini's vision of Iran's state identity, which was based on the rejection of the international order, and which was represented in the revolutionary slogan *"Neither East, Nor West*". Ayatollah Khomeini often said that Iran's most important foreign policy goal was standing up to the "Satanist world order" (referring to the US) by championing the protection of the *mostazafin*, who suffer at the hands of the *mustakbirin*, the Western great powers.[325] In other words, while revolutionaries rejected

[323] Walter Posch, "The Third World, Global Islam and Pragmatism"*, SWP Research Paper*, 2013, p. 15

[324] Abdar Rahman Koya and Imam Khomeini: *Life, Thought and Legacy*, Islamic Book Trust, 2009, p. 112

[325]A. Adib-Moghaddam, *Iran in World Politics: The Question of the Islamic Republic,* New York: Columbia University Press, 2008, p. 56

alignment with either of the camps, they set forth a model to be imitated by the oppressed part of the world, especially by other Islamic countries.

Although Khomeini's revolutionary doctrines were followed by different factions of the Islamic Republic, they parted ways over the contemporary meaning of that teaching, and the differences between them deepened. There is a complex discussion among factions on the "relationship between religion and state, ideology versus national interest, isolationism versus globalization, and which attitude to adopt vis-à-vis the outside world."[326]In short, this is a debate between the revolutionary ideals of 1979 and the spirit of reform, or in other words, a competition between the "old guard" and "the children of the revolution".

The moderate political forces led by Ali Akbar Rafsanjani, who ascended to the presidency in 1989, inherited an economic crisis and attempted to soften the image in the international order to rebuild the state's decimated economic and military capabilities. He also desired to promote "Iran's relations with other countries, especially Middle Eastern and Western authorities, which was the basis of his "both North and South policy".[327] He also was keen to mitigate the prevailing revolutionary rhetoric. Rafsanjani said, "We have no need to speak fanatically. We have no need to chant impractical slogans. We do not need to say things which are not acted upon, needlessly frightening people and blocking our own path."[328] On the other hand, despite all the revisionism of Rafsanjani, it continued to adhere to revolutionary principles. For this reason, Rafsanjani endeavored to rationalize the diverse array of religious-revolutionary bodies.

Iran prioritized dialogue and détente, and foreign policy elites finally changed their focus to cultural and civilizational factors in order to project a positive picture of Iran to the West and big powers.[329] In 1998, Mohammad Khatami, as a reformist president of the IRI, gave an interview to CNN in which he mentioned some kind of reconciliation with the United States.[330] In this interview, he directly touched on the hostility between the US and Iran, and

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[326] David Menashri, "Reform Versus Radicalism in the Islamic Republic", *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology*, Vol. 10, 2010, p. 60.

[327] Eva Rakel, "Paradigms of Iranian Foreign Policy in Central Asia and Beyond", *Perspectives on Global Development and Technology*, Vol. 2 (2003), p. 553.

[328] FBIS, 23 December 1991, 'President Urges "Prudent Policy" Above All'.

[329] Fariborz Arghavani Pirsalami, "Third Worldism and Ahmadinejad's Foreign Policy", *Iranian Review of Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 4, No. 2, Summer 2013, p. 83.

[330]Transcript of interview with Iranian President Mohammad Khatami, http://edition.cnn.com/WORLD/9801/07/iran/interview.html

the ideological element to it. Khatami emphasized de-escalation of tensions and the promotion of a critical and constructive conversation with the West.[331]

The dilution of revolutionary zeal in Iranian foreign policy during the 1990s, and the revolutionary tune in policy-making become rectified. The hardliners in the Majles, the Guardian Council; the circle around Khamanei, the *Sepah* leadership; and the Ministry of Intelligence and Security, as well as several revolutionary foundations and semi-governmental bodies,[332] sharpened their determination to oppose and overturn Khatami's reform program.[333]

The hardliners associated with the revolution were affected by the reform policies of President Mohammed Khatami and felt the revolutionary goals they fought for were weakened by Khatami's reforms. They felt a sense of isolation and alienation in the Islamic Republic. The reform movement – in their eyes – focused on political change; the role of these social groups in building the Islamic state and maintaining the regime of power was forgotten.[334] Additionally, the Supreme Leader and his office were also a strong obstacle against Khatami's "reformist stance".Khamenei is directly linked to the revolutionary tradition since it is through the Islamic Revolution of 1979 that revolutionary discourses were strengthened and institutionalized with *velayet-e faqih*. Without the revolutionist nature of his speeches, his office may cease to exist, as it is those discourses that created his position.

These significant markers of revolutionary identity signaled the beginning of a prolonged struggle over Khomeini's heritage among "the children of the revolution." Khomeini's followers struggled to define the structure and control of the new Islamic political order. When Mahmoud Ahmadinejad came to power in 2005, it was defined as a "twenty-year spasm"[335] typical of all great revolutions.In this context, Ahmadinejad's presidency sought to construct a state identity without disowning Khomeini's revolutionary ideals. In other words, the last groups of "the children of the Islamic revolution" turned politicians have sought to

[331] Dehghani Firouzabadi and Seyed Jalal. "The Discourse of Justice-Oriented Principlism in Ahmadinejad Government", *Political Knowledge (*Spring and summer 2007), Vol. 3, No. 1.

[332]The Foundation of the Dispossessed and Self-Sacrificers and the Foundation of the Martyrs.

[333] Michael Axworthy, *Revolutionary Iran: a History of the Islamic Republic*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 340.

[334]Anoush Ehteshami& Mahjoob Zweiri, Iran and the Rise of its neoconservatives, I.B. Tauris, 2007, p. 86.

[335] Fred Halliday, "Iran's Revolutionary Spasm," *Open Democracy,* 2005, www.opendemocracy.net/globalization-vision_reflections/iran_2642.jsp

follow the line of Khomeini.[336] Hence, Ahmadinejad and the neo-radicals emphasized a return to the original revolutionary principles.

Ahmadinejad revitalized the revolutionary stance by reflecting the components that make up the revolutionary identity to his own discourse and foreign policy. First of all, Ahmadinejad portrayed himself as a guardian of the revolutionary flame. The urgent concerns of President Ahmedinejad are not political rights, freedom of expression, and the modernization of the Iranian state, but social justice for the people of Iran.[337] Indeed, the foundation of the Islamic Republic highlights the achievement of justice as a major revolutionary aim. While reformers tended to stress political justice and institutional development, the conservative rhetoric focused on economic and social development.[338] Ahmadinejad derived much of his support from the poorer and more rural part of the population. He also emphasized his humble origins and focused on the Basijis, the poor, the uneducated, and traditional-minded Iranians from the provinces. For this reason, he represented a return to the original revolutionary principles of *social justice.*

Secondly, in the revolutionary sphere, Iran adopted a *self-sufficiency* strategy in the political and economic areas. This tactic isolated Iran, which Iranian officials did not want, but it was the logical outcome of the Iranian Islamic Revolution.[339] Ahmadinejad revitalized the self-sufficiency principle of revolutionary identity. For example, he was determined to use Iran's oil wealth to concentrate on domestic investment.[340] In order to tackle Iran's economic challenges, this economic policy encourages increased domestic investment by directing oil earnings to local firms.[341]

Additionally, anti-Western views in his rhetoric sign tended to have a confrontational tone against the United States and its Western allies. In this context, while Ahmadinejad established state identity as a revolutionary, he reintroduced and amplified Ayatollah Khomeini's rhetoric including anti-Americanism.In addition to regional developments such as

[336] Said Amir Arjomand, Has Iran's Islamic Revolution Ended? *Radical Historical Review*, Issue 105, 2009, p. 136.
[337]Anoush Ehteshami& Mahjoob Zweiri, Iran and the Rise of its neoconservatives, I.B. Tauris, 2007, p. 86.
[338] David Menashri, Reform Versus Radicalism in the Islamic Republic, *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology*, 2010, vol. 10, p. 64.
[339] Amir M. Haji-Yousefi, Iran's Foreign Policy during Ahmadinejad: From Confrontation to Accommodation, *Annual Conference of the Canadian Political Science Association*, 2010, p. 5
[340] Ansari, The Ahmadinejad Presidency: Domestic Policy, 2011
[341] Ali Ansari, *Iran under Ahmadinejad: The Politics of Confrontation*, Adelphi Papers, Vol. 47, No. 393, London: ISS, 2007, pp. 67–68.

the US invasion in Afghanistan and Iraq, he began internationalizing the standoff over its nuclear program.[342] Ahmadinejad initially referred to "international treaties and laws to justify the civilian nature of Iran's nuclear technology, and argued that the only way to achieve peace with the West was through dialogue and negotiations." Ahmadinejad was adamant during his first visit to the United Nations General Assembly in New York, saying that the Western 'hegemonic' powers' position on Iran's nuclear weapons program was only a ploy to deter Iran from establishing civilian nuclear power.[343] Actually, this harsh discourse of the president ultimately resulted in the UNSC sanctions on Iran's economic activities. In this regard, Iran's nuclear activities with anti-Western sentiments and the reactions of the West strengthen "its decision to reorient its policies toward the East".[344] Hence, the "look to the East" policy under Ahmadinejad created a delicate balancing act with this policy against the West.

Fourthly, the priorities of Iranian foreign policy shifted towards deepening relations with the Third World, especially Africa and Latin America. Weak and impoverished African countries, on the one hand, and leftist Latin American regimes, on the other, have been thrust into the spotlight of Iranian diplomacy.[345] Ahmadinejad's travels and meetings were mostly to countries that faced historical colonialism and economic exploitation, as well as to countries that felt the need for justice in international diplomacy. Additionally, despite the opposite ideological differences with Iran, relations with Venezuela and Cuba are important. Ahmadinejad's decision to ally with these countries shows him using the armory of his revolutionary principles. With the image of the "anti-imperialist" hero who is committed to overcoming the imbalance in the international system, he focused on the long-suffering Third World. This was signaled in his speeches at the United Nations General Assembly, in which he emphasized the need for justice, peace, ethics, the balance of power, non-discrimination, and equality in the world.[346]Finally, in his discourse, these countries on these continents have common characteristics with Iran, and they encounter the impacts of imperialism. However, Ahmadinejad tied the experiences of Asia, Africa, and Latin America, and the Arab World

[342]Bidjan Nashat, "Iran's Tactical Foreign Policy Rhetoric", *Middle East Institute*, 2009, https://mei.edu/publications/irans-tactical-foreign-policy-rhetoric

[343] Kasra Naji, *Ahmadinejad: The Secret History of Iran's Radical Leader*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2008, pp. 94–95.

[344] Sanam Vakil, "Iran: Balancing East against West", *The Washington Quarterly,* Vol. 29, No. 4 (Autumn 2006), p. 63

[345] Fariborz Arghavani Pirsalami, p. 86

[346]Minoo Alemi, "A Discourse-Historical Analysis of Two Iranian Presidents", Speeches at the UN General Assembly, *International Journal of Society, Culture and Language*, 2017, pp. 1–17.

together as sharing a common fate with respect to the struggle against the aggressor in his discourse.

> "Unfortunately the humanity has witnessed that in all long wars, like the Korean and Vietnam wars, the war of the Zionists against Palestinians and Lebanon, war of Saddam against the people of Iran and ethnic wars of Europe and Africa, one of the members of the Security Council was one of the belligerents or supported one party against the other, usually the aggressor, or the conflict itself."[347]

Ahmadinejad also became a strong supporter of the unity of the Ummah that contributed to the percentage values of revolutionizing tradition. Adhering to Khomeini, he is convinced of the illegitimacy of Israeli statehood, and he used anti-Israel rhetoric. Ahmadinejad said, "This regime that is occupying Qods must be eliminated from the pages of history".[348] The revolutionary stance of Iran that viewed "the world as a war between oppressed and oppressor divided the world into two positions: *domination and anti-domination"*,[349]in Ahmadinejad's rhetoric.This rhetoric provides that Iran could insist on the illegitimacy of the state of Israel, thereby winning the hearts and minds of the oppressed Arab peoples (*ummah*):[350]

> "The establishment of the occupying regime of Qods [Jerusalem] was a major move by the world oppressor [the United States] against the Islamic world. The situation has changed in this historical struggle. Sometimes the Muslims have won and moved forward and the world oppressor was forced to withdraw."[351]

In this regard,foreign policy organized political and diplomatic efforts to prosecute Israeli officials in international courts and the UN Human Rights Council from the perspective of the Zionist regime and had a strong presence in the final decision of the council.[352] This behavior

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[347]Ahmadinejad, "President Ahmadinejad Addressing 62nd UN General Assembly."

[348]Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, quoted in Trita Parsi, *Treacherous Alliance*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007, p. 1. In October 2005, quoting Khomeini, he included in a speech the words '*in rejimeh eshghalgareh Qods bayad az safeyeh ruzegar mahv shavad*', which in a more or less literal translation means 'this Jerusalem-occupying regime must disappear from the page of time'. But many Western media reports used a pithier translation that had been used by the Iranian regime to translate the same phrase before: 'Israel must be wiped from the map'. See: Michael Axworthy, *Revolutionary Iran: a History of the Islamic Republic*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013

[349] M. Mohammadi, *The Future of the International System and Iran's Foreign Policy*, 2008 quoted inAmir M. Haji-Yousefi, **"**Iran's Foreign Policy during Ahmadinejad: From Confrontation to Accommodation"**,** Annual Conference of the Canadian Political Science Association, 2010, p. 7

[350]Fred Halliday, *The Middle East in International Relations*, chaps. 4–7.

[351] Text of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's Speech, *The New York Times*, 30 October 2005. https://www.nytimes.com/2005/10/30/weekinreview/text-of-mahmoud-ahmadinejads-speech.html

[352] Mohammad Ali Tavana, "Analysis of Ahmadinejad Government's Foreign Policy", *International Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 4 No. 8, Winter 2014, p. 61.

of Iran affected Venezuela, which supported Hamas, expelled Israel's ambassador, and cut its relations with that country.[353]

All the components of Iran's revolutionary identity have been revitalized in Ahmadinejad's discourse. The line of Ayatollah Khomeini was followed by discourses that were closer to the radical line that followed immediately after the revolution. However, these revolutionary ideals constantly dominate the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamanei's political discourse. In Khamenei's discourse in particular, anti-Americanism as a component of revolutionary identity was remarkably consistent and enduring. He seamlessly related the issue of anti-Americanism to the cruelty, greed, and sinister plots of "Global Arrogance". He also held strongly that "Tehran must not compromise in the face of U.S. pressure or intimidation",[354] stating,

> "It is natural that our Islamic system should be viewed as an enemy and an intolerable rival by such an oppressive power as the United States, which is trying to establish a global dictatorship and further its own interests by dominating other nations and trampling on their rights. It is also clear that the conflict and confrontation between the two is something natural and unavoidable."[355]

Additionally, Khamanei strongly believed in the necessity of economic development and prosperity for all social strata based on *social justice*. These ideal visions of Khamenei were linked with *self-sufficiency*, political independence. In his words, "From the beginning of the Revolution until today we have been discussing the issue of self-sufficiency. We should think of self-sufficiency in all areas. The power of the country lies in self-sufficiency. The country's power and reputation lies in self-sufficiency."[356]

The Supreme Leader underlined in his discourses that the whole Muslim *Ummah* suffered from the *imperialist* stance of the West. According to him, "the West and the United States opposed progress and development in the Middle East region, a region which possesses most

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[353] Alireza Sanei, *Foreign policy of the ninth government towards Latin America, in foundation ruling and practical policy of the ninth government in international relations*, Tehran: the center of research and documentation of presidency

[354]Karim Sadjadpour, *Reading Khamenei: The World view of Iran's Most Powerful Leader*, Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2009, p. 14.

[355]https://english.khamenei.ir/news/128/Leader-s-Address-to-Students-at-Shahid-Beheshti-University

[356]https://english.khamenei.ir/news/6715/There-will-be-no-negotiations-and-no-war

of the world's oil, and which is one of the most sensitive regions in the world. They want this populous region, which is rich in mineral resources, to be in need of them forever."[357]

3.4. Conclusion

Chapter 3 reviewed reviewed the reconstruction of IRI identity and the competition between identities, which were national, religious, and revolutionary after the Islamic revolution. While the political elites stress different identities of state via discourse, importantly, this contestation between various identities shapes the foreign policy behaviors of the Iranian state.

Initially, the historical recollections, shaped the self-structuring of state identities. The Islamic revolution shared certain characteristics with the Tobacco movement, which forced the Shah to revoke the concessions, the Constitutional Resolution that limited the Shah's power, and the National Movement that forced Muhammad Reza Shah into exile. Along with the Islamic revolution, the struggle of opposition movements to the other in Iranian history was being constructed again. The West's negative intervention in Iran's affairs created Iran's anti-imperialist stance. The monarchy of the Shah was criticized as being a "puppet of the West" because of the insertion of Westerners and foreign values.

The intellectuals embraced the struggle against Western imperialism based on A'li Ahmad's idea of *gharbzadegi*. Shariati posited "Islamism" as a remedy for anti-imperialism in his works. In "Islamic Government", Khomeini made a historical analysis of imperialism in Iran and claimed it with the assertion of the *velayet-e faqih* as the central principle of the struggle with imperialism.

After the revolution, the characteristic features of Iran's state identity created the "utopian" romance. Firstly, Iranian identity, combined with the Shi'a sense of political activism, was tied to a cultural sense of justice, fairness, and rejection of oppression. Secondly, the sense of its victimization and humiliation by others becomes both genuine and an essential prerequisite to understanding foreign policy. In addition to the utopian approach, the Islamic Revolution, which had been fueled by a powerful wave of opposition to the West and had attained economic independence and *self-sufficiency* among its key goals, had been swiftly followed by the Iran-Iraq War. This served to strengthen such feelings of nationalism and the national

[357] https://english.khamenei.ir/news/96/Leader-s-Address-to-High-School-Students

identity discourse of the state came to the fore. Because the main theme of Iran's national identity depends on the "independence" and "fear of foreign meddling" components. The war led to strengthening the notion of independence and affected the national identity consolidation of the IRI. On the other hand, after the revolutionary change of Iran, the local environment, and the regional environment were restructured with radical changes in the political agent. Iran's regional and international relations were defined based on revolutionary principles.

Consequently, this chapter has illustrated that Iran's perception of self and other were constructed through national, religious, and revolutionary identity. While post-revolutionary decision-makers' discourse shaped state identity and foreign policy behavior, an intersection and clash points of state identity of Iran emerged in its national, religious, and revolutionary identities. However, this point will be discussed with cases in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4
MULTIPLE IDENTITIES IN THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN FOREIGN POLICY

The state identity constructs self-conceptions and perceptions of the other. This identity is formed over time and colors the political apparatuses of the state. In the Iranian case, as shown in the preceding chapters, the Islamic Republic regime has built its state identity on a combination of nationalist, religious and revolutionary characteristics. Hence, this study implies that foreign policy decisions are influenced by state identity, as well as multiple state identities.

Notwithstanding the varying characteristics of so-called state identity, when it comes to politics and foreign policy, the ruling elite strategically or pragmatically employ one of those identities, or a configuration of them. The main purpose of this section is to show these identities are being defined and redefined by the authorities. This will illustrate how the Islamic Republic's ruling elite selectively has used those identities in a number of cases.

In the research, the "Hostage Crisis", "Iran-Iraq War", "Palestine Issue", "Nuclear Issue" and "Syrian Civil War" will be used as case studies for the discourses of Iranian officials. The multiple state identities that Iran defined after the revolution plays an important role in determining its foreign policy in the selected cases.

4.1. Case 1: The Hostage Crisis 1979–1980

On November 4, 1979, group of Iranian students, as part of a larger demonstration being held to commemorate the death of students killed by the Shah's forces the previous year,[358] began to rally around the Embassy of the United States of America in Tehran. The students managed to seize the building. The students captured 61– ultimately 52 – American hostages,[359] touching off a 444-day hostage crisis.

[358]On November 3, 1978, dozens of students were killed or injured as a result of the shooting of the demonstrators at Tehran University by the Shah's security forces.

[359] Initially, the students took 66 people hostage inside. Thirteen of them who were women, African Americans, or non-US citizens were later released. They were released by the order of Khomeini between 19 and 20

The students explained that they had acted to protest the protection and asylum granted by the American government to the ousted Shah under the pretext of life-saving medical treatment.[360] However, in the historical memory of the Iranian nation, and in particular the revolutionaries, was the 1953 coup that resulted in the overthrow of the Mosaddeq government. Moreover, the coup resulted in the return of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi to Iran, and the continuation of his dictatorial regime.

Prime Minister Mehdi Bazargan also opposed the seizure of the embassy, and his foreign minister began a cautious program of rapprochement with the USA, meeting with the American national security advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski in Algiers on November 1, 1979. They asked the US not to accept the Shah into the country and to hand him over to Iran, but the US remained firm and did not accept the demands of the government. Indeed, both men expressed their fear that the Shah would use the US as a base to launch a counterrevolution. Brzezinski attempted to assuage their anxieties by trying to communicate the authenticity of the Shah's medical condition, and by encouraging them to sue for his assets in the American courts.[361]

The obvious result of the occupation was that on November 6, Bazargan and most members of his cabinet offered their resignation. He realized that he could not garner support from Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini or the Council of the Islamic Revolution for the evacuation of students from the embassy. After his resignation, the Revolutionary council took over the executive affairs.

By publishing secret documents they collected and saved from the US Embassy, the students claimed that some of the moderate politicians were in contact with the embassy and accused them of betraying the revolution and the public.[362] For this reason,the bulk of the Provisional Government's former leaders were imprisoned and barred from engaging in politics.

The occupation of the embassy meant fighting the US globally and ensuring the overthrow of the Shah. However, the occupation eventuated freezing Iranian assets in the US and cutting

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November 1979. Another hostage was also later released for medical reasons on 11 July 1980. See: Massoumeh Ebtekar, "*Takeover in Tehran"*, Vancouver: Talon Books, 2000.

[360] Massoumeh Ebtekar, ibid., p. 25.

[361]Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Adviser 1977–1981.* New York: Farrar, 1983, p. 27.

[362] Mohsen Milani, *The Making of Iran's Islamic Revolution*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1994, p. 312.

off bilateral diplomatic relations.[363]President Jimmy Carter responded to the situation by placing an embargo on the importation of Iranian oil and freezing Iranian assets in the US. Executive Order No. 12170 was given on November 14, blocking Iranian government property in the US, providing a means of hurting the Iranian regime.[364] The freeze placed serious politican and economic pressure on the Iranians.Washington also desire to create a reaction in the international public and with its allies. The next step for Washington was to convince its closest European allies, who were also Iran's largest trading partners, to support economic sanctions.[365]

In April 1980, the Carter Administration embarked on an ambitious military rescue of the hostages, Operation Eagle Claw, in collaboration with other units of the US armed forces. The operation failed. Upon stopping the operation for logistical reasons, three US helicopters crashed with a large C-130 military transport plane on the way back to the base, resulting in the death of eight soldiers.

In June, Ayatollah Khomeini sent a letter to the Islamic Consultative Assembly (Majles-e Shura-ye Islami) about the American hostages, and asked for the assembly's decision on the matter. On January 20, 1981, the hostage crisis was concluded after 444 days. With the Algiers Agreement, it was decided to release the hostages and lift the US trade embargo.

Indeed, the hostage crisis was a turning point in the construction of state identity in Iran. The self-definition of the revolutionary regime shaped the role of multiple state identities. This occupation undoubtedly created an external enemy for the Islamic government.

4.1.1. National Identity Perspective

Firstly, Iran's national identity in the post-revolutionary years highlighted *self*, especially with regard to "sovereignty" and "struggle against external threats". To the IRI, the US government was seen as an "external threat" exerting unwanted and unwarranted power on Iranian citizens and leaders. The embassy had a strong symbolic presence as a place of the

[363] Iran Hostage Crisis, Britannica Academic, *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 31 Jan 2020.

[364] https://www.iranwatch.org/library/government/united-states/executive-branch/white-house/executive-order-12170-blocking-iranian-government-property

[365] Christian Emery, *US Foreign Policy and the Iranian Revolution*, Palgrave Mcmillan, 2013, p. 152.

"malicious imperial designs" which overthrew the 'democratic' Mosaddeq government in the political consciousness of the Iranians, orchestrated by the CIA in 1953.[366]

In other words, it represented the loss of Iranian sovereignty in 1953. The hostage crisis served as a founding moment for Iran that displayed its independence and emancipation from external tutelage. It has underlined Iranians' conception of their history, in which powerful external enemies have sought to conquer Iran, only to witness its rich civilization emerge once again from the ashes. Masoumeh Ebtekar, who was among the occupying students during the hostage crisis said,

> "A strong sense of devotion and love for the values of the revolution and for Iran as the homeland of a free people filled our minds and hearts. Our reading of our own history told us that we had to act quickly. The stubborn and bullying attitude of the American government as it confronted the Islamic Revolution made it clear that we had few alternatives left to consider."[367]

However, the hostage crisis not only meant that Iran was battling against an "external threat" to its national identity; it was also a battle against liberal nationalism. According to Halliday, in order to weaken the legitimacy that anterior traditions such as communism and secular nationalism possessed, Khomeini and his associates needed to create a distinctive state identity. This identity denied these earlier oppositions and their leaders, and replaced the secular and nationalist ideas of earlier decades of the Islamic Revolution. For this reason, the major moderate and national groups remained in place after the revolution, but they were impressed by the dynamics of the ongoing power struggle. In this period Khomeini declared,

> "We know that the big plundering world powers have their own various agents of different categories among the people of other nations, such agents including nationalists, the imposter intellectuals and turban-wearing hypocrites, the latter being the most dangerous of all if given the chance. Sometimes they live among the people for thirty or forty years, assuming a quasi Islamic, a clerical and a sanctimonious and saintly appearance, or hide themselves under such masks as 'pan-Iranism' or pretend to be patriotic, resorting to all possible subterfuges, and when they find the opportunity to inflict their blow upon the society."[368]

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[366] Ali M. Ansari, *Confronting Iran: The Failure of American Foreign Policy and the Roots of Mistrust*, London: Hurst & Company, 2006, p. 89.

[367] Massoumeh Ebtekar, ibid., p. 52.

[368] R. Khomeini, The Last Message: The Political and Divine Will of His Holiness Imam Khomeini, Tehran: The Institute for Compilation and Publication of the Works of Imam Khomeini, International Affairs Division Translation Unit, 1998, p. 47

However, in general, the "liberal nationalists" had based their foreign policy on not participating in international conflicts and making concessions to any country after the triumph of the Islamic Revolution. The basis of the nationalist point of view was the negative balance that aimed to ensure Iran's independence and national sovereignty by relying on positive neutrality in its non-alliance and conflicts with the great powers. According to liberal nationalists, the US withdraw from Iran was enough, the next war against the US was useless. Moreover, the prime minister of the provisional government, Bazargan, wanted an accommodation with the West for the future of Iran. Bazargan had opposed the hostage taking for moral and legal reasons, and condemned the actions of the students, saying, "This is a very contrary act by students and everyone is against it. Their actions are against the revolution, Islam, the imam, and everything".[369]

However, the tendency of the leader of the revolution to gear the revolutionaries was effective during the crisis. Firstly, the hostage crisis was used and promoted to discredit the national-liberals who wanted accommodation with the West. In other words, the nationalist provisional government quickly encountered a reaction because of the competition between nationalists and *the lines of Imam*. When the US embassy was captured in November, the foreign minister of the Provisional Government, Ebrahim Yazdi went to Qom to report the incident to Khomeini. He was determined to "go back and kick those people [the hostage-takers] out![370] Bazargan and Yazdi were committed to following the rules of international diplomacy and law, so they waited for this reaction from both Iranians and Khomeini. However, the speeches of Khomeini turned favorable to the hostage-takers after meeting with Yazdi. According to Yazdi, "Khomeini's sudden change of mind occurred after he saw television scenes of large crowds gathering around the embassy and demonstrating solidarity with students."[371]

Moreover, Khomeini used this crisis to his advantage primarily to sideline the "US-friendly nationalist."[372] The Bazargan government resigned on 6 November 1979. Though respectful of Khomeini, Bazargan was a critic of the post-revolutionary excesses.Bazargan said,

[369] Quoted from Hossien Karimifard, "Bazargan foreign policy analysis in the framework of the components of national identity", *Quarterly Journal of Political Research*, Vol. 6, No. 15, 2020.
[370] M. Reza Ghods and Thomas W. Foster, "Conversation with a Revolutionary", *Middle East Studies Association* Bulletin, Vol. 36, No. 1 (Summer 2002), p. 30
[371] İbid., p. 31.
[372]Mohammad Ayatollahi Tabaar, "Causes of the US Hostage Crisis in Iran: The Untold Account of the Communist Threat", *Security Studies*, 2017, Vol. 26, No. 4, p. 668.

"interference from the Moslem clergy had made it impossible for him to govern".[373] Not surprisingly, his tumultuous relations with Khomeini and his cohorts led to his resignation eight months after assuming office.[374] While Khomeini had rejected Bazargan's previous attempts to resign, this time, he welcomed it and called for a full purge of all imperialist elements. Khomeini withdrew his support, and soon after the provisional government was pushed aside in favor of Khomeini's Islamist supporters. The provisional government, according to Yazdi, had no choice but to resign because Islamic radicals at opposite poles of the political spectrum had attacked Bazargan's policy of nonalignment, accusing him and his foreign ministers of pro-Americanism.

After the provisional government resigned, Abu'l Hasan Banisadr became first the acting foreign minister and then the first president of revolutionary Iran; Sadeq Qotbzadeh became foreign minister. They held a foreign policy line that was close to the nationalist nonalignment policy of Mosaddeq and Bazargan.[375] Qotbzadeh believed in a nonalignment policy, using Mosaddeq's term "negative equilibrium" with what he called "honesty in word and indeed."[376]
As to the hostage crisis, Banisadr called for its peaceful end, which included delivering the hostages to the cabinet. This was rejected by Khomeini, who declared that the Majlis would decide on this issue.[377] This decision has deepened the opposition between "the Imam Line" and "the liberal nationalist."
On March 5, 1981, Banisadr gave a long speech at Tehran University. He focused on the absence of judicial security, by which he meant the arbitrary conduct of the hostage-takers.[378] The broadcasting services and mass rallies labeled him as a "Westoxicated (*gharbzad*)", a nationalist, a "compromising liberal" and a collaborator with the domestic and foreign enemies of the revolution within weeks. Banisadr was ousted in June 1981. He fled Iran into exile on June of the same year.[379]

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[373] "Bazargan Government Resigns in Iran", *Washington Post*, Nov 7, 1979, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1979/11/07/bazargan-government-resigns-in-iran/e4360d7c-31ba-4cd0-9cbb-4649d24f50f2
[374] Abbas Amanat, *Iran a Modern History*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017, p. 930.
[375] Ramazani, ibid., p. 54.
[376] Foreign Broadcast Information Service, Daily Reports – Middle East and North Africa, December 21, 1979, p. 27.
[377] The Iran Hostage Crisis: A Chronology of Daily Developments, April 1981, https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/Digitization/77922NCJRS.pdf
[378] Amanat, ibid., p. 967.
[379] See: Abol Hassan Bani-Sadr, *My Turn to Speak*, Washington, DC: Brassey's, 1991.

Thirdly, the hostage crisis served to channel the nationalist sentiment onto a convenient target.[380]After the collapse of the nationalist provisional government, "anti-Americanism was a commodity" to be appropriated for political benefit, for political forces clamoring for influence in an atmosphere of turmoil.[381] This is because anti-Americanism was seen as necessary to prove one's revolutionary and "Islamic" bona fides. Khomeini and his supporters deftly exploited the hysterical atmosphere of the embassy siege to propound the notion that they were the true anti-American patriots and guardians of the Iranian nation.[382]

Khomeini was interviewed on the television networks two weeks after the takeover. He criticized the Carter administration because of the admission of the Shah to the USA, and he defended the student hostage-takers:

> "What our nation has done is to arrest a bunch of spies, who according to the norms, should be investigated, tried, and treated in accordance with our own laws. As for what Carter has done, it is contrary to international laws; for the criminal [the Shah]—a criminal who has acted against a country—should come to the country concerned and be tried. . . . It is Carter who has acted against international norms, not us."[383]

A few days later, the students, basking in the support of the imam, issued a warning to the American government. They warned that "if it is felt that the U.S. threats are becoming a reality, all the hostages will be killed at once or if a military rescue attempt was made, the embassy, which has been a place of espionage, will blow up."[384]

In short, while the hostage crisis paved the way for the fall of Banisadr and the purging of the opposition, it alsobrought the greatest concentration of power into the hands of the line of the imam. The hostage crisis allowed Ayatollah Khomeini to assert Iran's state identity as a revolutionary Islamic powerhouse, which was useful in fending off domestic criticism and claiming leadership of the Muslim *umma* on the international stage.

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[380] Fred Halliday, "Iran and the Reagan Doctrine", *MERIP Middle East Report*, No. 140, Terrorism and Intervention (May– Jun. 1986), pp. 31–35.

[381]Mohammad Ayatollahi Tabaar, "Causes of the US Hostage Crisis in Iran: The Untold Account of the Communist Threat", *Security Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 4, 2017, p. 667.

[382] Milani, 1994, p. 171.

[383] Khomeini interview text, November 18, 1979, CSM, box 85, LC, JC. Daved Farber, *Taken Hostage*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005, p. 159

[384] Excerpt from "Statement No. 45 of the Muslim Student Followers of the Imam's Policy," November 21, 1979, CSM, box 85, LC, JC. Farber, ibid., pp. 159–160.

4.1.2. Religious Identity Perspective

Leader of the Revolution Khomeini was "uncharacteristically silent" until he assessed the effects of the hostage crisis, both on the domestic and international fronts. Ayatollah Khomeini found the crisis useful to realize his plans for Iran and the Muslim world. He supported the occupation of the embassy actively, and he sanctioned the entry into the embassy of Hojjat al-Islam Mohammad Musavi Kho'iniha[385] as prayer leader and spiritual guide to the 'students following the Imam's line', as they now called themselves.[386] This step by Khomeini was important for the line of Imam. One of the student leaders declared that 'It was the presence of Mr. Kho'iniha that enabled us to resist."[387] This had two meanings: first, the invading students were receiving open support of Khomeini; second, this prevented the students from being labeled as communists.[388] Moreover,it was decided to add "Muslim" to the head of "Following the Imam Line" that would distinguish theirs from the more secular student groups that also professed allegiance to Khomeini, most notably the well-organized communist Tudeh party.[389]

The fact that the hostage-takers were devout Muslims rather than leftist hooligans turnedthe crisis into an excellent opportunity for the construction of Iran's religious identity after the revolution. Firstly, the ummah as a significant component of Iranian religious identity demonstrates itself in the discourse of the Iranian officials. The hostage crisis helped consolidate Khomeini's Islamic order, labeled "the Islamic homeland", and its struggle for the ummah. The period of the hostage crisis was one that Tehran used to rally international support and build a network of contacts with Muslim groups around the world. Massoumeh Ebtekar said in her inside story during the hostage crisis, "Our messages also included warnings to Muslim and oppressed nations that their governments might be engaged in attempts to grant the Shah asylum. This, we argued, should be considered as an insult not only to the Iranian nation but to Muslims everywhere."[390]

[385] Kho'iniha was a close friend of the son of Khomeini and one of Khomeini's radical students, who were also on the directorate of Iranian radio and television.

[386] Baqer Moin, *Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah*, Thomas Dunne Books, 2000, p. 174.

[387] M. E. Asgharzadeh, *Kayhan-e Sal,* Tehran, 1364/1986, quoted in Moin, ibid.

[388] Mohammad Ayatollahi Tabaar, "Causes of the US Hostage Crisis in Iran: The Untold Account of the Communist Threat", *Security Studies*, 2017, Vol. 26, No. 4, p. 667.

[389] Mark Bowden, *Guests of the Ayatollah*, New York: Grove Press, 2006, p. 29.

[390] Massoumeh Ebtekar, ibid.

Moreover, the military action against Iran served to strengthen Iran's image among these groups.[391] Khomeini declared, "It is incumbent upon students in the secondary schools, the universities and the theology schools to expand their attacks against America and Israel. Thus America will be forced to return the criminal, deposed shah." This message means a call for action against *arrogance*. It is based on the interpretation of Khomeini's transnational idea of an "Islamic universal order".[392]The Hostage Crisis led to the endorsement of Khomeini not only as the leader of the revolution in Iran but indeed as the leader of 'the Imam of the Islamic Community of the World and the Hope of the World Oppressed.'

In a speech heard during the hostage crisis, Khomeini said, "You are on the right … It is his will that those who have been oppressed should assume leadership and become heirs to their own destiny and resources."[393] Khomeini emphasized that the motivation behind the hostage crisis was one of Islam and unity.

Secondly, the hostage crisis linked revolutionary Shi'ism as a component of religious identity of Iran. Shi'ism also relied on an element of social concession, charismatic leadership, the imamate, a persecution narrative, and an external *Other*, real or imagined. The alien other reappeared as the US to allow for the political legitimacy of the Shi'i clerical body and secure its ascendency. In the hostage crisis, the struggle against the *Other* was strengthened especially with Shiite symbols and images. Ayatollah Khomeini emphasized the *shahadat* of Husayn, saying to President Carter, "We welcome every opportunity of sacrifice as Shiites", when the American embassy was captured. This imagery establishes a vital Shi'a principle: better to die a martyr to righteousness than to live meekly under injustice. In a letter to Pope John Paul II,[394] Khomeini said,

> "We fear neither military action nor economic sanctions because we are followers of the *Imams* who gladly welcomed martyrdom. Our nation today welcomes martyrdom

[391] Fred Halliday, "Iranian Foreign Policy since 1979: Internationalism and Nationalism in the Islamic Revolution", In *Shi'ism and Social Protest, ed. Juan R.I. Cole and Nikki R. Keddie, New Haven:* Yale University Press, 1986, p. 104.

[392] R.K. Ramazani, "Iran's Foreign Policy: Contending Orientation", in *Iran's Revolution* ed. R.K. Ramazani, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990, p. 53.

[393]Shadi Gholizadeh and Derek W. Hook, "The Discursive Construction of the 1978–1979 Iranian Revolution in The Speeches of Ayatollah Khomeini", *Journal of Community& Applied Social Psychology*, 2012, Vol.22, pp. 174–186.

[394]In 1979, Pope John Paul II sent an envoy to Iran to help to solve the Hostage Crisis.

> with joy. Even if America intervenes militarily, we are not afraid. There are 35 million Iranians who are ready to face the U.S. and ready to die for the sake of justice."[395]

When the American navy sailed from the Indian Ocean and appeared at the entrance to the Persian Gulf, the Iranian navy commander-in-chief Ahmad Madani appeared before the people with a white shroud over his uniform. A crowd followed him, gathering in front of the American embassy under siege with shrouds, saying, "We are ready to die, we are ready for martyrdom." Thus, the American government emerged as an enemy of Islam through the martyrdom of Hussain and the tragedy of Karbala.

Thirdly, *velayat-e faqih* as another aspect of the religious identity of the IRI is strongly connected to the hostage crisis. The hostage crisis allowed the revolutionary clerics to gain approval for the proposed constitution that formally established an Islamic Republic.[396] Khomeini's overriding goal was that a *faqih* would rule the Islamic Republic; he calculated that his support of the student's action would ensure the realization of his vision. In this case, the Other reappeared as a demonized United States so as to allow for the political legitimacy of the Shi'i clerical body and to secure its ascendency. Additionally, Khomeini was able to associate the US with opposition to the *velayet-e faqih.* The first opposition movement was seen in the petition sent by Bazargan and seven members of the provisional government to Khomeini. According to them, "the proposed constitution violated popular sovereignty; lacked needed consensus endangered the notion with *akhundism*, elevated the ulama into a ruling class and undermined religion since future generations would blame all shortcomings on Islam."[397] In the sight of the provisional government, the actions of the Assembly of Experts constituted "a revolution against the revolution." They considered their original version of the constitution by announcing it to the public. According to Abrahamian, if the people were offered such an option, they would likely have accepted the draft of Bazargan.[398]The second issue wasthe clerical opposition to Khomeini's move towards a fully theocratic state, which came mainly from Ayatollah Reza Zanjani, Qomi, and Shari'atmadari.

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[395] Imam Khomeini's Reply to the Message of Pope John Paul II, November 12, 1979, https://www.imamreza.net/old/eng/imamreza.php?id=4975 (Last seen, November 18, 2020)

[396] Farhad Kazemi and Jo- Anne Hart, *"The Shi'i Praxis: Domestic Politics and Foreign Policy in Iran",* in *The Iranian Revolution and The Muslim World,* ed. David Menashri, Boulder: Westview Press, 1990, p. 62.

[397] "İttilaat, 19 September 1979", in Ervand Abrahamian, *The History of Modern Iran*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

[398] Ervand Abrahamian, *The History of Modern Iran*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008,

Grand Ayatollah Shari'atmadari[399]stood out in particular among these clerics. Shari'atmadari and the Muslim People Republican Party (MPRP) had campaigned openly against Khomeini's methods and brand of Islam.[400]According to him, "the principle of *velayet-e faqih* could be applied only in cases where the *sharia* had not provided an authorized agent, and then only when it was a matter of dealing with unavoidable issues."[401]

Despite the crisis that resulted from the occupation, Khomeini submitted the constitution to a referendum. It was held the day after *Ashura.* He also stated that those who abstained or voted no would encourage Americans, as well as desecrate the martyrs of the Islamic revolution. He equated the ulama with Islam and those opposing the constitution, especially intellectuals, with *Satan.*[402] In short, the December referendum served as a massive endorsement of the new constitution, and those opposed to Article 5, which invested in the all-powerful *faqih,* were forced to go along with the constitution. Hence, the constitution institutionalized the sovereignty of the *velayat-e faqih,* the Supreme Jurisprudent, who represents the highest institution of the political system in Iran.[403]

4.1.3. Revolutionary Identity Perspective

One of the important features of revolutionary foreign policy is that at first, revolutionary states have good relations with external forces; after a period of grace, though, these turned into conflict.[404] When the Iranian revolutionary regime came to power in February 1979, the occupation of the US embassy in November 1979 and the subsequent hostage crisis were the most important examples of this discourse. In particular, for the revolutionaries, the US embassy had a strong symbolic presence, reminiscent of the "1953 scenario". The Shah's admission to the United States brought back vivid memories of Operation AJAX, arousing feelings of fear and anger that the US was planning to undo the revolution, and to overthrow the revolutionary government.[405] In other words, the relationship turned from "mutual trust to

[399] Commanded a large following throughout the country, particularly in his native Azarbaijan, where many recognized his as their *Marja-e taqlid.*

[400] Moin, ibid., p. 176.

[401] Asghar Schirazi, "*The Constitution of Iran: Politics and the State in the Islamic Republic"*, London: I.B. Tauris, 1997, p. 48.

[402] Abrahamian, ibid.

[403] Arshin Adib-Moghaddam, "What is Radicalism? Power and Resistance in Iran", *Middle East Critique,* Vol. 21, No. 3, Fall 2012, p. 287.

[404] Halliday, pp. 167–168.

[405] Babak Ganji, *Politics of Confrontation: The Foreign Policy of the USA and Revolutionary Iran*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2012, pp. 148–149.

mutual suspicion" in this case, coinciding with dramatic growth in political consciousness in Iran.[406]

While the leader of the revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini, condoned the occupation because It was organized by Iranians and backed by a number of revolutionary groups, he also reiterated Iran's revolutionary aspiration. In fact, "Revolution", a concept that originated in the West, was transformed into an anti-Western word with an Iranian and religious coloring. Baqer Moin writes that acting in a revolutionary manner was approved by Khomeini, and "revolution" became a sacred word, sometimes more important than Islam.[407]Hence, he referred to the takeover as the "second" Islamic revolution, and "a second revolution more glorious than the first one"[408]

Moreover, the revolutionary identity of the state strengthened itself especially through the conflict with its moderate/nationalist side, and with the support of radical clerics. To interpret and undermine their nationalist rivals and the orthodox *ulama*, the fundamentalists successfully used and expanded the revolutionary character of state identity to enact a new Islamic Constitution and consolidate power.[409]

Firstly, the hostage crisis aims to bring about the victory of the downtrodden against arrogance with *anti-American* rhetoric. Ayatollah Khomeini reflected his *anti-American* stance in word and deed. As Takeyh stated, Khomeini claimed that the revolution was in danger from America's manipulations and its internal crimes, using them as a means of radicalizing the population.[410]Khomeini also began to call the US the 'Great Satan,' a strong rhetorical and symbolic structure added to the political culture and discourse of the Islamic Republic.[411] Anti-US rhetoric became a major tool for mass mobilization, and he constantly warned against the "underground treason" being devised in these embassies by the "great Satan, Carter" and called the hostages "the worst anti-God and anti-people criminals."[412]

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[406] A. Ansari, *Confronting Iran: The Failure of American Foreign Policy and the Roots of Mistrust,* London: C. Hurst, 2006, p. 70.
[407] Moin, ibid., p. 176.
[408] Moin, ibid., p. 176.
[409] Mohsen Milani, *The Making of Iran's Islamic Revolution*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1994, p. 202.
[410] Ray Takeyh, *Hidden Iran*, New York: Times Books, 2006, p. 24.
[411] William O. Beeman, *The "Great Satan" vs. The "Mad Mullahs": How the United States and Iran Demonize Each Other*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008, p. 119.
[412] David Menashri, *Iran: A Decade of War and Revolution,* New York: Holmes & Meier, 1990.

As a result of Iran's revolutionary identity, since being elevated to Supreme Leader in 1989, Khamenei has sought relentlessly to transform the character of Iran's revolutionary identity. He also holds largely negative views of the US, a fact which must be understood in light of his experience of Iran's significant Other. November 4, referring to the hostage crisis in 1979, is called the National Campaign Day against Global Hegemony. Khamanei stated that

> "Today is the day of the religious, revolutionary and creative young people that seize the spying slot and keep the enemy from any action."[413]

Khamenei also characterized the "hostage crisis" in the revolutionary vision of the state and declared, "A hostility of America to the Iranian people before and after the Islamic Revolution because the US administration had made every attempt, including official and informal, to defeat the Islamic Revolution. The revolutionary youth then seized the espionage nest and claimed that the US had failed the conspiracy."[414]

Secondly, according to the supreme leader, the significance of the hostage crisis even today, is that it neutralized the US imperialist effort in Iran.

> "The step taken by students to capture the [United States'] embassy [in Tehran] was a reaction to all these evil acts, which was carried out victoriously; I mean, it barred the activities of America [as a] rude superpower with excessive demands in the country; this is what revolution means. That superpower, which had gotten used for 25 years, [and] 30 years that anything it wanted to take place and be done in Iran, it would do it and Iran was owned by it and belonged to it, [from] its [political] establishment, its government, [and] its king, [to] its oil, its reserves, its mines, its future, [and] its everything [once] belonged to it and were now taken out of its hands and it was waiting for an opportunity to strike back."[415]

The occupation of the "den of spies", as the US embassy was characterized, was meant to reiterate the revolutionary, *anti-imperialist* character of the Iranian movement. The anti-imperialist discourse of Ayatollah Khomeini was codified as a revolutionary narrative, one of total victory of the Islamic Revolution against occupation, and "kindling flames of hope in the hearts of the enchained nations and creating a legend of self-reliance and ideological

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[413] Khamanei, the Islamic Republic, more profound than the US think, November 3, 2009, http://www.leader.ir/en/content/6087/Islamic-Republic,-more-profound-than-US-think

[414] Khamenei, "Ülkenin Sorunları Üstün Moral Inkilapçı Düşünceyle Giderilecek", https://www.leader.ir/tr/content/16640/%C4%B0slam-%C4%B0nk%C4%B1l%C3%A2b%C4%B1-Rehberinin-lise-ve-%C3%BCniversite-%C3%B6%C4%9Frencilerini-kabul%C3%BC

[415] Khamenei, The Leader's Remarks in Meeting with Thousands of Students, November 2, 2016, http://www.leader.ir/en/speech/16636/The-Leader%E2%80%99s-Remarks-in-Meeting-with-Thousands-of-Students

steadfastness for a nation contending with imperialism."[416] In addition to this, while Khomeini demonstrated Iran's revolutionary anti-imperialist mission through the embassy takeover, he also emphasized solidarity with the people of the Third World. Releasing the black and African American hostages was such a symbol of the struggle with imperialism. Marine Sergeant William Quarles, one of the hostages, gave a statement in a press conference condemning American imperialism, which strengthened Khomeini's position:

> "I think the American people have a lot to turn around and look at. . . . Having been kept hostage here for two weeks, I got a look at American imperialism. . . . I'd like to, if I could tell the American government to re-evaluate their foreign policies. A lot of them are terribly wrong and a lot of people are suffering from a few people at the top."[417]

Khomeinist rhetoric also aggregated a *Third Worldist* tendency with Shi'i elements in the ideology of revolutionary government:

> "The revolutionary Imam Husayn in Iran, who is fighting imperialism, is not alone now. In addition to some 35,000,000 Iranians who bravely and devotedly rally around him, there are billions of Muslims and non-Muslims everywhere in Syria, Libya, Algeria, Lebanon and Palestine, Pakistan, Africa, the Omani liberation front, Eritrea, the Chilean resistance, the Chadian liberation movement, Spain, Korea, and many other places as well as the entire Islamic World and the oppressed all over the world, who all support Iran, the revolution and Imam Husayn, represented in leader Imam Ayatollah Khomeini."[418]

Khomeini also believed that nearly all Iran's economic problems arise from subservience to Western imperialism – "the world-devouring" imperialism. Additionally, during the hostage crisis, all Iranian assets in the US, including deposits in American banks, were frozen. It means that billions of dollars in Iranian assets were affected. When Iran was threatened with an economic blockade that would have greatly reduced its food supplies, the Ayatollah was fond of reminding his listeners that tbe Prophet Mohammad ate only one date a day.

> "We are a nation used to hunger – for thirty-five years of fifty years. We are used to these difficulties. We shall go on fasting, having one meal a day. If they resort to an economic blockade … it is a half baked idea that will not materialize."[419]

For Khomeini and other revolutionaries, American imperialism was seen as having total control over the Iranian economy during the Shah period. For this reason, the hostage crisis

[416]Massoumeh Ebtekar, ibid., p.70.

[417] Quoted in Daved Farber, *Taken Hostage*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005, pp. 157–158.

[418] BBC, "Survey of World Broadcast (SWB), Part IV, The Middle East November 24, 1979", quoted in Fred Halliday, *Iranian Foreign Policy since 1979*.

[419] SWB, November 12, 1979, quoted in Halliday's endnote.

stressed a total break with imperialist power in order to build a *self-sufficient* economy with the revolutionary character of the new state. The theme of a new economic model reduces Iran's dependence on foreign income and prolongs and makes easier Iran's survival in the face of economic pressures placed on it by the outside world.[420]"*Social justice* and economic independence were seen as the main economic goals to be achieved, among other means, through the expansion of the welfare state, extension of public ownership, creation of an active cooperative sector, as well as by strengthening the agricultural and industrial sectors for greater self-reliance."[421]

In conclusion, the hostage crisis as a case reflects the different identity perspectives of Iranian state identity through intellectual discourses. As a next case, the Iraq War (1980–1988) will be discussed.

4.2. Case 2: The Iran-Iraq War (1980–1988)

The Iran-Iraq War started when the Iraqi armed forces invaded Iran on September 22, 1980 and occupied a short strip of land at its Western borders close to the Persian Gulf.The conflict, as the longest and one of the most devastating wars in terms of casualties since World War II, had a cataclysmic impact on the construction of post-revolutionary state identity in Iran.[422] When the war started, the Islamic Republic regime was still in the process of consolidating its power. On the one hand, this occupation was viewed as "primarily a response to its fear of Iranian fundamentalism".[423] On the other hand, many reasons led the relationship between Iran and Iraq to conflict. These included border disputes, especially the status of the Shatt al-Arab and the Iranian Khuzestan province, religious and national differences, competition for regional leadership, and ancient animosities between the two nations.[424]

Saddam Hussein al-Tikriti perceived that the unstable period after the revolution would prove a "window of opportunity" for his regime. He intended the war to last only a few weeks but

[420] Fred Halliday, ibid., p. 93

[421] "Economy x. Under the Islamic Republic", in *Encyclopedia Iranica*, Vol. VIII, Fasc. 2, pp. 156–163, available online at: http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/economy-x-under-the-islamic-republic (accessed on November 26, 2020).

[422] Suzanne Maloney, "Identity and Change in Iranian Foreign Policy" in *Identity and Foreign Policy in the Middle East*, ed. S. Telhami and M. Barnett, 2002, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, p. 106.

[423] Stephen M. Walt, *Revolution and War*, Ithaca and New York: Cornell University Press, 1996, p. 277.

[424] Dilip Hiro, *The Longest War: The Iran-Iraq Military Conflict*, New York: Routledge, 1991. Tareq Y. Ismael, *Iran, and Iraq: Roots of Conflict*, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1982. Shirin Tahir-Kheli, Shaheen Ayubi, *The Iran-Iraq War: New Weapons, Old Conflicts*, Praeger, 1983. Sepehr Zabih, *Iran Since the Revolution*, London: Routledge 1982.

his 'limited war' strategy failed from 1980 to 1981. Saddam believed that the Iranians would be so unprepared, and the invasion would be such a shock, that they would grab the chance of an early peace to avoid further defeat and further damage. For this reason, Saddam accepted UN Security Council Resolution 479 on 28 September 1980, which called for a ceasefire. However, this resolution was not accepted by Iranians. Iraq captured the strategic Iranian cities of Khorramshahr and besieged Abadan, but Iranian troops halted the march of Iraqis. In the spring of 1982, Iran liberated a large portion of its territory that had been held by Iraqi forces. The liberation of Khorramshahr from Iraqi armed forces in May 1982 is widely regarded as a watershed moment in the Iran-Iraq War.

Iran launched large-scale offensives during 1983, all of which failed to cross the Iraqi line and were repelled with heavy losses. Despite this, Iraqi calls for an end to hostilities were rejected. In early 1984, the Iranian government reiterated its determination to overthrow the Saddam Hussein regime.[425] The radical leaders questioned the ceasefire and encouraged Khomeini to expand the war into Iraqi territory.

Saddam started the so-called 'tanker war' in early 1984 to take this stalemate in the war to a new potential arena.[426] Iran also attempted to paralyze the Iraqi economy after 1984, with small-scale retaliatory attacks on tankers and mining operations. As a result, the potential economic risks of war threatened not only Iraq but also the global economy, and this situation dragged the Western powers into the war in 1987 and 1988.

The conflict continued until the summer of 1988, when Iran accepted UN Security Council Ceasefire Resolution 598.[427]The Iraqi invasion was a turning point in foreign policy, and the dimensions of Iran's identities continued to shape its foreign policy agenda. The continuation of war, nationalism, religion, and revolution intersected or conflicted to create the state identity of the IRI; however, the Iran-Iraq War left an important imprint on the national identity of the IRI.

4.2.1. National Identity Perspective

Although the transnational vision of the *umma* and Islamism has become the dominant feature of the Iranian state identity and official rhetoric, Iraq's September 1980 attack on Iran had a

[425] Efraim Karsh, *Essential Histories: The Iran-Iraq War 1980–1988*, Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2002, p. 41.
[426] Ibid., p. 50.
[427] United Nations Security Council Resolution 598, 20 July 1987, http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/598, Rouhullah K. Ramazani, "Iran Foreign Policy: Contending Orientations," *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 43, No. 2, Spring 1989, pp. 210–217.

significant effect in elevating nationalism to a more influential role in the Islamic Republic. While this war revitalized the national identity of Iran, it led to greater emphasis within Iran on nationalist values and themes. According to Moghaddam,the Iranian revolution challenged the concept of national sovereignty through foregrounded pan-Islamic norms and institutions.[428]However, the attack by a foreign power emphasized the concept of sovereignty, motivating Iran to protect its border and igniting deep and strong patriotism throughout Iranian society.[429] In other words, Iran's sensitivity to occupation and the external threat invoked national sentiments despite the IRI's focus on a universal narrative of Muslim identity.

Firstly, Iranian nationalism was defined through patriotism upon the outbreak of war. Iranian leaders regularly appealed to patriotic sentiment by constantly invoking the '*nation*'. Khomeini increasingly began to speak of the nationalist-patriotic terminology, the Iranian patriot, and the honorable people of Iran. He called on the people to fight to the death for their beloved homeland.[430] "We must all try to give this nation hope."[431] President Bani Sadr also outlined that "our nation is ready to tolerate war hardships and is willing to endure the loss of those who make the ultimate sacrifice."[432]

Furthermore, Ayatollah Khomeini addressed the Iraqi people and army in his speeches; however, an item makes clear that his real target audience is was the Iranian people. He delivered these speeches in *Persian*. He tapped into popular feeling by underlining that failure would be a national embarrassment.[433]. Khomeini added, "The brave Iranian nation is not afraid of imperialist threats, scarcities, or the bombardment of cities".[434]

During the war, Khamenei defined the Islamic Republic conception of Iranian nationalism explicitly. Unlike nationalism, which aims to divide Muslims through racism and chauvinism,

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[428] Arshin Adib-Moghaddam, *The International Politics of the Persian Gulf: A Cultural Genealogy*, London: Routledge, 2006, p. 32.

[429] Annie Tracy Samuel, "Guarding the nation: The Iranian revolutionary guards, nationalism and the Iran-Iraq war", in *Constructing Nationalism in Iran,* ed. Meir Litvak, London: Routledge, 2017, p. 249.

[430] David Menashri, "Khomeini's Vision: Nationalism or World Order," in David Menashri, ed., *The Iranian Revolution and the Muslim World,* Boulder and San Francisco: Westview Press, 1990), pp. 46–47.

[431] "Khomeini Rebuffs Iraq and Urges War Until Victory", *New York Times*, 29 Jan 1981, https://www.nytimes.com/1981/01/29/world/khomeini-rebuffs-iraq-and-urges-war-until-victory.html

[432]Abol Hassan Bani-Sadr, *My Turn to Speak: Iran, the Revolution and Secret Deals with the U.S.*, trans. William Ford, Washington, DC: Brassey's, 1991.

[433] Heidar G. Azodanloo, "Characteristics of Ayatollah Khomeini's discourse and the Iraq and Iran war", *Orient 34*, 1993, p. 408.

[434] Quoted from Hamish Alan McGregor, *Nationalism in the Islamic Republic of Iran*, Phd Thesis, Australian National University, 2009, p. 50.

Iranian nationalism fulfills patriotic duties, and is referred to as *positive nationalism*. Not mincing his words, and using a most intriguing choice of words, Khamenei chose to transliterate the English word 'nationalism' into Persian when he spoke of *nasionalism-e mosbat* (positive nationalism). He rejected "extreme nationalism" and stated,

> "Yes, positive nationalism in which the citizens … consider it their duty to defend their country… is good. But negative nationalism that denies the nationalism of others and seeks to create a great schism among Muslim brothers is extremely ugly and very wrong."[435]

Even though those who entered the war in 1980 were encouraged by revolutionary zeal,the signs of national identity are undoubtedly important for them.[436] This is why the destruction of reliefs, mosques, architecture, museums, tombs, and ruins – particularly in southwest Iran, which was the cradle of ancient Persian civilization – incensed patriotic Iranians for whom the "identity of a nation is made up of its cultural heritage."[437] Aware of the power of Iranian nationalism and the people's sensitivity toward foreign invasions, during the war and after, the ruling elites had to reluctantly back out of their plan to weaken Iranian nationalism and culture. For instance, the nationalist anthem *Ei Iran* was banned during the reign of the Shah, as well as during the early years of the Islamic Republic's rule because it was associated with national hero Mosaddeq. Before breaking the news of Iraqi airstrikes on Tehran, the state began broadcasting this popular anthem. To mobilize the people for war, the Shi'a clergy stirred nationalist sentiments among the Iranian people with this song.[438]

According to Skocpol, "the task which revolutionized regimes in the modern world that performed best was the mobilization of citizen support across class lines for protracted international warfare."[439] For Iranian leaders, this war was an opportunity to unite from "one end of the country to the other all." Khomeini called for national unity, saying the superpowers were plotting "devilish" conspiracies to split Iran while fighting Iraq.[440]In

[435]Khamenei, in his Friday Sermon in Tehran, *Radio Tehran Daily Report*, 10 November 1987, quoted in Menashri, ibid, p.51

[436] Ali Ansari, The *Politics of Nationalism in Modern Iran*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, p. 212.

[437]M. Hojjat, "Cultural Identity in Danger", in *The Iran-Iraq War: The Politics of Aggression*, ed. F. Rajaee, Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1993, p. 41

[438] Omid Bastami, *Iranian nationalism or Islamic Nation?* 2007

[439] Theda Skocpol, "Social Revolutions and Mass Military Mobilization", *Social Revolution in the Modern World*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 281.

[440] Khomeini Pleads for Iran unity, *Chicago Tribune*, 1980.

particular, they sought to consolidate the IRI by channeling nationalist mobilization, popular energy into the new military, administrative and voluntary institutions and organizations.[441] There was a similar spirit of Iranian nationalism among the soldiers. IRGC units filled the void left by the Iranian regular military (*Artesh*) by resorting to successful irregular fighting against the Iraqis. Additionally, the *Basij* members and young Iranians believed in the necessity of fighting for the country's territorial integrity.[442] For this reason, the officials used a discourse that overlapped religion with 'secular nationalism' so called negative nationalism. In their eyes,one cannot offer exclusive credit to either secular or religious elements in Iranian nationalism, but one has to define Iranian nationalism as containing both.[443]The fate of Islam and Iran is related to victory in this war. For this victory, all militias, the army, and the people must be united. Indeed, soldiers who were interviewed cited both religious and rational justifications for fighting.[444]

Secondly, the interest in the Iran-Iraq War, in reference to Iran's colonial past, was certainly nationalist in character, but there was a different discourse of national identity from the prominence of Iranian nationalism during the Pahlavi era. Khomeini and other revolutionary leaders formed a nationalist theme designed to unite all Iranians against the external threat without giving the appearance of falling back into 'Pahlavi-triggered secular nationalism'. To suppress secular tendencies, nationalist rhetoric included more general Islamic connotations, and patriotism was seen as a religious obligation in the rhetoric of the war years. Particularly, while Khomeini was using patriotic sentiments to mobilize the population and calling on the 'Iranian nation' to unite and defeat the invader, he added that this was for the sake of Islam.[445] For instance, Ayatollah Khomeini saluted the Iranian soldiers: "Now I pray to God and pray for you devoted soldiers of the great Quran and the dear homeland of Iran." While the war was providing the impetus for the elevation of nationalism and its synthesis with Islam, the defense was a religious duty and imperative in addition to a nationalist one. Similarly, the leaders constructed symbiosis between independence and Islam in their speeches. Speaker of Parliament Hojatolislam Rafsanjani mentioned, "our soldiers are the guardians of Islam and

[441]Farideh Fahri, *States and Urban Based Revolutions: Iran and Nicaragua,* Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press), 1990.
[442] Mohammad Farzaneh, Shi'i Ideology, "Iranian Secular Nationalism and the Iran-Iraq War", *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism,* Vol. 7, No. 1, 2007.
[443] İbid., p. 87.
[444]Ian Brown, *Khomeini's Forgotten Sons: The Story of Iran's Boy Soldiers, Child Victims of Saddam's Iraq*, London: Grey Seal Books, 1990, pp. 86–90.
[445] Baqer Moin, *Khomeini: Life of Ayatollah*, I.B. Tauris, 2009, p. 182.

the country", and Bani-Sadr also emphasized, "without Islam, you cannot preserve independence." Iranians had a religious obligation and patriotic duty to defend Iran.

The Iranian army's recovery of most of the lands lost to invading forces, including the southern city of Khorramshahr in 1982, especially after the expulsion of the Iraqi invaders, was considered a monumental national epic. The advantages and disadvantages of taking the war into Iraq were discussed by different factions of Iran's Supreme Defense Council.[446] Khomeini turned down ceasefire offers and ordered a counter-offensive. Thus, between 1982 and 1984, the military position of the Iranian regime went from defense to attack. As the war progressed in favor of Iran, Khomeini in particular spoke more boldly on Islamic internationalism.[447] He was adding the liberation of the 'Islamic homeland' to his words. Hence, the Islamic Republic had fully revealed its pan-Islamic tendencies of overthrowing Saddam Hussein and extending the revolution into Iraq.

Despite that, some of Iran's nationalist elites sent cautious messages that the most important thing was Iran's direction and prosperity. For example, in 1986, Khomeini's first Prime Minister Bazargan wrote in a celebrated "open letter": "We think of ourselves as primarily responsible and bound defenders of Iran, which is our place of birth … Our concern with the world outside our home and homeland and nation is secondary."[448]

In conclusion, nationalist themes constantly infiltrated state rhetoric, but a national identity was created without seeing a return to Pahlavi nationalism. Khomeini and other senior leaders viewed the war as a defense of both Islam and Iran.

4.2.2. Religious Identity Perspective

Ramazani said that although the traditional conception of Persian nationalism increasingly came to the fore, religious identity notions were the defining elements of foreign policymaking during the Iran-Iraq conflict.[449]Religious identity conception defined the elements of foreign policymaking during the conflict. First, the IRI viewed the conflict to be something more than a mere territorial or racial-national issue, but as an Islamic government

[446] Dilip Hiro, ibid., p. 86. See: Abol-Hasan Bani Sadr, *My Turn to Speak*, trans. William Ford, 1991.
[447] Moin, ibid. p. 203.
[448] Quoted in Fouad Ajami, "Iran: The Impossible Revolution", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 67, No. 2 (Winter 1988), pp. 138–139.
[449] R.K. Ramazani, "Iran's Islamic Revolution and the Persian Gulf", *Current History*, Vol. 84, No. 498 (January 1985), p. 6.

and Islamic state it emphasized *Pan-Islamism*. For this reason, Iran's wartime rhetoric was linked to a long tradition of pan-Islamism, with the Islamic Republic asserting that "defending Iran is not just defending a nation and a government; it is defending God, Islam and the Qur'an".[450] The Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khomeini, portrayed the war as a place to implement religious duties. According to him, "We will fight to the end because we have to implement our religious duties. Our duty is to save Islam."

Initially, the IRI sought to construct "a pan-Islamic justification for its uncompromising insistence on the removal of Saddam Hussein from power and the destruction of his regime."[451] While doing this, the IRI declared *itself* as fighting for Islam and castigated other side as un-Islamic. The IRI presented itself as fighting in the way of the true faith and tarring Saddam Hussein as the representative of disbelief, or *kufr*.[452] The Islamic state criticized those who saw this as a war of Muslims against Muslims. In Iranian leadership's sermons and speeches about war, Saddam was called a *kafir* and the Baath regime as *bughat.*[453]Khomeini said that "these deviants who accused Iran of fighting against Muslims [should know that] we not only do not consider the Ba'ath Party as [a] Muslim [party] but we see it as an anti-Islam party".[454] Khomeini also urged the Iraqi soldiers to "return to Islam before it is too late", and to not "follow an unbeliever and apostate."[455]

Iran's religious identity placed a universal, Islamic ideology in opposition to secular Arab nationalism. Khomeini declared that "for Islam, we must resist" and that "Islam is ready to unite all Islamic nations into a global Islamic community"[456] For instance, on October 8, 1980, in Khomeini's address to the ambassadors of the Islamic countries who were visiting Tehran, he attempted to mobilize other Islamic countries against Saddam by a partial reference to Qu'ranic verse:

> "To what Islamic country is it a secret that Saddam did injustice to us, revolted against us, inflicted cruelty upon us, and invaded us? Why do the Islamic countries not act

[450] Heidar G. Azodanloo, ibid., p. 408.
[451] Massart, p. 39.
[452] A term generally interpreted as the refusal to recognize or acknowledge Allah.
[453] Saskia Gieling, *Religion and War in Revolutionary Iran,* London: I.B. Tauris, 1999, p. 53.
[454] Khomeini, R. *Sahifeye Imam [Imam's Book]* (Vol. 19). Tehran: Moassese Tanzim va Nashre Asare Hazrate Emam Khomeini, 2010
[455] Afshin Ostovar, *Vanguard of Imam,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016, p. 63.
[456] Keyhan, 26 May 1983

based on the Quranic verse which says: Fight all against the one that transgresses until it complies with the command of Allah."[457]

Moreover, Saddam Hussein portrayed the war as being one of Arabs against the Ajam or non-Arab Iranians, and he made racist provocations throughout the war. In response, Iranian leaders were careful in their discourse. While Saddam was using the "second Qadisiya"[458] analogy about the conflict, the Iranian leadership insisted that "all Muslims are brothers and all were equal" and could only be differentiated by the level of faith, not ethnicity or color.

Secondly, as a component of religious identity, *revolutionary Shi'ism* comes to the forefront in the Iran-Iraq conflict. In discourse, the war with Iraq represented the fight between *mustazafin* and *mustakbirin*. Iraqi leader Saddam was a "Western lackey" leading a proxy assault against Islam in Khomeini's view. He stated that "We strengthen our armed forces not to attack other nations,but to remove the consequences of the presence of oppressive forces of the world within the land of Islam."[459]

According to Khomeini's interpretation of Iraq and the war, Saddam Hussein took on the role of the Yezid and Umayyads' oppressors, while the Iranian people took on the role of the helpless Imam Hussain and his supporters.[460] Thus, a parallel was drawn between the invasion of Iraq and the war at Karbala in AD 683. Hussain's story was used to portray self-sacrifice and bravery, and his story of fate was the ultimate mediator of the gathering of men of all ages to defend the full integrity of Iran during the Iran-Iraq War.[461] "The people have shown that Iran will not accept any oppression and will not flee the battle under any threats. Thus, IRI provided the Islamization of the war as an act of belief in a battle of good versus evil.

Moreover, the 'imposed' war was seen as a great spiritual test for Iran. The regime used a discourse in which to revive qualities such as "martyrdom, sacrifice" at key moments in Shia history. While the leader of the revolution praised the idea of s*hahadat*, he highlighted that *shahadat* in the path of God was not something that could be evaluated by materialistic measures.[462] According to him, the frontlines were "centers for the worship of God".[463]

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[457] Surah Al Hujurat 49:9 in https://legacy.quran.com/49/9

[458]The Battle of Qadisiya in 637, when the Muslim Arab armies crushed the last Sassanian Zoroastrian empire. The Persians were routed by Arabs carrying the message of Islam.

[459] Quoted in Sepehr Zabih, *The Iranian Military in Revolution and War*, London: Routledge, 1988, p. 154.

[460] Farzaneh, Shi'i Ideology, Iranian Secular Nationalism and the Iran-Iraq War, p. 92.

[461] Farzaneh, ibid., p. 91.

[462] Khomeini, R. (2010e). *Sahifeye Imam [Imam's Book]* (Vol. 18). Tehran: Moassese Tanzim va Nashre Asare Emam Khomeini.

Enduring adversity was as a sign of devotion to the true faith. Thus, the war between Iran and Iraq, which was considered as a "holy defense", revived the religious cult of martyrdom inherent in Shiism andthe rhetoric provided, among young Iranians, ensured that they would ultimately fight in a seemingly endless war that led to high casualties".[464]

Thirdly, religious references were used throughout the war to consolidate the tenuous position of the Islamic Republic Regime. This caused them to strengthen their presence in Iran's domestic politics. For instance, in the late 1980s, the clergy occupied most of the senior positions in government, parliament, the revolutionary organizations, and the institutions of recruitment and mobilization of supporters and soldiers. Moreover, the war was seen as an opportunity to consolidate Khomeini's doctrine *velayat-e faqih*. The emergency situation of state-mandated obedience to the leader. There was a prevailing opinion that even those who opposed the autocratic claim of *velayat-i faqih* could recognize its virtues in wartime.[465] Ayatollah Khomeini, with a new title, had the authority and credibility to assure that one's possible 'martyrdom' at the front would not be vain.[466]

Under the banner of "export of revolution", the Islamic Republic has chosen to "appeal to the loyalties of Iraq's significant Shia population to hamper Iraq's war efforts".[467] Then-president Khamenei stressed,

> "The future government of Iraq should be an Islamic and a popular one. The policy of *velayat-e faqih* will be Iraq's future policy, and the leader of the Islamic nation is Imam Khomeini. There is no difference between the two nations of Iran and Iraq in accepting the Imam as the leader, and following the Imam and his line. Government and state officials are limited to international borders, but the Imam is not limited by geographical frontiers."[468]

Particularly, the Tehran regime counted a lot on the Shia dynamics of Iraq. The Supreme Council for the Islamic revolution in Iraq (SCIRI)[469] was founded in Tehran in November

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[463]D. Brumberg, "*Reinventing Khomeini: The Struggle or Reform in Iran*", Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001, p. 123.

[464] Farzaneh, ibid., p. 89.

[465] Ansari, *The Politics of Natonalism*, p. 212.

[466]ibid., p. 212.

[467] Maloney, "Identity and Change in Iran's Foreign Policy", p. 107.

[468] Quoted by Shaul Bakhash, *The Reign of the Ayatollahs: Iran and the Islamic Revolution*, New York: Basic Books, 1986, p. 234.

[469] Comprising three main currents: the so-called *Marjaeeya group* under Muhammad Baqr al-Hakim, *the Daawa group* under Kathem al-Haeri, *the independents*, who included Ayatollah Mahmoud al-Hashimi Shahroudi, Ali al-Haeri, Sheikh Jawad al-Khalisi, and Sheikh Muhammad Taqi al-Mudarrasi. See: Shiite Politics in Iraq,' *International Crisis Group Middle East Report,*https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/473d5d632.pdf

1982 to organize and unite various Iraqi Shia elements.[470] The SCIRI was forged during the Iran-Iraq War to replace the Baathist regime with Khomeini's understanding of *velayat-e faqih,* and sought to establish an Islamic theocracy in Iraq.[471]Meanwhile,"a military organization called Badr Force was established among the young Iraqi Shiites who fled to Iran and were affiliated with SCIRI."[472] This force is trained, equipped, and commanded by the IRGC. Similarly, most of the armed groups that received support during the war were Shii organizations opposing Saddam Hussein in Iraq.[473]

4.2.3. Revolutionary Identity Perspective

The Times, under the heading 'Never Invade a Revolution', published an editorial referring to the Iraqi invasion of Iran that summarized the challenges of revolutionary regimes. The idea that these have stronger legitimacy came to the fore,[474] such that the war and the revolution that preceded it become "linked closely" to each other. In the case of the Iran-Iraq War, this relationship underlined the revolutionary character of the IRI's state identity.

Firstly, the revolutionary identity of the IRI portrayed the war as a struggle against *imperialism*. According to leaders of the IRI, the conflict with Iraq was "imposed war by the forces of imperialism, and the IRI's struggles had implications not only for the benefit of Iranian society but also to liberate oppressed peoples the world over. Thus, "War war till victory" became a regular official slogan as long as the war lasted, and Khomeini declared, "we wish to reduce the dominion of the world the imperialist power." The supreme leader asserted that the struggle against imperialism would be achieved through the unity of the Third World:

> "Awakening nations and raising their awareness about the nature and role of the order of domination are the greatest source of support for *Third World* governments, and it is also a source of genuine power in the face of the hegemonic powers. The leaders of Third World governments have no powerful means and no choice other than their peoples' enlightened minds and strong wills. The kind of unity that we propose to Third World countries is not unity to fight the superpowers; rather it is a unity to

[470] Ishtiaq Ali Mehkri, "Religion and Politics in Iran-Iraq Relations", *Pakistan Horizon*, Vol. 58 No. 4, 2005, p. 37.
[471] Shiite Politics in Iraq,' *International Crisis Group Middle East Report*, p. 3, https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/473d5d632.pdf
[472] Bayram Sinkaya, *The Revolutionary Guards and The Iranian Politics*, Ph.D. Dissertation at Middle East Technical University, p. 162
[473] Anoushiravan Ehteshami, *After Khomeini: The Iranian Second Republic*, London: Routledge, 1995.
[474] The Times, October 1, 1980 Quoted from Fred Halliday, *Revolution, and World Politics*, London: Macmillian Press, 1999, p. 256.

> defend themselves and to prevent their undeniable rights from being trampled upon."[475]

Secondly, during the Iran-Iraq conflict, anti-American discourse was dominant as a component of revolutionary identity. The real enemy was not Iraq but its apparent master, the United States. The war was dubbed an "imposed war" by Iranians because they claimed the US had imposed it on them and regulated the global "tilt" toward Iraq during the conflict. Saddam was a "Western lackey" leading a proxy assault against Islam in Khomeini's view. The revolutionary leadership frequently repeated that 'the Great Satan' aimed to destroy the revolution. The most outspoken plea for action against the U.S. came from Ayatollah Montazeri, then-heir apparent of Ayatollah Khomeini. According to him,

> "In addition to its surrogates, the main enemy, the U.S. has entered the field openly. I consider that if the great leader of the revolution gives the order for the forces of revolution and resistance, cells at home and abroad will make the material, political and economic military interest of the U.S. targets of their struggle."[476]

In his speech at the United Nations General Assembly in 1987, Khamenei claimed America played a key role in the Iran-Iraq War despite global and local public pressure.During the war, U.S. support for "Iraq against Iran included arms, training and diplomatic support, as well as, during the war's final phase, the reflagging of the oil tankers of Iraq's Arab allies and direct combat between the U.S. and Iranian naval forces."[477] He said,

> "The history of our nation has reached a dark, bitter and bloody chapter that has been coupled with various kinds of enmities and spiteful actions by the American regime. … effective support for Iraq during the war that has been imposed on us, and finally illogical and thuggish deployment of military forces in the Persian Gulf and posing a serious threat to the peace and tranquility of the region – these are part of our nation's complaints against the US regime, complaints that can cast serious doubts on all its claims of supporting peace and claims about its leaders' goodwill towards the Islamic Republic."[478]

The shooting down of an Iran Air Airbus by the *USS Vincennes* vessel on 3 July 1988 resulted in the death of 290 people. The leaders of the Islamic Republic claimed this was an intentional

[475] https://english.khamenei.ir/news/1413/Leader-s-Speech-at-UN-General-Assembly

[476] Guardian, July 19, 1988, p. 7

[477] Paul R. Pillar, "The Role of Villain: Iran and U.S. Foreign Policy", *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 131 No. 2, 2016, p. 377.

[478] Leader's Speech at UN General Assembly, Sep. 22, 1987, https://english.khamenei.ir/news/1413/Leader-s-Speech-at-UN-General-Assembly

act that showed the confrontational nature of the US.[479] Iran announced its willingness to accept the UNSC Resolution two weeks later without any preconditions. Ali Akbar Velayati (Foreign Minister, 1981–1997) was sent to New York to negotiate a ceasefire agreement. Ayatollah Khomeini, as supreme leader of the IRI, confirmed this, and added, "taking this decision was more deadly than taking poison. I submitted myself to God's will and drank a chalice of poison for his satisfaction".[480]

Thirdly, Iran tried to provide *self-sufficiency* through the war with Iraq. According to Khomeini, the war "confronted our people with great difficulties but made our people more committed to the revolution and hardened their will and determination."[481] The period of war with Iraq not only united the country against a common enemy; it also forced Iranians to rely on their resources and abilities, a task that they met with enthusiasm and determination. As such, many Iranians now believed that they could achieve post-war reconstruction on their own, without help from the outside world. In a speech, Hashemi-Rafsanjani reassured his audience that, "We will never be prepared to give up our revolutionary ideals." He also emphasized his view that, "we cannot secure the independence of our motherland if we do not have any serious production in the country."[482]

As the war progressed, *military self-sufficiency* for the industrial war effort came to the fore. Towards these aims, a special Industrial and Engineering War Commission was established in 1985, and a war affairs headquarters was set up in every ministry.[483]

> "For six years after the liberation of Khorramshahr, what we have done has caused Iran to become extremely powerful in terms of military and to become *self-sufficient* in terms of the defense industry."[484]We have reached such a defense force in the country that we have become sufficient. I am sure that if the war had not continued, we would still be buying Kalashnikov or Katyusha from the outside. But we are currently manufacturing the most modern missiles in the world."[485]

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[479] Mohammad Ayatollahi Tabaar, "Factional politics in the Iran–Iraq war", *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 2017, p. 24.

[480] Robert Pear, "Khomeini Accepts 'poison' of Ending The War with Iraq", *New York Times*, July 21, 1988, https://www.nytimes.com/1988/07/21/us/khomeini-accepts-poison-of-ending-the-war-with-iraq-un-sending-mission.html

[481] Quoted in S. Zabih, *The Iranian Military in Revolution and War*, London: Routledge, 1988, p. 158.

[482] Quoted from Evalia Pesaran, *Iran's Struggle for Economic Independence,* London: Routledge, 2011, p. 72.

[483] https://www.dia.mil/Portals/27/Documents/News/Military%20Power%20Publications/Iran_Military_Power_LR.pdf

[484] Said Allamiyan, *Tarih İçin Anlatıyorum: Muhsin Refikdust'un Hatıraları 1979-1989*, trans. Hakkı Uygur, Istanbul: İyi Düşün Yayınları, 2008, p. 153.

[485] İbid., p. 152.

Iranian government officials regularly identify the Iran-Iraq War as the cornerstone of Tehran's current foreign policy. In an op-ed for the *Washington Post*, Iranian foreign minister Mohammad Javad Zarif discussed that the lack of defense during the eight-year conflict drove their current ballistic missile program: "It is against this backdrop that we develop and test our indigenous defensive capabilities. We have no other choice, as we continue to face major hurdles in fulfilling our military hardware needs from abroad, even as our neighbors procure such hardware in mind-boggling quantities".[486]

Finally, Khomeini's populist discourse of "social justice" was constantly expressed during the war years. Although the economic development plans prioritized war, the necessary activities were carried out to secure the interests of the *mostazafin*. In his discourse, Khomeini emphasized that Iranian society was free of class divisions and united through Islam. "Nowhere else in the world ... are farmers sitting alongside the president and workers alongside the prime minister".[487] In the war years, the government retained its label of protecting the *mostazafin*, the officials also added that those who opposed the government could no longer belong to the 'deprived class.' According to Khomeini, the deprived were to be identified by their presence at the war front and support of the regime.

> "All those who sacrificed their young people came from the deprived masses [slum dwellers and the deprived strata]. Let us count how many of the well-to-do, how many of those who are criticizing the Islamic Republic have gone to the war fronts."[488]

The government has established various institutions, such as the Marty Foundation, to provide financial assistance and special privileges to the IRGC and the volunteer *Basij* forces and their families. Among the low-income population who received the shares of Justice distributed by the institutions, Iran-Iraq War veterans, families of martyrs, and families receiving income support from state welfare institutions also participated.[489] Later, most Iranian war veterans began to hold key positions in the government and the army.[490]

To sum up, the eight-year war with Iraq strengthened the regime's other coexisting political tendency, namely its nationalism, and the Islamic Republic increasingly adapted its

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[486] Zarif: "Why Iran is building up its defenses", *The Washington Post*, April 20, 2016.

[487] BBC Summary of World Broadcasts,12 February 1986, quoted in Maryam Panah, *The Islamic Republic and the World*, London: Pluto Press, 2007, p. 113.

[488] BBC Summary of World Broadcasts 7945/A/4, 8 May 1985 quoted in Panah, 2007, p. 113.

[489] Nader Habibi, "The Economic Legacy of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad," *Middle East Brief*, No. 74, June 2013.

[490] Ariane M. Tabatabai and A. Tracy Samuel, "What the Iran-Iraq War Tells Us about the Future of the Iran Nuclear Deal", *International Security,* Vol. 42, No. 1 (Summer 2017), p. 161.

universalistic Islamic ideology to the nationalist context. The political mobilization brought about by the war made it easier to fulfill the revolutionary commitments of the state. The following part will focus on the Palestine issue through the relationship between multiple state identities and foreign policy in Iran.

4.3. Case 3: The Palestine Issue

The essence of the Palestine issue is the struggle between two national movements. On the one hand, there is the Zionist movement that has been going on since the early 20th century – the existence of Israel as its embodiment – and, on the other hand, there is the Palestinian national movement.[491] However, as Rashid Khalidi sets out, "the Palestine-Israel conflict was never one between two national movements contesting equally over the same land, but was always a settler colonial conquest by Europe-based Zionists. Jewish settlers aided by Britain and by the United States later on colonized Palestine, creating and securing Israel through six wars."[492]

As a direct result of this, a regional war between the Arab armies and the Israeli army was triggered. Arab forces from Egypt, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon intervened ineffectively; meanwhile, some major powers provided more equipment to the Israeli army, leading to their decisive victory. The *Nakba* [catastrophe] of the 1948 wars led to the conquest of 77 percent of the country by Israel, and the emergence of 750,000 Palestinian refugees.[493] Palestinians found themselves living under a variety of foreign administrations, having lost authority over most elements of their lives and being deprived of the vast majority of their property.[494]

The Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) was founded in 1964,[495] advocating armed struggle to liberate Palestine. The 1967 Six Day War between Arab states in the region and Israel started a new phase of Zionist expansionism. Israeli forces had seized Palestinian territory: East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza. On October 6, 1973, Egyptian President Sadat and Syrian President Assad jointly launched a raid on Israel.As a result of the attack on

[491] Walid Khalidi, "The Palestine Problem: An Overview", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 21 No. 1, Autumn 1991, p. 5.
[492] Rashid Khalidi, The Hundred Years' War on Palestine, New York: Metropolitan Books, 2020.
[493] İbid., p. 9.
[494] Rashid Khalidi, "The Palestinians and 1948: The underlying causes of failure", in *The War for Palestine: Rewriting the History of 1948*, ed. E. Rogan & A. Shlaim, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 12.
[495] Yasser Arafat formed the Fatah party in 1959; later Fatah merged with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine to form the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

Yom Kippur, the most important holy day of the Jewish year, Israel again expanded its territory.

In Iran's pre-revolutionary period, Iranian opposition groups were very interested in the Palestinian issue. Left-wing Iranian guerrilla forces and a number of Iranian student organizations were developing new strategies against the Shah's regime in particular. These opposition groups had "socio-political tendencies", which include anti-imperialist, anti-Zionist, and pro-Palestinian stances.

Along with the left-wing guerrilla movements, the attitude of some of the most prominent revolutionary figures such as Mostafa Chamran and Ali Shariati came to the fore in favor of the Palestinian cause. Mostafa Chamran, as a key member of the Liberation Movement of Iran, had a pro-Palestinian stance. According to him, the Palestinian struggle represented a just cause. It was not only these left-wing guerrilla movements that opposed imperialism and Zionism, but also non-clerical religious and revolutionary figures like Ali Shariati. He saw Israel as an element of Western imperialism and an extension of oppressive world order.[496] According to him, imperialism is omnipresent, like the former Oil Company in Iran, the East India Company, and the Mines Union in Congo and the Zionism in the Arab Countries.[497]

The Palestinian issue has been a prominent and persistent issue in the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic. PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat became, within days of the success of the revolution, the first official foreign visitor to Tehran. Arafat said, "Every Iranian freedom fighter is represented in the Iranian revolution".[498] In addition, the Israeli consulate in Tehran was turned into the Palestine embassy.[499] With this symbolic gesture, Iran was both showing its orientation towards the Muslim world and ridiculing Egyptian recognition of Israel.[500]

The Palestine movement came to the fore and Palestinians decided to regain control over their struggle for self-determination and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. The first *intifadah* (1987–1993)against Israeli occupation began as an uprising spontaneously with

[496]Mahdi Ahouie, "Ali Shariati on the Question of Palestine: Making a Sacred Symbol for Uprising Against Injustice and Domination", in *Ali Shariati and the Future of Social Theory: Religion, Revolution and the Role of the Intellectual*, ed. Dustin J. Byrd and Seyed Javad Miri, Leiden: Koninklijke Brill, NV, 2017, p. 202.
[497] İbid.
[498] "Arafat in Iran, Reports Khomeini Pledges Aid for Victory over Israel", New *York Times*, Feb 19, 1979. www.nytimes.com/1979/02/19/archives/arafat-in-iran-reports-khomeini-pledges-aid-for-victory-over-israel.html
[499] Elaheh Rostami-Povey, *Iran's Influence: A Religious-Political State and Society in Its Region,* London: Zed Books, 2010, p. 158.
[500] Sariolghalam, ibid., p. 22.

rock-throwing by Palestine youths.[501] The Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiya (Hamas) was founded at the beginning of the first *intifada*. The establishment of Hamas was a new alternative for Iran to remain in relations with Palestine. Hamas Leader Khalil al-Qoqa held a first visit to Iran to take part in the Tehran First Conference to Support the Palestinian Intifada.[502]

The Iran-PLO relationship weakened due to the hostage crisis and the PLO's support for Saddam Hussein in the Iran-Iraq War. Additionally, on September 13, 1993 the Oslo Accords provided that Israel and the PLO would formally recognize each other. As a result, with the PLO being an actor in the Peace Accords, support for the "resistance" and anti-Israel sentiments were displayed through Hezbollah and Hamas.[503]

Moreover, Iran continued its anti-Zionist and pro-Palestinian policy, openly supporting Hamas and Islamic Jihad. In August 1988, Hamas published its terms outlining its ideological and political goals; the charter outlines the organization's policy and emphasizes that "Palestine is an Islamic trust." The charter also promoted the ideology of the Islamic revolution, touched on the Islamic dimension of the Palestinian cause, and called on all Muslims to prevent "world Zionism and imperialist powers".[504]

Similarly, the Islamic Jihad Movement in Palestine was founded in 1980, inspired by the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran. Fathi al-Shaqaqi, as a founder of the Islamic Jihad, believed that the revolution was an important historical turning point in the Muslim struggle against the domination of Western powers.[505] In contrast to the PLO, the Islamic Jihad continued to take a pro-Iranian stance.

The second Intifada erupted in September 2000; Ariel Sharon provocatively visited the Haram al-Sharif, and it was fueled by the Israeli claim of shared sovereignty over Haram al-Sharif at the Camp David Summit of 2000. The uprising was also in response to the failure of the Oslo Accords and the continued building of settlements in East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and

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[501] Rowley and Taylor, ibid., p. 88.

[502] Ali Abo Rezeg, "Understanding Iran-Hamas Relations from a Defensive Neo-Realist Approach", Iranian Studies, Vol. 4, No. 2, pp. 389–405.

[503] Bayram Sinkaya, "Filistin Meselesi, Direniş Ekseni ve İran",https://bsinkaya.blogspot.com/2014/10/filistin-meselesi-direnis-ekseni-ve-iran.html

[504] Muhammad Maqdsi, "Charter of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) of Palestine", *The Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 4, Summer 1993, pp. 122–134.

[505] Meir Hatina, *Islam and Salvation in Palesitne: The Islamic Jihad Movement*, Tel Aviv: The Dayan Centre for Middle Eastern and African Studies, 2001, p. 53.

Gaza. At the same time, the two leading authorities, Hamas in Gaza and Fatah in the West Bank, were at odds.

In 2001, Iran hosted the second Support for Palestinian Intifada conference, and Palestinian parliamentarians and representatives from Hamas and Islamic Jihad attended.[506] With the Hamas victory in the 2006 elections, Israel increased its systematic military campaign against the government and regularly targeted Gaza. On December 27, 2008, Israel launched a unilateral war called Operation Cast Lead against Gaza Strip. Until January 2009, the territory was bombarded from air, land and sea, and 1,417 Palestinians, including 238 fighters, lost their lives.[507]In response to the assault, Iran organized the Fourth International Conference on Palestinian Intifada in Tehran in March 2009.[508]

In November 2012, Israel launched a war against Gaza. Although there was no land offensive in Operation Pillar of Defense, 166 Palestinians were killed, the vast majority of whom were civilians.[509] The Netanyahu government launched a new war on 8 July 2014 intending to sabotage the April 2014 reconciliation agreement between Fatah and Hamas. The 2012 and 2014 Gaza Wars served as a 'litmus test' for the IRI's discourse on the Palestinian cause.[510]Although the 2014 war took place at a time when the Iranian regime and Hamas had deep disagreements over the Syrian crisis, Iran continued to try to improve its relations with Palestinian Islamic groups, especially Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

Further, in May 2014, new Muslim faction emerged in the north of Gaza that expressed strongly ideological affiliation with the IRI. This movement for supporting Palestine was called Al Sabireen.[511]In an interview with Al-Akhbar, the movement's founder, Hesham Salem, rejected the rhetoric of sectarianism and denounced widespread beliefs in Palestinian

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[506] Second Conference Tehran, https://en.parliran.ir/eng/en/Content/articles/Second-Conference-Tehran-April-2425-2001

[507] Jean- Pierre Filiu, The Twelve Wars on Gaza, *Journal of Palestine Studies* Vol. XLIV, No. 1 (Autumn 2014), p. 56.

[508] The First Palestinian Intifada was a Palestinian public uprising launched on December 8th of 1987 and lasting until September 13th, 1993, when the Oslo Agreement was signed between Israel and the PLO's leadership. "Declaration Of The Fourth International Conference", In Support of Palestine, Symbol of Resistance; Gaza, Victim of Crime, https://icpalestine.parliran.ir/icp/en/Content/_/Declaration-of-The-Fourth-International-Conference-13951021

[509] Filiu, ibid., p. 57.

[510] Seyed Ali Alavi, *Iran and Palestine: Past, Present, Future*, London: Routledge, 2019, p. 184.

[511]See: https://www.medyasafak.net/haber/2184/filistin-sabirin-hareketi-iran-direnis-ekseni-nin-basi-ve-filistinli-gruplarin-koruyucusudur---hale-2184

society that Shiites pose an existential threat to Sunnis. As for the movement's ties with Iran, all Palestinian groups have solid relations with the IRI, and all are protected and assisted by Iran. He said that Iran is the only country in the world that concretely protects Palestine on a military basis.

To characterize the Palestinian issue in Iranian foreign policy, the issue will be viewed through national, Islamic, and revolutionary identities. This part will outline how the IRI explains the Palestine issue as a cornerstone of multiple state identities through the discourse of Iranian officials.

4.3.1. National Identity Perspective

Firstly, theummah has become central to the IRI's stance on the Palestinian issue. The Palestinian issue was defined as an "Islamic duty" that the Iranian nation needed to take responsibility for. Ayatollah Khomeini referred to the Quran's verse 8:60, and explained the place of the Palestinian issue in Iranian national identity, which was to "Prepare against them whatever force you can, and the trained horses whereby you frighten Allah's enemy". This was an attempt to substantiate the indispensability of defending the territorial integrity of the Muslims nations".[512]

Pointing to the Quran, Ayatollah Khomeini stated: "If the Muslims had acted following this command and, after forming a government, made the necessary extensive preparation to be in a state of full readiness for war, a handful of Jews would never have dared to occupy our lands and to burn and destroy the Masjid al-Aqsa".[513] Khomeini's description of Palestine as "our land" implies a strong socio-religious tie between the Palestine question and Muslim Iran. In other words, he described the support and defense of Palestine by Iranian Muslims as an "Islamic duty".

> "Palestine and Lebanon have been our primary concern, and have never been separate from our concerns in Iran. In general, a Muslim should not just concern himself with only a group of Muslims. We are all responsible to stand up to the oppression by the superpowers and discredit plans like those of Sadat and Fahd."[514]

[512] Hamid Algar, *Islam and Revolution*, Mizan Press, 1981, p. 46

[513] Ibid. Masjid al Aqsa is the site in Jerusalem where the Prophet Mohammad is believed to have ascended to heaven, Quran 17:1, but it also encompasses the complex of mosques and buildings erected on the site.

[514] *Sallee/ell NOlil'* (collection of speeches), Vol. 16, Tehran: Ministry of Islamic Guidance, 1982, p.200 quoted in Sariolghalam, ibid., p. 23.

Khomeini's discursive adoptions of Palestinians as an "Islamic duty" stand on Islamic trans-nationalism. "Defending Islamic nations is an obligation. But it does not mean that we put Islam aside and cry nationality and pan-Islamism".[515]

Secondly, the IRI defined its perception in opposition to the Shah. The Shah had close ties with Israel, and Khomeini presented the Shah's secularization policies as a part of the Zionist-Western cooperation against Iran.[516] Khomeini's view of Israel, Zionism, and Palestine was consistent with his hostility to the Pahlavi monarchy and the superpowers of the Cold War.[517] Ayatollah Khomeini maintained that Muslims in Iran and Palestine struggle on a single front line against common enemies: Zionism as the enemy of Islam and its collaborator the Shah's regime.[518] The enemy of Iran and Palestine was conceptualized as the state of Israel.

In October 1979, Ibrahim Yazdi, the foreign minister of Iran's revolutionary government, took the opportunity to clarify Iran's Palestine policy in the United Nations. According to Yazdi, during the preceding twenty-five years, the Shah had been a "puppet of imperialism and Zionism." He also expressed that strong support for the Palestinians characterized Zionism as "one of the most vicious forms of racism in recorded history".[519]

During the Khatami period, Iran's view of the Palestinian issue was shaped by the competing discourses of national identity related to being Iranian. Following the PLO's declaration accepting the right of Israel, Iran became determined to institutionalize its connection with Hamas and Islamic Jihad. However, The Islamic Republic also questioned the credibility of the Oslo Agreement. Ayatollah Khamenei stated,

> "One of the issues that is raised today in order to erase the issue of Palestine from memories and prevent it from being raised by public opinion of the Islamic Ummah, is the so-called peace talks that are held between a group of Palestinians – namely, Arafat and his gang – and the Israelis: the issue of negotiations, the Palestinian "Authority" and other such things. This is also one of the most reprehensible tricks

[515] R. Khomeini, Imam's Message on September 26, 1979.
[516] Meir Litvak, "The Islamic Republic of Iran and the Holocaust: Anti-Semitism and Anti-Zionism", *Journal of Israeli History: Politics, Society, Culture*, Vol. 25, No. 1,2006, p. 270.
[517] Latife Reda, "Origins of the Islamic Republic's Strategic Approaches to Power and Regional Politics: The Palestinian-Israeli Conflict in Khomeini's Discourse", *Middle East Critique*, 2006, p. 2.
[518] İbid., p. 197.
[519] Quoted by Anoushiravan Ehteshami and Manshour Varasteh, eds., *Iran and the International Community*, London: Routledge, 1991, p. 10.

and machinations designed by the Israelis and unfortunately, certain Muslims and certain Palestinians have fallen into this trap."[520]

On the other hand, many of the reformists in Khatami's camp were ardent opponents of the Jewish State, yet they felt that the heavy burden of the Palestinian issue needed to be lifted from Iran's shoulders. Iran former Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Maleki explained, "When the Palestinians want to negotiate, why should Iran insist on non-negotiation? The debate revealed that the Palestinian issue was increasingly seen as a nationalist cause and not a religious matter, as Khomeini wanted to see it."[521]

Thirdly, the Green Movement has clearly demonstrated its opposition to the cooperation of the nationalist identity of the State with Islamic internationalism, with mass protests especially after the 2009 elections. The Islamic internationalist policy for supporting the oppressed and maintaining the unity of the Muslim world was rejected by this movement. Thus, the nationalist discourse of the Green Movement targeted an *external* factor with which the state was in collaboration.[522]

Ayatollah Khamenei, a week before the annual Quds Day, defended the Islamic identity of the state on September 11, 2009. He noted that "Quds Day is devoted to the issue of Quds in which Iranians show their unity."[523] Despite official warnings, people gathered to renew their protests in Mashhad, Rasht, Tabriz, Shiraz, Isfahan, Bushehr, Kerman, Ahvaz, Yazd, and central Tehran, which hosted the largest gatherings. These protests were meant to draw attention to the injustices developing within the country.

The nationalist slogan of the Quds Day rallies was "No to Gaza, no to Lebanon, I sacrifice my life only for Iran" (*na ghazzeh, na lobnan, janam faday-e Iran*) on International Quds Day on September 18, 2009.[524]This chant puts Iran, not Islam at the center of Iranian life and death as a result of its nationalist nature. Thus, the nationalist slogan targeted the religious identity of

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[520] Ayatollah Khamenei, *Palestine from the Perspective of Ayatollah Khamenei*, Islamic Revolution Publication, 2011.

[521] Quoted from Trita Parsi, *Treacherous Alliance*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007, p. 221.

[522] Pınar Arıkan Sinkaya, *Discursive Continuity of Political Nationalism as a Form of Opposition Politics in Modern Iran*, Ph.D. Dissertation at Middle East Technical University, 2015, p. 251.

[523] Quoted by Pouya Alimagham, *Contesting the Iranian Revolution*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020

[524] Pouya Alimagham, *Contesting the Iranian Revolution*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020, p. 180. Hugh Fitzgerald, "Not Gaza, Not Lebanon, My Life For Iran", *New English Review*, 21 May 2018, https://www.newenglishreview.org/blog_direct_link.cfm?blog_id=67415

the Islamic Republic and it refused "a central foreign policy priority of Iran where the issue of Palestine liberation had become intertwined with the persona of Ahmadinejad".[525]

As nationalist criticism permeated, the political establishment attempted to accuse supporters of the Green Movement of being ignorant about the Palestine issue. However, many of the Green Movement supporters responded to this accusation with solidarity with the Palestinian people. This solidarity was also emphasized in the protests regarding the Gaza war in 2014.

In a Twitter message, Mohammad Khatami clearly expressed that the "honourable" people of Iran always stood with the deprived Palestinian nation. Condemning Israel for its atrocities in Gaza, Khatami stated that "exhibiting support for the Palestinians is about supporting humanity and it stems from the Islamic and humanitarian values."[526]

4.3.2. Religious Identity Perspective

The Islamic component of the Palestine issue, according to Khomeini, is the most influential vehicle for the liberation of Palestinian territory. He also emphasized the religious importance of the Palestinian cause, and its connection to the heart of the Islamic world.Furthermore, he urged Arafat to take the Islamic path, emphasizing the Palestinian struggle's Islamic character rather than its pan-Arab component.[527]

Firstly, the discourse of Palestine legitimized the IRI's symbolic claim to the city of Quds as an important source of *pan-Islamism*. On 7 August 1979, Ayatollah Khomeini declared the last Friday of the Islamic holy month of Ramadan as the international day of Jerusalem (Quds): *Youm al- Quds*. In his announcement, he stated,

> "I call on all Muslims of the world to select as Quds Day the last Friday in the holy month of Ramadan which is itself a determining period and can also be the determiner of the Palestinian people's fate and through a ceremony demonstrating the solidarity of Muslims worldwide announce their support for the legitimate rights of the Muslim people."[528]

Thus, he also ensured that the connection between Quds Day and the Islamic State of Iran was clear. According to him, "Quds Day is not only a day for Palestinians but is also an

[525] Alimagham, ibid., p. 180.
[526] https://twitter.com/khatami_ir?lang=en
[527] Seyed Ali Alavi, *Iran and Palestine: Past, Present, Future*, London: Routledge, 2019, p. 93.
[528] Ruhollah Khomeini, *Felestin az Didgahe Emam Khomeini [Palestine from the Viewpoint of Imam Khomeini]*, Tehran: Moaseseh Nashr va Athaar-e Emam Khomeini, 1382[2003], pp. 156–157.

Islamic day. It is a day for the Islamic government. It is a day in which the flag of the Islamic Republic must be raised in other [Islamic] countries."[529]

In the second intifada in December 2000, Ayatollah Khamenei detailed his outlook on the notion of peace talks between Israel and Palestine in the process also sending a message to the Palestinian people.He also added, "we used to remind ourselves of the issue of Palestine as a deep wound on the body of the Islamic *Ummah*."[530]

According to Ali Akbar Velayati, at the 2nd International Conference on the Palestinian Intifada, there was an emphasis on the Palestinian cause, not just an Arab one, but an Islamic one. The fact that the conference was held in Tehran and demanded the participation of non-Arab Muslim countries and organizations further strengthened this emphasis. Thus, the IRI further reiterated that the fate of Palestine was intertwined with the fate of other Muslim nations.[531]

Similarly, at the Fourth International Conference on the Palestinian Intifada, the IRI called on the entire Muslim *Ummah* to unite to support the Palestinian people. "Taking into consideration the current sensitive situation we stress on the necessity of unity of the Islamic 'Ummah' and abstaining from exaggerating existing in sectarian, ethnic and political differences."[532]

On the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the establishment of the "global arrogance" Zionist regime, Ahmadinejad labeled the Zionist regime as a "stinking corpse", and said those who think they can revive the corpse of this fabricated "usurper regime" were mistaken.[533] Moreover, in his speeches, he often condemned all Muslim leaders who accepted its existence as "acknowledging a surrender and defeat of the Islamic World."[534]

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[529]Ruhollah Khomeini, "Vizhegihaye ruzi qods." August 16, 1979. *Qom*. Vol. 9, p. 276https://farsi.rouhollah.ir/library/sahifeh-imam-khomeini/vol/9/title/94,quoted by Alimagham, ibid., p. 164.

[530] Leader's Speech in Meeting with Government Officials, https://english.khamenei.ir/news/1930/Leader-s-Speech-in-Meeting-with-Government-Officials

[531]Ali Akbar Velayati, *Jumhouri Eslami Iran va Tahavollaat-e Felestin 1357–1385 [Islamic Republic of Iran and Palestine Development 1979–2006]*, Tehran: Centre for Documents and Diplomatic History of the Foreign Ministry of the Islamic Republic of Iran, 1386[2007], p. 196.

[532] Article 21 of the Declaration of the Fourth International Conference on Palestine in Tehran.

[533] President Ahmadinejad calls Zionist regime a 'stinking corpse' *Quds International News Agency*, 09 May 2008, http://qodsna.com/en/101720/President-Ahmadinejad-calls-Zionist-regime-a-'stinking-corpse'

[534] Ehteshami and Zweiri, *Iran and the Rise of its Neoconservatives*, p. 109.

Secondly, the Palestine issue was linked with the revolutionary Shi'ism stressed by Iranian officials. The struggle against the Israel and Palestine issue was shown as an important justification of the Islamic revolution. The self-sacrifice added new dimension to the call for an all-out war against Israel. There was no better way to practice martyrdom than to engage in the battle for the liberation of Jerusalem. In his message to pilgrims in 1979, Khomeini made clear his stance on the Palestinian issue.Since "the first *qibla (direction of prayer)* of the Muslims Jerusalem has fallen into the grasp of Israel, it was the duty of every Muslim to prepare himself for battle against Israel.''[535]

Equating Israel's treatment of the Palestinians with the massacre in Karbala put the question of Palestine openly within the Islamic narrative. The IRI's discourse included that Hussain's followers are unable to change the course of history by preventing his martyrdom at the Battle of Karbala, but by coming to the assistance of the suffering Palestinians, they can enliven his legacy today. In other words, fighting Israel for the complete liberation of Palestine and Jerusalem is an expression of revolutionary Shi'ism. Thus, this struggle intertwines the resistance of Hussein and Palestine with their "timeless fates". For instance, Ayatollah Mottahari, as most prominent revolutionary figures in the historical speech about Palestine, said that "the problem that would fill Husayn ibn Ali's heart with sorrow today is this issue was Husayn ibn Ali present today, he would say if you people would want to mourn for me today, if you want to lament over me your slogan must be Palestine."[536]

Additionally, in the Iran-Iraq War, the Karbala metaphor was associated with Palestine. Saddam Hussein's secular Ba'ath regime was seen as an obstacle in Iran's Islamic quest to free Palestine from Zionist control.[537] As the popular wartime slogan "the path to Jerusalem runs through Karbala" expressed, Karbala was considered both a destination and a way station in the Islamic revolution's drive against imperialism and Zionism.[538]

Thirdly, Khomeini's theory of *velayat-e faqih* as an integral component in the construction of religious identity defined the other as 'the Zionist entity that occupied Palestine.' Khomeini argued on the first page of his book, *Velayat-e Faqih: Hukumat-e Eslami*, that "from the very beginning" Islam "was afflicted by the Jews, for it was they who established anti-Islamic

[535] David Menashri, *Post-Revolutionary Politics in Iran: Religion, Society and Power*, London: Routledge, 2012.
[536] Ayatollah Motahhari's historic speech about Palestine, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-SxOUMLfX7c&has_verified=1
[537] Afshon Ostovar, *Vanguard of the Imam*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016, p. 134.
[538] İbid., p. 134.

propaganda and engaged in various stratagems" against the Muslims.[539] According to Khomeini, the way to protect the Islamic Revolution and its political system is to fight against "Zionism". In this situation, the flavor of Iran's Islamic revolution and theocratic system, which was firmly rooted in the Shia clerical tradition, would be a guide for the Palestinian revolution.

Ayatollah Hossein-Ali Montazeri considered that

> "The liberation of beloved Jerusalem is an important issue to us. Consequently, to realize the slogan "Today Iran; tomorrow Palestine" and to strengthen the profound bond between the Islamic revolution of Iran and the Palestine revolution, it would be appropriate for the [IRGC] to implement certain programs both inside and outside the country to strengthen ideological foundations as well as to promote and expand their religious knowledge of Palestinian Muslims."[540]

Additionally, Khamenei highlighted that "the outright rejection of Zionism, which, today, comprise the pivots of the movements in Islamic countries, are all inspired by Islam and the Quran."[541] Khamenei maintained that the most overt manifestation of the Zionist conspiracy against Islam was the establishment of Israel by Western imperialism, and he condemned the absence of a unified policy of 'resistance' under the umbrella of Islam. The resistance is a movement that aims to establish an Islamic political system like *velayat-e faqih* in Iran. Along this line, the term 'resistance' used Iran's religious identity discourse in referring to Palestine's 'resistance' organization and Hezbollah.

Major General Mohammad Ali Jafari, the commander of the IRGC, said that his forces are ready to continue assisting the Palestinian resistance movement in their fight against Israel. He said that "Shias and Sunnis are of no difference to us when it comes to defending Muslims, and our loyalty and commitment goes to the whole Muslim community and the oppressed."[542]

4.3.3. Revolutionary Identity Perspective

TheIRI portrayed Israel as a product of European colonialism, and it had become the main source of imperialism in the Arab and Muslim World. Khomeini reflected this issue in his

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[539] Meir Litvak, ibid., p. 269.

[540] Montazeri's Guidelines for the Revolution Guards, BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, 19 May 1982

[541] Khamenei, Leader's Remarks at International Conference on Islamic Awakening, https://english.khamenei.ir/news/1523/Leader-s-Remarks-at-International-Conference-on-IslamicAwakening

[542] Commander: IRGC Ready to Support Palestinian Resistance, *Fars News,* 4 August 2014, https://en.farsnews.com/newstext.aspx?nn=13930513001267

words: “Israel was born out of the collusion and agreement of the imperialist states of East and West. It was created in order to suppress and exploit the Muslim people and it is being supported today by all the imperialists. Britain and the US by strengthening Israel militarily and politically and supplying it with lethal weapons are encouraging Israel to undertake repeated aggression against the Arabs and the Muslims and to continue the occupation of Palestine and other Islamic lands”.[543]

To outline the global implication and ideological reasoning of his announcement of Quds days, Ayatollah Khomeini designated it as “the day for the weak and oppressed to comfort their oppressors”, stating,

> “Quds day is an international day, it is not a day devoted to Quds alone. It is the day for the weak and oppressed to confront the arrogant powers, the day for those nations suffering under the pressure of American oppression and oppression by other power to confront the superpowers; … Quds day is the day when the fate of the oppressed nations should be determined. The oppressed nations should rub the noses of the oppressors in the dirt and will continue to do so, so too all the nations should rise and throw these germs of corruption into the rubbish bin. Quds Day is the day when superpowers should be warned to stay at home and leave the oppressed alone.”[544]

In parallel with this, supreme leader Khamenei used the anti-imperialist inner core of Iran's approach to the Palestinian issue. He was referring to the historical past of "external" powers in the region emphasizing the colonial goal behind the establishment of the Zionist regime. According to him, “The occupation of Palestine has been part of the evil plots of the world domineering powers, Britain in the past and the United States at present, to weaken and foment division in the Islamic world.”[545]

After the revolution, the Palestinian issue was covered in primary school textbooks in Iran. Students read that one of the roles of Iranian leadership is to protect the rights of oppressed (Muslim) nations. One of these oppressed nations was conceptualized as “occupied Palestine”.[546]

In the Iranian post-revolutionary narrative, Ahmadinejad underlined Khomeini's revolutionary line by referring to Palestine:

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[543] Palestine from the viewpoint of imam Khomeini.

[544] Ibid., pp. 157–160.

[545] Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Leader's Speech at International Conference in Support of Intifada, 24 April 2001, https://english.khamenei.ir/news/166/Leader-s-Speech-at-Intl-Conference-in-Support-of-Intifada

[546] Amir Hossein Mirfakhraie, *Curriculum Reform and Identity Politics in Iranian School Textbooks: National and Global Representations of “Race”, Ethnicity, Social Class and Gender*, Ph.D. dissertation at the University of British Columbia, 2008, p. 229.

> "Our dear Imam [Ayatollah Khomeini] said that the occupying regime [Israel] must be wiped off the history and this was a very wise statement. We cannot compromise over the issue of Palestine …Our dear Imam targeted the heart of the world oppressor in his struggle, meaning the occupying regime. I do not doubt that the new wave that has started in Palestine, and we witness it in the Islamic world too, will eliminate this disgraceful stain from the Islamic world. But we must be aware of tricks."[547]

On 29 July, 2014, Eid Al-Fıtr, Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in his speech denounced Israel by pointing out the 2014 Gaza war, and described the attacks on Gaza as "genocide". He pointed out that "Our clear message to Islamic governments is this:" Let's help the oppressed rise and show that the Islamic world will not be calm in the face of oppression," and added, "To realize this goal, all Islamic governments, irrespective of their political and non-political differences, [must] accelerate help to the oppressed."[548]

Secondly, *anti-Americanism* became the foundation of revolutionary identity narratives in the pro-Palestine stance of the IRI. The United States has been considered as the main cause of the Palestine issue. Khomeini specifically highlightedtheAmerican effect on this issue. According to him, "All problems come from America. It is America that has strengthened Zionism to a great extent and continues to [empower it] and who kills our [Muslim] brothers."[549] It is America who gives Israel its strength to make Muslim Arabs homeless.[550] To Khomeini's revolutionary rhetoric "Great Satan" and "illegitimate offspring of the Great Satan" he added that America is the "godfather of the twin evils of Zionism and American imperialism."[551]

The supreme leader Ali Khamenei declared that "the occupation of Palestine [by the Jews] is part of a satanic design by the world domineering powers, perpetrated by the British in the past and being carried out today by the United States, to weaken the solidarity of the Islamic world and to sow the seeds of disunity among Muslims."[552]

Another, Iranian revolutionary identity factor in the Palestine issue is *third worldism.* Ayatollah Khomeini emphasized bilateral, interconnected obligations to liberate Muslim

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[547] Text of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's Speech, *the New York Times*, 30 October 2005, https://www.nytimes.com/2005/10/30/weekinreview/text-of-mahmoud-ahmadinejads-speech.html

[548] Arash Karami, "Iran's Supreme Leader calls on Muslim World to arm Gaza", *Al-Monitor*, 29 July 2014, https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/07/khamenei-asks-muslim-countries-arm-gaza.html

[549] R. Khomeini, Speech on October 29, 1979

[550] Palestine from the viewpoint of Imam Khomeini, The Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini's Works, 2010, p. 37.

[551] R.K. Ramazani, *Revolutionary Iran*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986, pp. 153–154

[552] Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA), 24 April 2001.

states and Third World countries from imperialism. One of the first acts of the new Iranian government after the revolution was to institutionalize its anti-Zionist and pro-Palestine rhetoric by replacing the Israeli council in Tehran with the Palestinian embassy. The IRI held the West and Israel responsible for the Palestine issue, especially during the rule of Ahmadinejad. The Ahmadinejad government aimed to lead the Islamic movements that resist Israel and the US. In this line, Iran under Ahmadinejad emerged as a strong supporter of Palestinian 'resistance' organizations. This defiant attitude of Iran made Ahmadinejad a heroic symbol of resistance against "tyranny" against Third World youth and the new "anti-imperialist" crowd in Latin America.[553]

Ahmadinejad sought to appear as an advocate of the Palestinian people and therefore focused on the injustices committed against the Muslim community around the world. The Iranian parliament in 2005 amended the Article 1 "Law to Support the Islamic revolution of Palestinian People." According to Article 1, "The Palestine territory had belonged and still belong to the people of Palestine and occupying regime of Zionist which had occupied Al-Qods, is a usurper and cruel and shall be condemned, so it is recommended that all the justice-seeking peoples of the world, particularly Muslims and also people and government of the IRI shall support the oppressed and displaced people of Palestine until they achieve their legitimate rights."[554] According to the amendment, Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs was now obliged to present the case for sanctioning goods from the Zionist regime at the World forums and international conferences such as the OIC and the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).The purpose of this amendment was to deepen and further institutionalize Iran's backing for Palestinian movements such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

In addition to this, following the Gaza War in 2009, the Islamic Assembly of Iran unanimously ratified an Act that established 18 January as Gaza Day in the official calendar of the Islamic Republic.[555] On May 9, 1990, the 3rd Islamic Parliament of Iran adopted the "Law on the Islamic Revolution's Support of People of Palestine."[556]

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[553] Jahangir Amuzegar, "The Ahmadinejad Era: Preparing for The Apocalypse", *Journal of International Affairs*, Spring/Summer 2007, Vol. 60, No. 2, p. 49.

[554] International Conference Palestine intifada, 24 December 2016, https://icpalestine.parliran.ir/icp/ar/Content/3_artmajles1_14586/Law-on-Supporting-Islamic-Revolution-of-Palestine

[555] Seyed Qassem Zakeri, *Hemaayaat-e Qanouni [The Legal Support]*, Tehran: Markaz e Motaleaat e- Felestin, 1390[2011], p. 67, quoted by Seyed Ali Alavi, *Iran and Palestine*, p. 122.

[556] Parliamentary Conference on Support for People of Palestine https://en.parliran.ir/eng/en/Conference-on-Palestine

In conclusion, Iran's new government has institutionalized its anti-Zionist and pro-Palestine rhetoric andmade this discourse part of the state identity after the revolution. In this part of the research, the concepts of Islamic revolution and the IRIs multiple identities were discussed to better understand the extent of Iranian support for the Palestinian issue. In the next case, the nuclear issue in Iran's foreign policy will be discussed.

4.4. Case 4: The Nuclear Issue

The nuclear program of Iran began in the 1950s. In 1967, under the rule of Mohammad Reza Shah, the Tehran Research Reactor as the first nuclear initiative in Iran was built by the US.[557] The Shah devoted more resources to nuclear work as oil revenues increased in the early 1970s. He attempted to realize an ambitious target of generating "23,000 MWe[558] from nuclear power stations" by creating the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI).[559] Also, he sought to purchase nuclear-capable technology. Thus, the Shah aimed to fulfill its efforts to expand its nuclear capacity. In 1974, Iran signed a contract to construct the first nuclear power plant in Bushehr with West Germany's Kraftwerk Union.[560]In the meanwhile, in order to allay the concerns of the West with Iran's potential quest for nuclear weapons technology, it signed and approved the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

After the overthrow of the monarchy in 1979, the IRI decided to abandon the Shah's ambitious nuclear program. Khomeini's hostile stance against working with the West and the relative turmoil of the revolutionary government, combined with the war effort against Iraq, meant that there were more pressing issues than the pursuit of nuclear energy. Khomeini found it wasteful and unislamic; the Bazargan government then decided that Iran did not need nuclear energy and discontinued the nuclear project.[561]

However, the need for nuclear technology became inevitable for Iran. The abandoned nuclear program was restarted. Because of its increasing isolation, Tehran struggled to acquire arms to

[557]Seyed Hossein Mousavian, "The Solution to the Iranian Nuclear Crisis and Its Consequences for the Middle East", *Global Governance*, 2014, p. 531.
[558] A megaWatt of Electricity.
[559] Daniel Poneman, *Nuclear Power in the Developing World*, London; Allen & Unwin, 1982 p. 86.
[560] Saideh Lotfian, "Nuclear Policy and International Relations", in *Iran in the 21st Century: Politics, Economics and Conflict*, ed. Hom Katouzian and Hossein Shahidi, London: Routledge, 2008, p. 159.
[561] Mohammed Sahimi, "Iran's Nuclear Program: Part 1: Its History," Payvand http://www.comw.org/pda/fulltext/03sahimi.html

fight Iraq, which used chemical weapons and had a nuclear weapons program.[562] Economic problems brought about by the war with Iraq and limitations in access to technical expertise were added to these. Hence, from mid-1980 until around 1999, the Iranian nuclear program was characterized by "persistence and incrementalism."[563]

In 1987, the German firm Kraftwerk Union decided to completely withdraw from the Bushehr reactor deal, under US pressure.[564] Even though German technicians had abandoned the unfinished Bushehr reactor and Iraq had bombed it, Tehran attempted to resurrect the project with Russian help.[565] For this reason, Iran and Russia signed an agreement in 1995 to restore the nuclear reactor and provide nuclear technology and expertise to Iran. In particular, the US and Israel pointed out that the transfer of any nuclear technology to Iran through Russia would allow Iran to develop a clandestine nuclear weapons program.[566] Iran accelerated its nuclear program in 1999. Iran first sought to complete the Bushehr Nuclear Power Plant, which had been unfinished with the advent of the revolution.

In short, during the 1990s Iran expanded its enrichment program and also worked on a heavy water reactor capable of producing plutonium. Almost none of these activities were reported to the IAEA at that time. When Mojahadin-e Khalq (MEK or MKO), in exile, revealed to the world the existence of a nuclear research facility in Natanz and a heavy water facility in Arak, international pressure on Iran increased beginning in 2002.[567] For this reason, Iran's nuclear program has become a topic of political debate.

In response to these claims, Iran claimed to pursue peaceful use of nuclear energy. In addition, at the IAEA 46th General conference in September 2002, Reza Aghazadeh, President of the Iran Atomic Energy Organization, stated that it maintains strong and active ties with the

[562] Shahram Chubin, Iran Primer Politics of Iran's Nuclear Program, September 1, 2010 https://carnegieendowment.org/2010/09/01/iran-primer-politics-of-iran-s-nuclear-program-pub-41782

[563] Shahram Chubin, *Iran's Nuclear Ambitions*, Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2006, p. 7.

[564] Mustafa Kibaroğlu, "Iran's Nuclear Ambitions from a Historical Perspective and the Attitude of the West", *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 43, No. 2, 2007, pp. 223–245.

[565] Chubin, p. 7.

[566] Nasser Saghafi Ameri, "Iran Nuclear Programme: The Question of Non-Proliferation", *Discourse: An Iranian Quarterly*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (Fall 2003), pp. 63–82.

[567] Mahdieh Aghazadeh, "A Historical Overview of Sanctions on Iran and Iran's Nuclear Program", *Akademik Araştırmalar Dergisi*, Vol.56, pp. 137–160.

IAEA, and has subjected all of its nuclear activities to the agency's oversight, including the Bushehr Power Plant Project. [568]

Iran voluntarily implemented the Additional Protocol to the NPT in 2003 as a confidence-building measure, allowing the International Atomic Agency (IAEA) to conduct more intrusive inspections to ensure that the country was not developing nuclear weapons.[569] In subsequent years,the US government has used sanctions to try to force the Iranian regime to abandon its nuclear activities. Otherwise, the European Union has attempted to engage Iran through talks between Iran and the EU3 (Germany, France, and the United Kingdom) to stop its nuclear program, especially enrichment activities.

Between 2003 and 2005, the EU3 process, which aimed to curb Iran's nuclear activities, was unsuccessful. First, in 2004, the Brussels Agreements were made between the EU3 and Tehran, in which they expressed their commitment to establishing a long-term relationship, including the Trade and Cooperation Agreement. However, the Brussels agreement was never implemented. Secondly, On November 14, 2004, with the Paris Agreement, the EU3 decided to "recognize Iran's right to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes", and the agreement recognizes Iran's rights under the NPT and states that the freeze of enrichment is voluntary, rather than a legal obligation. Nevertheless, Iran left this agreement in 2005 and resumed enrichment activities.

On August 26, 2005, as Iran's nuclear chief negotiator (2005–2007), Ali Larijani visited Vienna and met the Secretary-General of the IAEA, Mohamed ElBaradei. On September 2, 2005, the IAEA issued a report in which it announced that Iran had resumed uranium enrichment at the Isfahan nuclear center. The IAEA board of governors released the resolution on September 24, 2005, in which Iran was asked to resume talks with the EU3, have the Iranian parliament approve the Additional Protocol, and avoid enriching uranium.[570]

Iran's nuclear issue was referred to the UN Security Council in February 2006 after an IAEA report on the Iranian government's non-cooperation in providing full access to its nuclear

[568] https://www.iaea.org/sites/default/files/16/08/aghazadeh160902.pdf

[569] Elham Kadkhodee & Zeinab Ghasemi Tari, "Otherising Iran in American political discourse: case study of a post-JCPOA senate hearing on Iran sanctions", *Third World Quarterly*, 2018, p. 4. See: https://www.iaea.org/newscenter/news/elbaradei-receives-assurances-iran

[570] https://www.iaea.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/infcircs/2004/infcirc637.pdf

facilities. On April 11, 2006, President Ahmadinejad announced, "Iran has joined countries with nuclear technology" by enriching low-level uranium.[571] Then, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1696[572] in July 2006 to introduce broad sanctions against Iran.[573]

When the UNSC asked Iran to suspend its uranium enrichment program, Iran insisted that its nuclear program was for peaceful purposes, and that it had no plan to give up on it. The UN Security Council imposed sanctions on Iran for not halting its uranium enrichment program following Resolution 1696. It prohibited the supply of nuclear-related technology and materials, and imposed the freezing of assets on key individuals and companies involved in the enrichment program with resolution 1737.[574] These early sanctions were followed by stricter sanctions imposed by the European Union and the Security Council's resolutions 1747 (2007), 1803 and 1835 (2008), and 1929 (2010).[575]

Meanwhile, the Iranian nuclear issue was addressed by the P5+1 group,[576] which replaced the EU3. Iran's negotiations with the P5+1 on its nuclear energy development program came to a dead end in 2009. In addition to this, the uranium swap agreed by the Vienna group,[577] which came together to deal with Iran in Vienna in October 2009, failed.

Thereupon, the Tehran Declaration, announced by Turkey and Brazil on May 17, 2010, revised this 2009 nuclear fuel swap proposal of the United States, France, and Russia. According to this deal, 1,200 kg of Iranian uranium enriched to a low level could be exported and swapped for 120 kg of uranium enriched to the 20 percent level. In the declaration, Turkey and Brazil accepted the right of Iran to research, develop and use nuclear energy, including peaceful uranium enrichment activities within the framework of the NPT.[578] However, the Vienna Group was skeptical of the Tehran Declaration, and that didn't stop the UN Security Council from imposing new sanctions only three weeks after it was signed.

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[571] http://edition.cnn.com/2006/WORLD/meast/04/11/iran.nuclear/

[572] United Nation Security Council Resolution 1696, http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/1696

[573] Aghazadeh, ibid., p. 148.

[574] https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/s/res/1737-%282006%29

[575] Aghazadeh, ibid., p. 149–155.

[576] The group consists of the five permanent members of the Security Council (China, France, Russia, UK, and the US) and Germany.

[577] U.S. Russia, France, and the IAEA.

[578] Bayram Sinkaya, "Iran Nükleer Programı Karşısında Türkiyenin Tutumu ve Uranyum Takası Mutabakatı", *Ortadoğu Analiz*, Jun 2010, Vol. 2 No. 18. Hussein Shariatmadari, "A Glance at the Tehran Declaration,"Kayhan International, May 18, 2010, https://www.iranfocus.com/en/nuclear/20433-editorial-reflecting-irans-position-on-nuke-deal/

In November 2011, the IAEA declared that it had "serious concerns regarding possible military dimensions to Iran's nuclear program."[579] Thereupon, in late 2011 and early 2012, the US and Europe expanded their sanctions with an "unprecedented" oil embargo and exclusion of Iran from the international financial markets.[580]

Over the following two years the "Iran talks", eventually reached the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). On 14 July 2015, Iran agreed to limit its sensitive nuclear activities, allowed the IAEA to monitor implementation, in return for lifting the crippling economic sanctions related to its nuclear program.[581] In parallel with these developments, the UNSC adopted resolution 2231, in which it unanimously endorsed the JCPOA on July 20, 2015.

Mutual fulfillment of the commitments made for Iran was to maintain core capacities for civilian nuclear reactors, including the local production of uranium-based fuel and the sensitive uranium enrichment step, while at the same time removing the crippling international financial sanctions imposed on the country since 2006.

Correspondingly, from January 2016 to May 2018, the IAEA and the US government repeatedly confirmed Iran's compliance with its commitments under the JCPOA. However, on May 8, 2018, the US announced that it was withdrawing from the P5+1 agreement. Iran's nuclear issue took a serious blow with Trump's withdrawal from the JCPOA, which he criticized as "the worst deal ever".

The nuclear issue of Iran has become a central issue for both Western countries and the Islamic Republic. This part of the study will examine the Iranian nuclear issue by drawing on the multiple identities of the IRI using rhetorical instruments.

4.4.1. National Identity Perspective

The nuclear policies of the IRI were shaped around national identity components. Firstly, the new revolutionary regime of the IRI rejected the Shah's plans to finance and rapidly modernize the civilian and military infrastructures with Iran's oil revenues, and nuclear activity was seen as a part of it. Khomeini condemned the nuclear vision of the shah as an example of Iran's penchant for all things Western. He strongly objected to several of the

[579] https://www.iaea.org/sites/default/files/gov2011-65.pdf

[580] Xiaoning Huang, "The Iranian Nuclear Issue, and Regional Security: Dilemmas, Responses and the Future", *Sabbatical Leave Report*, 2016.

[581] Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, Vienna, 14 July 2015. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/122460/full-text-of-the-iran-nuclear-deal.pdf

Shah's domestic and foreign policies, and denounced nuclear technology as a waste of the country's resources.[582]Moreover, Khomeini declared weapons of mass destruction to be antithetical to Islamic teachings due to the danger to innocent civilians.[583]

Secondly, Iranian discourse associated Iranian access to nuclear technology with national sovereignty The nuclear program was described as part of Iran's historical aspiration to reclaim its proper place in the face of external manipulation under a large tent of nationalism. Because the Iranian nation has a semi-colonial history and this assumes a lack of initiative against the omnipotent *Other*, a strong and challenging *self* was created on the nuclear issue.[584]

In the early period of the revolution, "self-reliance" became a trendy discourse of some officials, including Rafsanjani. They thought that the country should become self-reliant in defense in order to further that goal. The assault of Iraq and eight-year war reinforced this view because Iran appeared to be in a vulnerable position in the 1980 Iran-Iraq War, so much so that it could not resist Iraq's extensive attacks on civilian areas and the widespread use of chemical weapons.

By the 1990s, however, the nuclear option seemed to offer a way out, a point to gather nationalist ideas around it and legitimize the regime. Just as the rhetoric of Iranian nationalism increased during the Islamic Republic's war with Iraq, the same discourse dominated the nuclear program. "Dozens of patriotic songs have been composed about the country's nuclear program."[585]

After the secret facilities parts of Iran's nuclear program was revealed in 2002, President Khatami used a nationalist discourse. One of the steps taken by Khatami to establish relations with the Western world about "dialogue between civilizations" was the nuclear issue. According to him, Iran could define itself in opposition to a world order in which Iran's nuclear program was used as a negotiating tool with the international community. Mohammad

[582]Tabatabai's interview with Ali Asghar Soltanieh, Tehran, June 2014. See: Ariane M. Tabatabai & Annie Tracy Samuel*, "*What the Iran-Iraq War Tells Us about the Future of the Iran Nuclear Deal", *International Security,* Vol. 42, No. 1 (Summer 2017), p. 160.

[583] Farhad Rezai, "Iran's National Identity and the Nuclear Program" in *Politics, Culture and Religious Identity in Crisis in Ira*n, ed. Ronen A. Cohen, New York: Lexington Press, 2014.

[584] Majid Khosravinik, *Discourse Identity, and Legitimacy: Self and Other in the representation of Iran's Nuclear Program*, John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2015.

[585] Mahdi Mohammad Nia, "Discourse and Identity in Iran's Foreign Policy", *Iranian Review of Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 3, No. 3, Fall 2012, p. 48.

Khatami's government cited deep-rooted Iranian nationalism and the associated anti-Americanism to the 1953 Mosaddeq coup, and created a complex narrative that explains Iran's right to nuclear energy, and promised to be a broader source of technological progress that strengthens Iran's status.[586] In negotiations with the Europeans, the Khatami government underlined that Iran will would permanently give up its "sovereign national right" to uranium enrichment.[587]

Likewise, Ahmadinejad described the nuclear issue as a "national cause." He pointed out that "there is strong national integrity defending the lawful right to attainpeaceful nuclear technology, and emphasized that we cannot step on our independence and freedom."[588] Former nuclear negotiator Ali Larijani similarly compared Iran's current nuclear standoff with the European Union and the United States to Britain's refusal to recognize Iran's nationalization of its oil resources, as well as British and American plots to depose Prime Minister Mosaddeq for standing up for Iranian sovereignty and freedom. He said that

> "In 1953 also, the West made a huge mistake by standing against the national determination of Iran to nationalize its oil. They must learn from their experiences. If they think that the Iranian government will let go of nuclear technology they are mistaken."[589]

Thirdly, Iran's nuclear nationalism is argued to be the result of its perception of *self* as an exceptional state. The nuclear 'advances' of Iran symbolized the narrative of a glorious past as a source of national pride and self-confidence.

Ahmadinejad attempted to frame the nuclear issue as a matter of national sovereignty in order to thwart international powers aiming to deprive Iran of its rightful place in the world.[590] He used slogans like "Nuclear Energy is our Absolute Right".[591] The "ardent defense" of

[586] Farideh Fahri, "Ahmadinejad's Nuclear Folly", Middle *East Report*, No. 252, p.3.

[587]Farideh Fahri, Atomic Energy Is Our Assured Right": Nuclear Policy and the Shaping of Iranian Public Opinion, Nuclear Politics in Iran, ed. Judith S. Yaphe, *Institute for National Strategic Studies*, May 2010, p. 9.

[588]*Kayhan*, 15/1/2006 quoted by Majid Khosravinik.

[589]Larijani, *Shargh,* 24/1/2006 quoted by Majid Khosravinik.

[590]Kayhan Barzegar, "The Paradox of Iran's Nuclear Consensus", *World Policy Journal*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (Fall 2009), p. 24.

[591] Hadi Dadmehr, "Reputation and Iranian Nuclear Program: 1997-2013", Iranian *Review of Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 4, No. 2, Summer 2013, p. 41.

Ahmadinejad reflected nationalist pride reminiscent of Mosaddeq's oil nationalization initiatives.[592] The supreme leader also referred to the achievements of IRI.

> "The utilization of nuclear energy, as a national achievement, is a source of honor for the Iranian nation and the Islamic world, and if certain Arab and Islamic governments are assuming that by forming an alliance with the United States and Britain and enforcing sanctions they can please the Zionist regime, they are making a political mistake."[593]

He also stressed Iran's national identity by evoking the glory of the Iranian nation among the Iranian people. Hence, the nuclear issue linking future prominence and achievement to historical Iranian Greatness was perceived to be a winning strategy for the struggling regime.[594] As a reflection of this, Iran responded to the Resolution 1747 by naming April 11, 2006 as National Day of Nuclear Technology on Iran's calendar, which means that not only would Iran not stop its nuclear program, it had decided to pursue it indefinitely.

Additionally, on the first National day of the nuclear technology ceremony held at the Natanz nuclear site, President Ahmadinejad stated that "Several world powers are using their influence to stop Iranian progress. They should know that the great Iranian nation will not stop allowing them to do so."[595] Since then, that date has been celebrated by Iranian officials.

4.4.2. Religious Identity Perspective

First of all, the IRI's religious identity makes self-construction by reference to "the Muslims" and "the Islamic communities" on the nuclear issue. Supreme Leader Khamenei assessed that Iran and the Muslim world share the same interests and enemies; for this reason, Iran's nuclear ambitions affected not only Iran's nation but also the entire Muslim World. In other words, he attributed the nuclear achievements of Iran to the *ummah:*

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[592] Jahangir Amuzegar, "The Ahmadinejad Era: Preparing for the Apocalypse", *Journal of International Affairs*, Spring/Summer 2007, Vol. 60, No. 2, p. 38.
[593] Khamenei, Residents of Qom Call on the Leader, Jan 8, 2007, https://english.khamenei.ir/news/351/Residents-of-Qom-Call-on-the-Leader.
[594] Etel Solingen, *Nuclear Logics: Contrasting Paths in East Asia and the Middle East*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009, p. 165.
[595] Shah Alam, "Nuclear and foreign policy calculations of Iran." *India Quarterly: A Journal of International Affairs*, No. 64 (2008), p. 120.

> "Any success that is achieved by the Iranian nation will reflect honor and credit on the whole Muslim *ummah*. Likewise, any harm that is inflicted by the enemies on our Islamic system will harm the interests of the whole Islamic world."[596]

Similarly, Ahmadinejad nursed the ambition to become a leader in nuclear technology that would benefit the Muslim Ummah, the entire Islamic community. He stated his country's willingness to provide nuclear technology to other Muslim states: Iran was ready to transfer nuclear know-how to the Islamic countries due to their need.[597]

Crucially, the IRI did not abandon its pan-Islamist rhetoric while nuclear negotiations with Western powers continued in 2014.Referring to Khomeini's statement "No Muslim should think peace is ever possible between Islam and disbelief or between Muslims and the disbelievers", President Rouhani's speech cited *ummah* objectives. He asserted,

> "We are all united and coherent in seeking to flourish the flag tawhid [monotheism in Islam], Islam, independence, and resistance throughout the Islamic world and against the oppressors, and we do not doubt that if we continue to stand, the ultimate victory will be ours."[598]

After all, nuclear-related sanctions against Iran had been lifted in 2016 as part of the JCPOA; President Rouhani described the realization of peace throughout the region and the world as the ultimate role of the IRI, saying, "We are honored to continue supporting the oppressed people with the Supreme Leader's guidance".[599]

Secondly, the nuclear issue was framed by a revolutionary Shi'i narrative. The leaders of the IRI have used Shia history to explain the nuclear issue. In his speech, Iranian former president Khatami focused on "Iran's natural and legitimate right to nuclear technology, and urged Iranians to remember Imam Hussain, whose thoughts had become all the more imperative because he taught us to safeguard our dignity and freedom."[600]

On the other hand, even the opponents of the JCPOA, which is regarded as a major restriction on Iranian nuclear activities, continued to advocate Iranian nuclear activities with reference to

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[596] Leader's Address to Foreign and Iranian Guest, June 2, 1999, https://english.khamenei.ir/news/173/Leader-s-Address-to-Foreign-and-Iranian-Guests

[597] Ahmedinejad, Iran is ready to transfer nuclear know-how to the Islamic countries, Sep 15, 2005, https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/iran-is-ready-to-transfer-nuclear-know-how-to-the-islamic-countries-1.541340

[598] Hassan Rouhani,Sacred Defense 'is a lesson to draw for the enemies, Tehran, Iran, 22 September 2014,http://www.president.ir/en/81076

[599] Hassan Rouhani, President at a meeting with the Supreme Leader, May 5, 2016, http://www.president.ir/en/93387

[600] Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA), September 20, 2004

the shiite history. The opposition referred to the resistance and martyrdom of Imam Hussain. The billboards were part of an effort by organizations affiliated with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) to transform the most important Shiite day of mourning, *Ashura*, into a reason to oppose a nuclear deal. On November 4, 2014, red tents were put up that represented the army that fought Imam Hussain, the heroic Shiite leader whose death is commemorated on Ashura. The message was clear: to portray negotiations with Washington as talks with the "murderers of Imam Hussein."[601]

The hardliners, including Friday prayers leaders throughout the country, have suggested that Iran should follow Imam Hussain's path concerning the nuclear issue. "Obama was wrong when he said that the sanctions made Iran come to the negotiating table," Ahmad Khatami, the Friday prayers leader in Tehran, told worshippers. "We are the followers of Imam Hussein and Ashura, and our way is that of resistance."[602]

Thirdly, the *velayat-e faqih* doctrine, as a part of the religious identity of the IRI, has played a major role in shaping its nuclear program. Nuclear talks and related initiatives and discourses were considered as part of the export of the revolution. In the words of Ayatollah Khamenei's chief advisor Ali Akbar Velayati,

> "All [the Supreme Leader] is doing is preventing the rights of the people from being violated. After all, the people and all Muslims in the world have pinned their hopes on the Islamic Republic of Iran and him. During the time I was in charge of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, I traveled to many countries. Certain individuals in some of these countries used to say to me, "You are not only Iran's Minister of Foreign Affairs. You are the Minister of Foreign Affairs for the entire world of Islam. You are our Minister of Foreign Affairs as well". The position that the Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran enjoys is, in fact, the manifestation of the dignity that Muslims have throughout the world."[603]

Tehran has been increasingly involved in the Middle East since the nuclear deal was completed, and it continues to support the concept of proxy groups, which is at the heart of the Islamic Revolution's philosophy.Thus, if Iran acquires nuclear weapons, one of the main objections raised by the US was the possibility of using nuclear weapons to "export the

[601]Hossein Bastami, "Swiftboating in the Islamic Republic", *Foreign Policy*, Nov 11, 2014, https://foreignpolicy.com/2014/11/11/swiftboating-in-the-islamic-republic/

[602] Hossein Bastami, ibid.

[603] Interview with Leader's Advisor on Foreign Affairs about the Nuclear Negotiations, May 17, 2015, https://english.khamenei.ir/news/2070/Interview-with-Leader-s-Advisor-on-Foreign-Affairs-about-the

revolution."[604] Therefore, Ayatollah Khamenei stated that with the withdrawal of the US from nuclear talks, *velayat-e faqih* was being targeted.

> "Two, three years ago – at the beginning of the recent phase of nuclear negotiations – I said that the Americans should make it clear to us what the extent of our retreat should be so that they stop showing enmity to us. They should make this clear for us. If the nuclear matter is resolved, will everything be over? Well, now the nuclear matter has been resolved. You should go and see if the issue is over or not! Then, they brought up the issue of missiles. If the issue of missiles is resolved, they will bring up the issue of human rights. If the issue of human rights is resolved, they will bring up the issue of the Guardian Council. If the issue of the Guardian Council is resolved, they will question the essence of Leadership and Velayet-e Faqih. And if the issue of Velayet-e Faqih is resolved, they will bring up the issue of the Constitution and the authority of Islam. This is the main issue. The dispute is not about trivial matters."[605]

Additionally, Khamenei issued *fatwa* banning all weapons of mass destruction (WMD), nuclear weapons in particular. Khamenei's fatwa to ban the proliferation of nuclear technology was used by Iranian diplomats to support their arguments for the peaceful character of the nuclear program. Moreover, the Supreme Leader's fatwa was officially transmitted to the IAEA.[606]

4.4.3. Revolutionary Identity Perspective

The IRI's revolutionary identity reveals itself in the nuclear issue. Firstly, anti-imperialism as an aspect of the revolutionary identity of the IRI strongly correlates with the nuclear issue. Iran's leader sees imperialism and the West as the source of oppression, and Western powers who "deny Iran's indisputable right to nuclear energy" are portrayed as colonial powers that want to keep Iran's reliance on foreign sources and prevent it from developing an independent economy.[607]

In the meeting with a group of high school students, Ayatollah Khamenei drew a connection between the nuclear struggle and what it regards as a colonial invasion. The transfer of nuclear technology was necessary for the ongoing struggle between the oppressed peoples in the world and the world's leading imperialists.

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[604] Mahdieh Aghazadeh, "A Historical Overview of Sanctions on Iran and Iran's Nuclear Program", *Akademik Araştırmalar Dergisi*, Vol. 56, p. 138.

[605] Khamenei, How did Ayatollah Khamenei predict US withdrawal from Iran Deal? May 13, 2018, https://english.khamenei.ir/news/5660/How-did-Ayatollah-Khamenei-predict-US-withdrawal-from-Iran-Deal

[606] Farhad Shahabi Sirjani, "Iran's Nuclear Fatwa", *Iranian Review of Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 4, No. 2, Summer 2013, p. 65.

[607] Homeira Moshirzadeh, "Discursive Foundations of Iran's Nuclear Policy", *Security Dialogue V*ol. 38, No. 4, December 2007, p. 532.

> "It is hard for the global arrogance to accept that the talented Iranian nation has been able to take great strides in the field of science and technology, especially in the field of nuclear technology. They want Iran's energy to be always dependent on oil since oil is vulnerable to the policies of world powers. They aim to control other nations with invisible ropes."[608]

In a speech given less than a month after Iran was granted preliminary sanctions relief as a result of the signing of an interim nuclear deal with Western powers in 2014, Rouhani said that " Iran had helped the oppressed and will continue to help the oppressed, and stated that Tehran was winning the wars in Syria, Yemen, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Gaza".[609]

Similarly, Ayatollah Khamenei declared the occasion to express his views on the JCPOA at the *Eid ul-Fitr* prayers sermon. He saw this agreement as the opportunity to reassure oppressed people, and emphasized that "Iran will not leave them because of the JCPOA".

> " Whether this document (JCPOA document) is ratified or not we will not abandon our regional friends: the oppressed people of Palestine, the oppressed people of Yemen, the people and government of Syria, the people and government of Iraq, the *oppressed* people of Bahrain and the sincere mujahids of the Resistance in Lebanon and Palestine."[610]

Secondly, Iran's nuclear issue produces an anti-American discourse driven by an "immutable" revolutionary state identity. The US and Iran have had many mishaps, ranging from the US siding with former Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein in the Iran-Iraq War to the American embassy hostage crisis shortly after the Iranian Revolution began in 1979.

The US has regarded Tehran with suspicion and hostility, particularly since the 2002 discovery of the Natanz uranium enrichment plant, which the Iranian government had failed to declare to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).[611] While the Iranian government claims that its nuclear program was designed for peaceful purposes, the US accused it of having a secret program to build the bomb.

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[608] Leader's Address to High School Students, March 14, 2005, https://english.khamenei.ir/news/96/Leader-s-Address-to-High-School-Students

[609] Hassan Rouhani, speech at the ceremony of the parade of the armed forces at the beginning of the Sacred Defence Week, Tehran, Iran, 22 September 2014,http://www.president.ir/en/81076

[610] Leader's Sermon at Eid ul-Fitr Prayers, July 18, 2015, https://english.khamenei.ir/news/2102/Leader-s-sermons-at-Eid-ul-Fitr-prayers

[611] Ariane M. Tabatabai & Annie Tracy Samuel, "What the Iran-Iraq War Tells Us about the Future of the Iran Nuclear Deal",*International Security,* Vol. 42, No. 1 (Summer 2017), p. 152

The Iranian leaders believe that "the United States is playing a major role in the continuing process of persistent international pressures exerted on Iran to accept the most intrusive IAEA inspections of its nuclear sites".[612] Tehran saw the US opposition to uranium enrichment as "the most radical form of modern hegemony, aimed at preventing Tehran from transforming into both a major power and regional power."[613]

In the background of anti-American sentiments, there was the perception that the US was trying to prevent Iran's strengthening by blocking its nuclear activities. Thus, the US decision to impose severe sanctions as a result of Iran's nuclear policies is portrayed as a "satanic plan" to deprive Iran of its deserved place.[614]

As the adoption date of the political framework of the nuclear deal was looming, the Supreme Leader used a speech in Mashad to highlight anti-Americanism. He accused Washington of bullying and attempting to shift Iranians against Islamic governance during his speech at the Imam Reza Shrine. Shouts of "Death to America" could be heard coming from the audience. The supreme leader continued, "you are right: 'Death to America'." "This is because America is the main element in exerting these pressures. They insist on focusing their efforts on the economy of our dear people. What is their purpose of doing so?"[615] Ayatollah Khamenei raised a point about the nuclear issue in the same speech. "They need the nuclear negotiations. America needs the nuclear negotiations. The differences that exist among the Americans – between senators and executive officials – do not mean that they do not need the negotiations. This is not the case. The opposite side to the U.S. administration does not like the benefits that exist in these negotiations to be registered in the name of its rival – the Democratic Party."[616]

Iran maintained its anti-American stance after the JCPOA negotiations concluded. Ayatollah Khamenei declared that "our policy towards the arrogant government of America will not change in any way despite these negotiations and the document that has been prepared. As we

[612] Saideh Lotfian, ibid., p. 174.
[613] Iran's Nuclear Program: Challenges and Solutions, "Roundtable with Dr. Ali Larijani", *Discourse: An Iranian Quarterly*, Vol. 7., No. 2-3, pp. 3-4.
[614] U.N. resolutions vs Iran "not worth penny": Ahmadinejad, Reuters, May 12, 2010, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-nuclear-ahmadinejad-idUSTRE64B2RN20100512
[615] Leader's Speech at the Holy Shrine of Imam Ridha, Mar 21, 2015, https://english.khamenei.ir/news/2025/Leader-s-Speech-at-the-Holy-Shrine-of-Imam-Ridha-a-s
[616] The U.S. in dire need of the nuclear negotiations with Iran, May 17, 2015, https://english.khamenei.ir/news/2214/U-S-in-dire-need-of-the-nuclear-negotiations-with-Iran

have said many times, we have no negotiations with America on different global and regional issues. We have no bilateral negotiations with America."[617]

Thirdly, Iran has developed relations with third-world countries that follow the 'anti-imperialism' agenda. It also looked at the nuclear issue through the "Third Worldist" discourse. In particular, the IRI described *the self* as the leader of the struggle of the Third World, which in this discourse occupied the majority in the international community. "Victimization" is the core point of political affinity between these countries.[618]

Hassan Rohani summed up this point of view when he took office as the Secretary of the Supreme National Council:

> "So what is the United States trying to do? A country in the Third World, because it is independent, because it does not surrender to the United States, because of its rightful stances, and because of certain empty allegations and the suspicions that are raised against it … They [the Americans] are trying to deprive this country [Iran] of a modern form of technology which it wants to use for peaceful purposes."[619]

Ahmadinejad has embraced Iran's foreign policy, the policy of "looking to the East" and Third Worldism.[620] Therefore, while increasing cooperation with African and Latin American countries, he tried to gain their support in international organizations regarding the nuclear issue.[621] He had success at the D8 Summit in May 2006 in Bali. The D8[622] issued a statement supporting the development of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, in clear support of Iran's ambitions, at the Summit in May 2006.[623]

Additionally, the nuclear issue turned into a matter of Third World pride. As a member of the Non-Aligned Movement, he often criticized the West, especially the United States. Ahmadinejad said, "It is no longer possible to humiliate nations and to impose double

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[617]Leader's sermons at Eid ul-Fitr prayers, Jul 18, 2015, https://english.khamenei.ir/news/2102/Leader-s-sermons-at-Eid-ul-Fitr-prayers

[618] Suzanne Gratius and Henner Fürtig, "Iran and Venezuela: bilateral alliance and global power projections", Jun 29, 2009, https://diariojudio.com/idioma/en/iran-and-venezuela-bilateral-alliance-and-global-power-projections/79436/?amp

[619] "Ruhani: No Russian, PRC 'Surrender' on Nuclear Issues", *FBIS-NES, Vol.* 21 April 1995, pp. 53–54.

[620]Amir M. Haji-Yousefi, "Iran‟s Foreign Policy during Ahmadinejad: From Confrontation to Accommodation", *Alternatives: Turkish Journal of International Relations,* Vol. 9, No. 2, (Summer 2010), p. 7.

[621] "Tehran Developing Ties with Africa and Latin America to get support for its nuclear program", *Asia news*, November 25, 2009, http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Tehran-developing-ties-with-Africa-and-Latin-America-to-get-support-for-its-nuclear-programme-16960.html

[622]Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Turkey.

[623]https://developing8.org/image/Booklet/5th-D-8-Summit.pdf

standards on world society,"[624] at the 64th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. This rhetoric of Ahmadinejad actively challenged the authority of the United States, and the Tehran Declaration confirmed and reinforced the regime's discourse. In other words, the Tehran Declaration, which emerged as a result of cooperation with Brazil and Turkey, actually contributed to "the realization of a world view in which Western hegemony" is increasingly being forced by the rising power.[625]

Fourth, the idea of *self-sufficiency* as "a hallmark of Iran's revolutionary identity" has become the focal point of the nuclear issue. On Iranian foreign policy behavior, Iranian officials rationalize their nuclear program as a matter of self-sufficiency in a world that is becoming increasingly fragile and reliant on energy. In this situation, US sanctions were seen as an "imposed economic war", like the imposed Iran-Iraq War, and the Iranians would protect themselves just as they did in this war.[626] Thus, as a result, foreign pressure and sanctions exacerbated Tehran's sense of "victimization" and desire for "self-sufficiency", despite efforts to reverse Iran's progress.

Iranian leaders argue that the West's policies are primarily designed to stifle Iran's development. Notably, "scientific and technological success" as such is essential in the self-sufficiency discourse to break Western attempts against Iran. Ayatollah Khamenei promoted an Iran that is self-sufficient in terms of science and technology. He also believed that,

> "The United States is opposed to the progress and development of the Iranian nation. They do not want an Islamic and independent country to achieve scientific progress and possess advanced technology in the Middle East region, a region that possesses most of the world's oil and which is one of the most sensitive regions in the world. They are worried about anything that can help the regional nations to achieve independence, self-reliance, and self-sufficiency."[627]

The state's demand for progress became apparent in Iran's nuclear program because Iran demonstrated its self-sufficiency in its nuclear development, which made Iran independent from the West. Indeed, Ahmadinejad's discourse supported the idea that nuclear development and technology is natioanl right of Iran because it is vital to Iran's development despite the efforts of hegemonic powers.

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[624] Statement by Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Sep 23, 2009. In the 64th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. New York, https://www.un.org/en/ga/64/generaldebate/pdf/IR_en.pdf

[625] Maaike Warnaar, *Iranian Foreign Policy During Ahmadinejad*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, p. 138.

[626] "Mushkilat-i iqtisadi az su'-i tadbir ast" [Economic problems are the result of mismanagement], *Jahan News* (news agency), October 5, 2012, http://www.jahannews.com/analysis/248182, quoted in Tabatabai, p. 165

[627] Karim Sadjadpour, *Reading Khamenei:The World View of Iran's Most Powerful Leader*, Carnegie Moscow Center, 2009, p. 23.

Finally, although the Islamic Republic had shelved the nuclear issue after the revolution, many reasons, especially the perception of threat, affected its return to nuclear initiatives. In this case, Iran's nuclear issue has been handled through multiple identities and the foreign policy reflections of the Iranian leaders' discourses on this issue from the Islamic revolution to the present are touched. In the next section, the case of the Syrian war will be discussed.

4.5. Case 5: The Syrian Civil War

Syria has been a significant ally of the IRI for a long time. The Iranian and Syrian regimes seem ideologically different on the surface. While the Syrian regime was Baathist based on Arab nationalism, the IRI defined itself as pan-Islamic and revolutionary.[628] However, on regional matters, these regimes cooperated closely with each other, such that the IRI supported Syrian president Bashar al-Assad since the first civil uprising of March 2011.

To give a brief overview of the historical context of the alliance formation, it was established soon after the Iranian Revolution in 1979.[629] During the 1980–88 Iran-Iraq war, Syria broke with Arab solidarity and became one of only two states to back Tehran explicitly.[630] Syria has assertively stood by Iran and provided military and intelligence, diplomacy, and other forms of support to Tehran. In particular, Syria's blocking of the trans-Syrian oil pipeline, which is an important artery for Iraq's oil exports, dealt a significant economic blow to Iraq.Saddam Hussein was obliged to redeploy soldiers from the Iranian front as a result of Syria's deployment of troops near the Iraqi border.[631] According to Mohsen Rafiqdust, "Damascus was transformed into the transit center for transportation of weapons to Iran."[632]

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[628]Jubin M. Goodarzi, *Syria and Iran: Diplomatic Alliance and Power Politics in the Middle East,* London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2006. Dania Koleilat Khatib, "*Iran and Exporting the Revolution: The Syrian Case*" in *Syrian Crisis,* ed. Dania Koleilat Khatib, Beirut: Issam Fares Institute, 2021.

[629] Although the Iranian-Syrian friendship started with the Iranian Revolution, relations between the Iranian revolutionaries and the Baath regime date back to earlier times. In the pre-revolutionary era, some of the Iranian Islamist revolutionaries, especially Mostafa Chamran and Imam Musa Sadr, went to Lebanon to help the Shiites who were victims of the Lebanese civil war, and to fight against Israel, and received support from Syria under Hafez Assad. See: Bayram Sinkaya, "Arap Baharı Sürecinde İran'ın Suriye Politikası", *Seta Analiz*, Vol. 53 April 2012, http://file.setav.org/Files/Pdf/20121121171707_seta-arap_bahari_surecinde_iran'in_suriye_politikasi.pdf.

[630] Libya, under Muammar al-Qadhafi, was the other Arab state to back Iran, although Algeria and South Yemen provided occasional gestures of support for Tehran on occasion. Jubin M. Goodarzi, *Syria and Iran: Diplomatic Alliance and Power Politics in the Middle East,* London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2006

[631]Bilal Saab, "Syria and Iran Revive an Old Ghost with Defense Pact, "*The Brookings Institute*, July 4, 2006, https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/syria-and-iran-revive-an-old-ghost-with-defense-pact/

[632]Said Allamiyan, *Tarih İçin Anlatıyorum: Muhsin Refikdust'un Hatıraları 1979-1989*, trans. Hakkı Uygur, Istanbul: İyi Düşün Yayınları, 2008.

For Syria, the "anti-imperialist" character of the revolutionary state in Iran, its opposition to Israel/Zionism, and its pro-Palestinian stance were the main factors that brought it closer to Iran. On the other hand, Syria's stance resulted from the competition between Syria and Iraq by Arab nationalist Baathist regimes for the title of ideological and political leadership.

Additionally, the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in June 1982 turned the Iranian–Syrian alliance into a long-term and lasting form. This invasion led to the creation of Lebanese Hezbollah with an ideological allegiance to *velayat-e faqih*, so it helped strengthen the cooperation between Iran and Syria. Syria, which has a military presence in Lebanon but avoids close combat with Israel, allowed Tehran to send over 500 Revolutionary Guards to Damascus, and from there to the Bekka Valley in Lebanon to train and arm the Shiite militants fighting against Israel in southern Lebanon. Afterward, Syria continued to be an important route and connection point in Iran's logistical support to Hezbollah and its relations with other resistance organizations.[633] Briefly, according to a commentator, "if Iran is Hezbollah's oxygen tank, Syria would be the air hose."[634]

With the invasion of Iraq by the United States in 2003 and the subsequent deployment of a large US military presence in the region, notably near both nations' borders, Iran and Syria strengthened their strategic collaboration. During the 2006 war between Hezbollah and Israel, Iran leveraged its ties with Syria to aid Hezbollah.[635] Iran, Syria, and Hezbollah had a strong and popular partnership before the Arab Spring began in December 2010. In the same year, President Ahmadinejad, Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah and Assad visited the Umayyad mosque in Damascus together. Iran and Syria continued to emphasize their "deep and brotherly ties".[636]

When the "Islamic awakening" started in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, the Iranian authorities loudly supported these uprisings, not expecting the protests to spread to Syria. Although Iran urged Assad to suppress his opponents after the demonstrations in March 2011, with the rising popularity of the uprising, Tehran began publicly encouraging Assad to implement reforms

[633] Bayram Sinkaya, 'İran-Suriye İlişkileri ve Suriye'de Halk İsyanı,' *Ortadoğu Analiz, Vol.* 3, No. 33, September 2011, https://www.orsam.org.tr/d_hbanaliz/4bayram.pdf

[634] Rounda Roumani, "Syria's last trump card", Media Monitors Network, Sep 25, 2004, https://www.mediamonitors.net/syrias-last-trump-card/

[635] Nicholas Von Maltzahn, "*The Syria-Iran Axis: Cultural Diplomacy and International Relations in the Middle East"*, I. B. Tauris, 2013, pp. 50–51.

[636] Hezbollah Chief Nasrallah meets Ahmadinejad in Syria, *BBC News*, February 26, 2010, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8539178.stm

and negotiate with "legitimate" opposition forces.[637] In addition to this, Iran published its six-point peace plan for Syria in December 2012. It asked for a rapid halt to the bloodshed, humanitarian aid for Syrians once the conflict was over, the easing of sanctions against Syria, and assistance to Syrian refugees returning to their homes, among other things. The suggestion was quickly rejected by Syrian opposition groups.[638]

However, in the Iranian view, the Syrian case was different from the movements in the Maghreb. Tehran viewed it as a conspiracy designed by the US and Israel to destabilize Assad and dismantle the Axis of Resistance.[639] This so-called "Axis of Resistance" drew its ideological inspiration from the "resistance" narrative against the US and Israel.[640] It was repeated by Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei in 2012 that "Iran supports the Syrian regime because it supports the resistance front against the Zionist regime. Also, the IRI is strongly opposed to all kinds of foreign interference in the internal affairs of Syria."[641]

Following the election of reformist candidate Hassan Rouhani as president of Iran in 2013, speculation arose as to whether Rouhani would take a new strategy in Syria. The new strategy was based on "seeking a diplomatic solution based on an Iran–Syria partnership that went beyond President Assad".[642] Sadegh Zibakalam, advisor to the president, told *Al-Monitor*, "Rouhani is trying to come out with a moderate solution, where both the regime and the opposition take part in a cease-fire and go to the round table."[643] Although President Hassan Rouhani, the newly elected president, began office in 2013 and proposed moderate solutions to the Syrian issue based on a framework that allows both Assad and the opposition to participate in a transitional period, this did not induce a shift in Iran's priorities and actions.

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[637] Mohsen Milani, "Why Tehran Won't Abandon Assad(ism)", *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol 36, No. 4, 2013, p. 86.
[638] Ibid., p. 86.
[639] Mohsen Milani, "Why Tehran Won't Abandon Assad(ism)", *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 36, No. 4, 2013, p. 84.
[640] Mohsen Milani, ibid., p. 83.
[641] Leader Meets with Turkish Prime Minister, Mar 29, 2012, https://english.khamenei.ir/news/1613/Leader-Meets-with-Turkish-Prime-Minister
[642] Shahram Akbarzadeh & Dara Conduit, "Charting a New Course? Testing Rouhani's Foreign Policy Agency in the Iran–Syria Relationship", in *Iran in the World*, ed. Shahram Akbarzadeh & Dara Conduit, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, p. 139.
[643] Ali Hashem, "Rouhani Considers New Approach in Syria," *Al-Monitor,* July 2, 2013, https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2013/07/iran-rouhani-support-syria-diplomatic-initiative opposition.html

Iran deepened its support for the Assad regime in Syria on the eve of President Rouhani's inauguration with financial[644] and military support.

According to Tehran, the deepening of support for Assad was in response to the existence of externally supported Salafist extremist movements, in addition to the legitimate popular movement within the Syrian opposition. Salafists, who received financial and logistical support from Saudi Arabia, aimed to overthrow the Bashar Assad administration.[645] Moreover, the emergence of the threat of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, also known as ISIS) in 2013 embodied another reason for its presence in the region of Iran. A new discourse accompanied Iran's increasing military presence in the region "defense against *takfiris*[646] and terrorists." In short, along with the Rouhani period, "takfiri" terrorism manipulated and supported by the West and Saudi Arabia is defined as "other." This narrative was often repeated by President Rouhani and the Iranian foreign minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif. On September 22, Rouhani called on "certain countries in the region" to stop "bombarding their neighbors and put an end to their support for *takfiri* terrorist groups" in his speech to the U.N. General Assembly.[647]Similarly, Zarif added that "the *takfiri* currents are one of the biggest threats facing not only the Muslim world but also the whole world."[648] Moreover, the leader of Hezbollah, Nasrallah warned, in a televised speech, that Syria's "real friendswill not allow Syria to fall into the hands of America, Israel or the takfiri group".[649] Similarly, the IRGC articulated Iran's commitment to Syria as a strategic and revolutionary response to "takfiri" terrorists, and Israel's plans to weaken the "axis of resistance."

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[644] In July 2013, Iran granted Syria a $3.6 billion credit facility to buy oil products, according to officials and bankers at the time. Another $1 billion went for non-oil products. Suleyman Al-Khalidi, "Exclusive: Iran's Support for Syria tested by oil price drop", *Reuters*, December 19, 2014. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-iran-idUSKBN0JX21420141219

[645]Bayram Sinkaya, "İran-Suriye İlişkileri ve Suriye'de Halk İsyan," p. 45, http://www.orsam.org.tr/files/OA/33/4bayram.pdf.

[646]At the base of Takfirism (*al-manha al-takfiri*) is the Arabic word *takfir*—pronouncing an action or an individual unIslamic. Hassan Mineimneh, "Takfirism," *Critical Threats*, October 1, 2009, https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/takfirism

[647]"Rouhani 1: Speech at the UN", *The Iran Primer*, September 22, 2016, https://iranprimer.usip.org/blog/2016/sep/22/rouhani-1-speech-united-nations (Last accessed July 15, 2021).

[648] Iran's Zarif Calls Israel, Takfiri Terrorism "Common Threat" to World, *Tasnim News Agency,* July 1, 2016, https://www.tasnimnews.com/en/news/2016/07/01/1119357/iran-s-zarif-calls-israel-takfiri-terrorism-common-threat-to-world

[649] Anne Barnard and Hania Mourtada, "Leader of Hezbollah Warns It Is Ready to Come to Syria's Aid," *The New York Times,* April 30, 2013, https://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/01/world/middleeast/nasrallah-warns-that-hezbollah-is-ready-to-come-to-syrias-aid.html

In line with all these developments, the IRI increased its military engagement in the region, with comprehensive public justification for its military presence in Syria. In the early years of the conflict, as conditions on the ground deteriorated, Iran sent members of its Law Enforcement Force and IRGC Ground Forces to advise Assad, and to provide training and logistical support to the Syrian army. Particularly, Iran was highly active in Syria with the deployment of Quds Force (QF) operatives, affiliated with the IRGC, to defend the Assad regime. IRGC Quds Force commander Qassem Soleimani went to Syria and organized Iran's military activities in the field. In the second half of 2012 reports showed that Lebanese Hezbollah had become active in Syria and was also helping the IRGC and QF to train Syrians. By late 2013, Russia had progressively assumed this role, while Iran's involvement on the ground had grown. [650]

Additionally, Iran encouraged the Shia minority in Syria to form special militia units and even recruited Sunnis—especially tribes—to the militia ranks. Iran's presence in Syria primarily revolved around its establishment of a militia similar to its own *Basij* model. Thus, several pro-Assad militias and local committees were restructured, and by the end of 2012 they had merged into the new National Defence Forces (Quwat al-Difa al-Watani).[651] For Iran, the NDF's purpose was primarily to ensure the survival of the Assad regime; moreover, in the event of its overthrow, there would be a viable, armed proxy in post-Assad Syria.[652] In addition to the NDF, Local Defense Forces (LDF) and Syrian Shia militias took their place among the local forces.

Moreover, Iran enabled the deployment of foreign Shia militias, beginning with its closest ally, Hezbollah, which fought in Syria for the first time in 2012.[653] The organization and training of Shia volunteer fighters have been Iran's most significant contribution to the expansion of Shia proxies. It employs the ideological factor through its own "Husseinat Scouts" to recruit Shia volunteers under the motto of "Guardingholy shrines." For Twelver

[650] Ali Ansari and Aniseh Tabrizi, "Understanding Iran's Role in the Syrian conflict", *RUSI Paper*, p.4.
[651]Edward Wastnidge, "Iran's Own War on Terror: Iranian Foreign Policy Towards Syria and Iraq During the Rouhani Era", in *Foreign Policy of Iran under President Hassan Rouhani's First Term (2013–2017), ed.* Luciano Zaccara, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020, p. 112. Payam Mohseni & Hussein Kalout, "Iran's Axis of Resistance rises", *Foreign Affairs*, 24 January 2017, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/iran/2017-01-24/irans-axis-resistance-rises
[652] Jubin M. Goodarzi, "Iran and the Syrian Civil War: To the bitter end", *Confluences Méditerranée*, Vol. 113, No. 2, April 2020, pp. 181–182.
[653] Ali Ansari and Aniseh Bassiri Tabrizi, ibid.

Shi'ism adherents—as practiced in Iran, Iraq, and Lebanon—Damascus is home to the shrine of Sayyidah Zaynab, the daughter of the first Shi'i Imam, Ali, and also the Prophet's granddaughter, and therefore a respected person in Shi'ism. In other words, Iran formed transnational forces to participate in the struggle, recruiting and training militants from Pakistan, Afghanistan, and other Arab countries, many of whom were driven to volunteer for the defense of the holy shrines by religious and ideological loyalties. Parallel to events in Iraq and the founding of the Hashd al-Shaabi, these recruits were known as the Fatimiyoon and Zaynabiyoon Brigades.

The changing course of the war and Iran's limited capabilities prompted Tehran to negotiate with Moscow to solicit further Russian support for pro-Assad forces in the spring of 2015. Thus, Iran began to coordinate its actions on the ground with Russia at the ministerial and operational levels.[654] The Russian aerial intervention in September 2015substantially relieved Iran militarily and economically, removing the need for it to shift its posture. Iran has allowed Russian planes to use its base near the Iranian city of Hamedan to bomb targets in three provinces in northern and eastern Syria. Nevertheless, because of Russia's involvement, Tehran was forced to follow Moscow's lead on Syria.[655]

Supporting the Assad regime with its military presence, Iran also provided diplomatic support and attended international initiatives. In November 2015, the Iranian foreign minister participated the Vienna talks with 19 other International Syria Support Group (ISSG) member states.[656] The talks produced a peace plan for Syria, which included a January 1, 2016 target date for formal negotiations to start, which did not work like most other international attempts to cease violence in the country.[657]Next, Iran, along with Russia and Turkey, became a party to the Moscow Declaration on 20 December 2016, and the Astana process was initiated.

In this part of the study, Tehran's role in the Syrian civil war and the effects of its relations with multiple state identities on Iran's foreign policy towards Syria will be discussed. Particularly concerning Iran's presence on the ground, this section will draw on the Iranian authorities' discourse on the Syrian civil war.

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[654] Ansari and Tabrizi, ibid., p.6

[655] Bayram Sinkaya, "İran'ın Suriye Stratejisi" *Akademik Ortadoğu Vol.* 11, No. 2, 2017, p. 62.

[656] The ISSG consists of the Arab League, China, Egypt, the EU, France, Germany, Iran, Iraq, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, the United Nations, and the United States.

[657] https://iranprimer.usip.org/blog/2015/nov/17/iran-attends-syria-peace-talks-vienna

4.5.1. National Identity Perspective

When looking at the discourses and developments of the Iranian authorities in the Syrian civil war and how these might be related to Iran's perception of national identity, discursively, "national independence" and "resistance to foreign sovereignty" come to the fore with respect to strategic depth and fighting in Syria to protect Iran. Despite tending to be embedded in layers of "Umma" rhetoric at the start of the Islamic Revolution, Iranian nationalism was never far below the political surface. For this reason, Iran's presence in Syria was effective for "rediscovering" national identity.

The IRI's assessment regarding the Syrian war was that "if we don't defend our strongholds out of our borders we have to fight them (enemies) inside our borders".[658] Hence, the Syrian civil war provide the IRGC now has a chance and a platform to present a new brand of nationalism that sees it as Iran's defender. Addressing students at the Haqqani Theological Seminary in Qom on May 22, 2011, Soleimani declared that the social revolutions in the Middle East and North Africa "provide our revolution with the greatest opportunities." He continued,"Today, Iran's victory or defeat no longer takes place in *Mehran* and *Khorramshahr*. Our boundaries have expanded and we must witness victory in Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, and Syria. This is the fruit of the Islamic revolution."[659]

From the perspective of Iran's national identity, the other component refers to the pre-Islamic Iranian national identity. Especially during the Ahmadinejad era, Iran's pre-Islamic history was emphasized and efforts were made to rediscover "Persian" nationalism. While he was establishing a link with the 'glorious past' of Iran, he also referred to the "resistance" movement against invaders in Syria, which he said dates back several thousand years and cannot be isolated or detailed by the West. In his view, what is happening in Syria is the West's attempt to target this culture and target Iran. By targeting Syria, the West is targeting Iran, by pushing the outer border of resistance.[660]

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[658] Shahir Shahid Saless, "Iran's Plan to Confront a Post-Assad Era", *Huffington Post*, 9 November 2015, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/irans-plan-to-confront-a_b_8510186

[659] "Hezbollah's Victory at the Thirty-Three-Day War Was the Result of Blood Sacrificed during Eight Years of Sacred Defense", *Rasa News* (Tehran), May 23, 2011, www.rasanews.ir/Nsite/FullStory/?Id=105241, quoted in Ali Alfoneh, "Iran's Most Dangerous General", American Enterprise Institute, July 2013, https://www.aei.org/research-products/report/irans-most-dangerous-general/

[660] Iran's Ahmadinejad says Syria crisis may engulf region, *Reuters*, Oct 2, 2012, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-crisis-ahmadinejad-idUSBRE8910R420121002

As a third component, "opposition nationalism" has brought criticism to Iranian intervention in Syria. Support for Assad has gradually become a responsibility for the IRI, which speaks on behalf of the oppressed in the Middle East, and defines itself as the voice of justice. However,after the violent suppression of mass protests led by the Green Movement in June 2009, the value of this self-identification dropped significantly.[661]Criticism by the nationalists – led by the Green Movement – about the Syrian civil war also permeated "the protests consistent with greater publicity of Iranian interventions abroad; slogans began to target the Islamic Republic's regional activities".[662] Protesters called for "the death of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and accused regime leadership of plundering the nation's wealth to support Syria".[663] In the demonstration that started 2017 and spread to almost all of Iran, the refrain "Leave Syria, think about us" became popularized among demonstrators, referring to the economic problems in Iran.[664]

4.5.2. Religious Identity Perspective

TheIslamic Republic presented its support for Assad in the Syrian crisis from a religious identity perspective as well. Firstly, Iranian leaders began to use a more inclusive "pan-Islamic" discourse on the Syrian issue. Many analysts have tended to explain Iran–Assad relations through sectarian affiliations, but Iranian leaders have used broader pan-Islamic rhetoric, as well as using sectarian language to mobilize Shiite militias.[665]

In particular, they emphasized their commitment to Islamic unity. In an address at "the Islamic Awakening and Ulama Conference", Khamenei reinvigorated this issue.

> "Propaganda campaigns of the West and dependent and mercenary media in the region pretend that the destructive war in Syria is a Shia-Sunni conflict and they create a safety margin for the Zionists and the enemies of resistance in Syria and Lebanon.

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[661] Erik Mohns and Andre Bank, "Syrian Revolt Fallout: End of the Resistance Axis?" *Middle East Policy*, Vol. 19, No. 3, 2012, p. 29.

[662] Golnaz Esfandiari, Twitter Post, 4:26 p.m., 28 December 2017, https://twitter.com/GEsfandiari/status/946492678547615744 .

[663] Mike Saidi and Daniel Amir, "More Chants, More Protests: The Dey Iranian Anti-Regime Protests", *Critical Threats*, December 18, 2018, https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/more-chants-more-protests-the-dey-iranian-anti-regime-protests.

[664] "Price protests turn political in Iran as rallies spread", Reuters, Dec 29, 2017, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-economy-protests-idUSKBN1EN0P0.

[665]Afshon Ostovar, "Sectarian Dilemmas in Iranian Foreign Policy: When Strategy and Identity Politics Collide", Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, November 30, 2016. https://carnegieendowment.org/2016/11/30/sectarian-dilemmas-in-iranian-foreign-policy-when-strategy-and-identity-politics-collide-pub-66288

> This is while the two sides of the conflict in Syria are not Shia and Sunni; rather they are the supporters and opponents of anti-Zionist resistance. Neither the Syrian government is a Shia government, nor is the secular and anti-Islam opposition a Sunni group."[666]

The IRI emphasized the presence of the US and Israel on the Syrian issue, emphasizing the "*ummah*" discourse, just like in the Palestinian issue. Ali Akbar Velayati, International Affairs advisor to the Supreme Leader, said on July 13, 2012 that "Under existing conditions, they [the United States and its allies] intend to challenge the region by creating the crisis in Syria, which is at the frontline [of resistance] against the Zionists. Meanwhile, they want to prevent the unity of the Islamic *Ummah* because the Middle East is the heart of the Muslim *Ummah*."[667]

Further, Iranian officials have described the government of Damascus as an outpost of resistance against Israel by Washington and its lackeys in the region. They reiterated that the Syrian issue is not only a concern for Iran but for the entire *ummah*. Alaeddin Boroujerdi, head of the Iranian parliament's foreign affairs committee (2005–2018) said,

> "In regard to Syria, we are confronted with two choices. The first is for us to place Syria in the mouth of a wolf named America and change conditions in a way that NATO would attack Syria. That would mean we would have a tragedy added to our other tragedies in the world of Islam.The second choice would be for us to contribute to the termination of the clashes in Syria. The interests of the Muslim people command that we mobilize ourselves to support Syria as a center of Palestinian resistance."[668]

Moreover, while Iran's efforts at defining *Self* have attempted to include "takfiri terrorism" in its perception of enemy, it viewed the spread of groups espousing radical Sunni Islamism as a cancer in the region and a disaster for the Islamic *ummah.*

> "The creation of these groups goes back to America. Some American officials have acknowledged this. They have acknowledged that they have helped create ISIS to create discord inside the Islamic Ummah and to promote Umayyad and Marwani

[666] Khamenei, "Supreme Leader's Speech at Inauguration of Islamic Awakening and Ulama Conference", Apr 29, 2013, https://www.leader.ir/en/content/10574/Supreme-Leader's-Speech-at-Inauguration-of-Islamic-Awakening-and-Ulama-Conference.

[667] Velayati, Iran, a comprehensive model of Islamic Awakening, July 13, 2012, https://en.irna.ir/news/80227037/Velayati-IR-Iran-a-comprehensive-model-of-Islamic-awakening.

[668] Iran sees ally Syria surrounded by U.S. Arab "wolves", https://www.reuters.com/article/cnews-us-syria-iran-idCATRE77E1E320110815

> Islam. This Wahhabi and *takfiri* Islam is the same as Umayyad and Marwani Islam!"[669]

Secondly, the narrative of the "sacred shrine defense" in the Syrian civil war has become a part of the "revolutionary Shiite" character of Iranian state identity in the Syrian civil war, discursively. Based on the Shiite narrative of "presence" and "absence" [in holy war], the war in Syria was associated with what Hussain and his followers experienced in Karbala. Damascus is home to the shrine of Sayyidah Zaynab. Zaynab, who lost her brothers and sons in battle and came to Damascus as a prisoner, has long been honored, particularly by Shiites, as a symbol of sacrifice and steadfastness.[670] "Hussain's revenge!" and "O Zaynab, you will not be held captive twice" were used as slogans among Shi'is.[671] In many provinces of Iran, rallies and demonstrations were held regarding the defense of the shrine.[672]

For this reason, in the early days of the war, the defense of the Zaynab Shrine became a key symbol of Iran's narrative. Iran has consistently invoked the defense of the "holy shrines" concept to justify the IRGC deployment in Syria. In addition, the discourse on holy shrine defense facilitated the mobilization of volunteers into the conflict from Shi'i communities in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, and Lebanon. Iran has praised and promoted these fighters and defenders of the shrines (*modafe'een haram*), as well as fostered the creation of music videos and films about them.[673]

It has also encouraged its citizens to volunteer in defense of the Shi'i shrines. For example, in encouraging members of Iran's Basij to volunteer, IRGC Major General Rahim Nowi-Aghdam stated, "If you do not volunteer to fight in Iraq and Syria, I will go myself, and I will martyr myself in the defense of Sayyidah Zaynab or the Shii shrines in Iraq."[674]

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[669] Khamenei, "7 Questions Answered by Ayatollah Khamenei on ISIS, Who created it? How was it defeated?" Dec 13, 2017, https://english.khamenei.ir/news/5314/7-Questions-Answered-by-Ayatollah-Khamenei-on-ISIS-Who-created

[670] Anne Barnard, "Muslim Shrine Stands as a Crossroads in Syria's Unrest", *The New York Times*, April 8, 2014, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/09/world/middleeast/muslim-shrine-stands-as-a-crossroads-in-syrias-unrest.html

[671] Saud Al Sarhan, "From Qusair to Yabrub: Shiite foreign fighters in Syria", *Al-Monitor*, March 6, 2014, https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2014/03/qusair-yabroud-shiite-foreign-fighters-syria.html

[672] People in Savadkooh, Mazandaran Province, northern Iran, conducted a rally labeled "From Sacred Defense to Shrine Defense," calling for the Shrine defender martyrs' journey to be continued. See: Hamed Amirnejad, "From Sacred Defense to Shrine Defense", *Mehr News Agency*, May 25, 2016, https://en.mehrnews.com/photo/116834/From-Sacred-Defense-to-Shrine-Defense-gathering

[673] Hassan Ahmadian & Payam Mohseni, ibid., p. 248.

[674] "Iran: General Nowi-Aghdam urges recruits to fight in Syria as Assad stumbles", July 11, 2015, http://www.islamedianalysis.info/iran-general-nowi-aghdam-urges-recruits-to-fight-in-syria-as-assad-stumbles/?cn-reloaded=1

Moreover, Iran described the ongoing fighting in Syria as a war between Islam and *kufr* (infidels). In February 2016, Supreme Leader Khamenei remembered the Iran-Iraq War, known as the "sacred war", in his speech at the ceremony held for the death of 46 Iranian soldiers in Syria. He described the "self-sacrifice" of Iranian soldiers fighting in Syria as a new door of martyrdom: “The door for martyrdom, which was closed by the end of the Iranian-Iraqi war, is now open in Syria.”[675]

Hassan Rouhani, in his speech on March 12, 2016, on the day for honoring martyrs, underlined the importance of holy shrines in the fight against *takfiri* terrorism.

> “Martyrs have taught and told us if close to you there is a Muslim in danger of annihilation if the shrine of Ali Hossein Asgari and the shrine of Zaynab are in danger. We have to protect it. I have told earlier while ISIL was active in Iraq, I have said in a public speech that holy shrines are our red line. We will not tolerate there is no question of Iran, Iraq, and Syria, this and that country. If terrorists intend to attack Imam Shrines anybody will tolerate an attack on Hossein Shrine? That shrine of Ali is insulted. Anybody who will tolerate Zaynab is insulted. We will not tolerate it. We will stand and resist.”[676]

Thirdly, when it comes to another component of religious identity, the increased authority of the Iranian supreme leader and the *velayat-e faqih* among non-Iranian Shiites could shed light on the motivations of Shiite fighters in Syria.There was a prevalent notion among militants who follow the dictates of Iranian clerics that the conflict in Syria is a precursor to the arrival of Imam al-Mahdi. In the Syrian civil war, in connection with the Revolutionary Guards, the messianic discourse is frequently emphasized. As Iranian cleric and parliamentarian Ruhollah Hosseinian put it,

> “According to Shi’ite tradition, an early sign of his return came with the 1979 Iranian revolution, which set up an Islamic state to provide fighters for an army led by the Mahdi to wage war in Syria after sweeping through the Middle East. This Islamic Revolution, based on the narratives that we have received from the prophet and imams, is the prelude to the appearance of the Mahdi.”[677]

In this discourse, the Revolutionary Guards were seen as a tool that paved the way for Imam Al-Mahdi in Syria, such that in Iran's view, the presence of the Revolutionary Guard in Syria

[675] Islam Fighting disbelief in Syria: Iran’s Khamenei, https://www.aa.com.tr/en/politics/islam-fighting-disbelief-in-syria-iran-s-khamenei-/527121

[676] Hassan Rouhani: Holy shrines in Syria are our red line we will not tolerate https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U085m9Tb-S0

[677] Mariam Karaouny, "Apocalyptic prophecies drive both sides to Syrian battle for the end of time", *Reuters*, Apr 1, 2014, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-crisis-prophecy-insight-idUSBREA3013420140401

is a necessary condition for the reign of the Hidden Imam to begin. In this view particularly, the QF has the most prominent role in this respect, preparing the Middle East for the return of the Imam. General Qassem Soleimani has been labeled as a soldier of Imam al Mahdi.

4.5.3. Revolutionary Identity Perspective

The support of the Islamic State of Iran to the Assad regime reflected Iran's rhetoric of revolutionary defiance. First, Iran emphasized combating oppression, which in the Islamic Awakening manifested itself in an anti-hegemonic discourse that sought to challenge perceived imperialism in the Middle East and beyond.

The *other* resembles the influential former colonial powers in Iran, which has been described as a 'foreign-inspired' sedition in the uprising in Syria. According to the Supreme Leader, "the arrogant powers have used colonial and imperialistic methods so they can divert the attention of two sides [Shia-Sunni] from the main enemy [the West]." [678]

The Syrian conflict co-opted into the Iranian *anti-imperialist* discourse. Ayatollah Khamenei declared that "Fighting against arrogance is one of the principles of the revolution."[679] The presence of such "global arrogance in Syria" demonstrates their transgression, oppression, and greed, which they use to "destroy every resistance which is put up against arrogant powers".[680]

The discourse of IRI against imperialist domination and Western interference in Syria referred to the Iranian experience of a semi-colonial past. President Ahmadinejad stated in February 2012, while addressing the audience about the Syrian crisis at the Islamic Awakening Conference in Tehran, "We must be vigilant: the West is trying to foment sectarian conflict in our societies, as part of their goal of keeping Israel alive," he said. "Today Syria, tomorrow your country."[681] Ali Akbar Salehi, the foreign minister of the period, underlined Iran's stance

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[678] Khamenei, "Leader's Speech on the Occasion Eid al-Ghadir", October 13, 2014, https://english.khamenei.ir/news/1966/Leader-s-Speech-on-the-Occasion-Eid-al-Ghadir.

[679] Khamenei, "Leader Meets with Students", Jul 11, 2015, https://english.khamenei.ir/news/2098/Leader-Meets-with-Students.

[680] Khamenei, "Leader's Speech to Government Officials and Participants of Conference, Jan 29, 2013, https://english.khamenei.ir/news/1739/Leader-s-Speech-to-Government-Officials-and-Participants-of-Conference

[681] Robert F. Worth, 'Effort to Rebrand Arab Spring Backfires in Iran', *New York Times*, 2 February 2012. https://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/03/world/middleeast/effort-to-rebrand-arab-spring-backfires-in-iran.html

on the Syrian issue. Salehi put emphasizes on "This is Iran's stance and our solemn decision," and further pointed out, "we will not allow a foreign prescription for Syria."[682]

Secondly, the issues in Syria have already become part of a well-established *anti-Americanism* narrative. In this context, the Supreme Leader affirmed Iran's support for Assad, noting, "Wherever a movement is Islamic, populist, and anti-American, we support it".[683] For the Iranian regime, Syria under Assad is the front line of defense against the US and Israel. At the same time, in the Iranian-Syrian nexus, the alliance itself deepened the anti-US and anti-Zionist ideological stance exhibited by both countries.

Iran also accused the U.S. of fomenting internal unrest and backing terrorists. Ayatollah Khamenei has made it clear that Tehran sees the uprising in Syria as a U.S. ploy: "In Syria, the hand of America and Israel is evident." Since the uprisings in Syria started to create a negative atmosphere for the Assad regime, Iran's official discourse was based on "Iran's strong opposition to foreign intervention in Syria" and criticism of the US "interference" in Syrian affairs. Khamenei said that: "Iran's stance towards Syria is to support any reforms that benefit the people of this country and oppose the interference of America and its allies in Syrian domestic issues."[684]

Similarly, to Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the United States and its allies oppose the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in order to dominate the Middle East and prop up Israel. He said that "The Americans are seeking only their interests, and it is the right of the people of the region, including the great Syrian people, to freely decide their fate and others should not impose their demands on them."[685]

Thirdly, the idea of supporting the oppressed and seeking justice forthe Third World is an important part of Iran's revolutionary identity. The Iranian regime developed deep relations with Africa, Asia, and Latin America, where it shared its criticisms of the West, especially during the Ahmadinejad era. As the turmoil of Syria continued, Ahmadinejad visited South

[682] https://en.mehrnews.com/news/55701/Iran-Won-t-Allow-a-Foreign-Prescription-for-Syria

[683] Geneive Abdo, "How Iran Keeps Assad in Power in Syria" *insideIRAN*, https://web.archive.org/web/20120320184525/http:/www.insideiran.org/featured/how-iran-keeps-assad-in-power-in-syria/

[684] "Iran's Khamenei criticized U.S "interference" in Syria", Jan 31, 2012, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-us-syria-idUSTRE80U1VR20120131.

[685] "Countries must not 'impose' demands on Syrians: Iran", July 5, 2012, https://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012%2F07%2F05%2F224616.

America in January 2012; Venezuela was the first stop on a tour of the region that would take him also to Nicaragua, Cuba, and Ecuador.

In his meeting with Ahmedinejad, Hugo Chavez, former Venezuelan president, blamed U.S. imperialism in part for the protests against the Bashar al-Assad government in Syria.[686] In addition to this, Venezuela's support of Bashar al-Assad's regime is even more pronounced, in line with its position with Iran. According to sources close to the Venezuelan petroleum company PDVSA, the government defied international sanctions by supplying diesel to Syria in 2012.[687]Iran saw that the Syrian issue resonated among Third-World states in different corners of the world. Additionally, the 16th summit of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) was held in Iran from August 26 to 31, 2012.[688] In the meeting of members of NAM, Iran recommended a ceasefire and the implementation of national reconciliation talks in the country to solve the Syria issue.

Moreover, Iran also underlined the importance of *self-sufficiency* and economic resistance by improving Iran's relations with Third-World states to cope with the consequences of the Syrian turmoil. Iran emphasized its military *self-sufficiency* characteristic as it faced the reality of the Iran-Iraq War after the revolution. Similarly, Iran's physical and military presence in Syria and support to the al-Assad regime was characterized by self-sufficiency. Iran has developed a *self-sufficient* method of combined force operations that excludes a major role for the regime's military. The IRGC has developed a model of cadre warfare that allows "Iran to implant military leadership over a base of irregular fighters that it organizes, funds, and equips in a host country".[689]

4.6. Conclusion

The last case of this chapter, which tries to explain that Iran's state identity and foreign policy are quite intertwined, was the Syrian civil war. Although Iran had called for reform when the

[686]Adam Raney, "Ahmadinejad South America Tour", *Aljazeera*, Jan 10, 2012, https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2012/1/10/ahmadinejads-south-america-tour.
[687]Marianna Parraga & Emma Farge, "Venezuela ships fuel to war-torn Syria", *Reuters*, Feb 18, 2012, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-venezuela-syria/exclusive-venezuela-ships-fuel-to-war-torn-syria-idUSTRE81F2AU20120218.
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uprisings began in Syria in 2011, after the negative atmosphere of the riots, the IRI changed its rhetoric. The Syrian uprisings have been described as part of the front line in the struggle between Iran's "axis of resistance" and global arrogance.

This chapter has shown the development of official political discourse over time, and how this relates to the understanding of Iranian multiple identities through the case studies of the "Hostage Crisis", "Iran-Iraq war", "Palestine Issue", "Nuclear Issue" and "Syrian civil war." This chapter was interested in examining how foreign policy discourses are shaped depending on the perception of national, religious, and revolutionary identity. In this context, the IRI has rediscovered and re-constructed these identities through the definition of the *self* and the *other*. Since Iranian foreign policy discourse has a high potential to adapt to events due to its association with a certain perspective and multiple identities projection, IRI officials discursively prioritized these identities according to situation.

CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSION

The main objective of this dissertation has been to understand the relationship between identity and foreign policy with regard to the Iranian case, especially after the Islamic Revolution. The puzzling thing here was the existence of multiple identities attributed to any state, besides, or instead of a single dominant one. The key question at the heart of the discussion has been: how do these multiple identities shape Iranian foreign policy?

Identity provides a lens for someone to assess who one is and who others are, as well as what kind of world one faces. Like any person, the identity of any state is primarily shaped by self versus other perception. In most cases, any state's identity is shaped by its political elite and leading governmental institutions, which play a critical role in defining perceptions of self and the rest. A state being hostile to some, rivaling others, friendly to others depends on norms, beliefs and perceptions. On the other hand, when a government redefines its state identity, it also redefines its connections with other states.

The main argument here is that understanding Iran's foreign policy behavior requires first an understanding of Iran's multiple identities and a comprehensive understanding of how Iranian elites define these identities, as well as how they relate to selected cases in social and historical context. Concerning the role of identity in the IRI's foreign policy, the thesis has attempted to identify that multiple state identities – national, religious and revolutionary – coexist, and they compete with each other to influence Iran's foreign policy. These overlapping, complementary and competing identities interact to shape what Iran is and is not. They also have defined Iran's post-revolutionary *self and other* conceptualization.

Based on the identity-foreign policy relationship, most of the existing literature has discussed the effect of a fixed identity on foreign policy. This study has sought to extend previous studies in terms of the idea that fixed identity does not affect foreign policy, and that multiple identities are defined and redefined by Iranian authorities. While the thesis has aimed to provide evidence of how Iran's concepts of multiple identities have become relevant in foreign policy, it has done so through interpretive cases, using primary and secondary documentary sources to collect data.

The dissertation defined three official identities – national, religious, and revolutionary – under the Islamic Republic regime in Iran. While each of these identities is important in its own right, in the context of Iran, they combine in unique ways to defining and limiting Iranian foreign policy. Moreover, the three identities produce complementary or conflicting imperatives related to decision making or conducting foreign policy.

Firstly, an overview of Iranian nationalism showed that the effort to create and advance a distinctive Iranian national identity has dominated domestic and foreign policy throughout modern history. While Iran identifies an external other regarding its semi-colonial past, the 1953 coup attempt against Mossadeq was seen as a turning point for Iran's international relations and has continued to resonate throughout the Iranian political debate. However, the discourse in the first decade of the Islamic Revolution showed that the IRI's officials redefined national identity in such a way that it would play a subservient role in the dominant Islamic narrative. Despite this discourse, Iraq's attack on Iranian territory and its consequences have directed the "Islamic utopia" that was created without a national border to an Islamic solidarity policy that also cares about national borders. The rising national concerns and the 'national identity' that emerged continued to influence Iranian politics and foreign policy in the aftermath of the Iraq war. Especially under the presidency of M. Khatami (1997–2005), the Iranian national *self* was redefined with a balance between "being Iranian" and "being Islamic". It is consisted of both *Iraniyat and Islamiyat*.Likewise, PresidentAhmadinejad, refurbished and burnished Iranian national identity based on the discourse of national pride and sanctification of the pre-Islamic era. In his period, the Cyrus cylinder, which signified 2500 years of Iranian history, was brought to Iran for exhibition in 2011, and a Norouz ceremony was conducted at Persepolis in the same year. The national identity conception is based upon the Islamic characters of Iran's social and political system, and on Iran's insistence on territorial integrity and sovereignty.

The second state identity that prevailed over the Islamic Republic is, as its name suggests, the religious one. While Iran's religious identity envisages a pan-Islamic discourse on the path to revolution, the Shiite faith has become an effective force in mobilizing the Iranian masses. Both Ali Shariati and Ayatollah Khomeini reinterpreted the "Tragedy of Karbala" to mobilize the masses. Traditional Shiism was reinterpreted by invoking the spirit of the past. The struggle between the wounded "self" and the cruel "other" became a constant reality in the Shiite collective consciousness. Two points were very important in this transformation. The first is the growing influence of Shiite popular culture, and the other is the expectation that

Imam Mahdi would bring justice to the world. Religious rituals turned into a mass mobilization mechanism. The “martyrdom of Hussein” was exactly the action guide. It came to symbolize the struggle of the Iranian people against oppression.

After the revolution, the religious identity of the Islamic Republic is primarily built on the doctrine of *velayet-i faqih*. During the reign of Khomeini, the institution of *velayet-i faqih* was criticized by religious authorities, and these criticisms increased against Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei.Critics of the *velayat-e faqih* institution were seen as the “internal other” for the regime. The “internal other” is associated with the “external other”, and reflected in the discourses of the Supreme Leader. The religious *other* was labeled was as "British Shiism" and “American Islam.”

The third identity of the Islamic Republic that some times competed against and other times complemented the national and religious identities, is the revolutionary identity. The intellectual climate of the 1960s and 1970s influenced Iran's revolutionary ideology. Jalal Al-e Ahmad's *Gharbzadegi* and Shariati's “return to self” brought a socialist, third worldist, and revolutionary perspective to the period. Particularly for Khomeini, the leader of the revolution who internalized the discourses of Ali Shariati, the protection of *mostazafin* thatwho suffered at the hands of the *mustakbirin* became the aim of the revolution. After the Islamic Revolution, the components of revolutionary identity were markedly anti-imperialist, anti-Americanist, third-worldist, self-sufficient, and social justice-oriented. The revolutionary self in Iran defines resistance to Western-dominated imperialism as an important component of revolutionary identity. Standing against America, which is presented by the "great satan" discourse, has been at the center of the regime's ideology. The components that make up the revolutionary identity have strong relations with each other. Anti-imperialism and anti-Americanism are strongly consistent with third worldism. The third worldist stance of Iran ensures the continuation of the struggle for the liberation of all deprived and oppressed people in the world. Economic development and prosperity for all social strata is based on self-sufficiency and social justice.

Contrary to the expectations of the diluting effects of revolution and ideology in Iranian politics, particularly during the 1990s, the revolutionary characteristics of the regime continued to prevail over Iranian politics. In particular, the Ahmadinejad’s presidency witnessed a discursive revival of revolutionary identity in the “line of Khomeini." It was a "twenty-year spasm", as Halliday calls it. The need for the world to be freed from the chains

of two arrogant powers came to life in the discourse of "Neither East nor West" for Khomeini. Ahmadinejad reinforced the position of the third worldist approach in Iranian foreign policy with the "Look to the East" discourse.

Table –**1**: Multiple Identities Components of the IRI

Identities	**Components**		
	Notional/Geographical Coverage	**Core Discourse**	**Secondary Discourses**
National	The territorial integrity of Iran "sovereignty"	"Islamic Internationalism"	Complementarity of *Iraniyat* and *Islamiyat* "Opposition nationalism"
Religious	Shi'ite communities within the *Ummah*	Velayat-e Faqih	-Revolutionary Shi'ism -Mahdism
Revolutionary	Oppressed communities throughout the world	Anti-imperialism, Anti-Americanism	-Third Worldism -Self-sufficiency, -Social Justice, solidarity

Having outlined and clarified multiple identities of the Islamic Republic, this study traced the effects and implications of each identity with regard to a number of selected cases. The first case selected for discussion is the Hostage Crisis, and how the new regime handled the taking over of the US embassy immediately after the revolution in terms of its multiple identities. Firstly, as a national identity component, the hostage crisis is seen as a struggle with the external other. Secondly, the opposition to imperialism and Israel became a unifying mantra that guided the revolutionary opposition to the Shah's pro-Western regime. The anti-imperialist and anti-US discourses strengthened the IRI's revolutionary identity in domestic and foreign policy. Iran's rulers presented the Iranian *self* as resisting against the *other*, the "greatest evil against the purity and righteousness of Iran". In the Iranian context, being anti-

American and anti-imperialist has become an indisputable component of being revolutionary and Islamist.

The Iran-Iraq War (1980–88) is taken as the second case to trace the effects of the dominant identities. Firstly, the surprise Iraqi invasion – which occurred during the Islamic Republic's efforts to rebuild Iranian identity, society, and the state along Islamic lines – prompted the Iranian leadership to give the war effort an Islamic "aura." Secondly, with the start of the conflict, it became clear that faith alone would not be enough to rouse the people. In the face of an Iraqi leadership that was clearly interested in framing the conflict in national rather than sectarian terms, the Islamic Republic adapted quickly. Indeed, at that time, Ayatollah Khomeini knew that defending national borders require all forces, and gave priority to nationalism for the revolutionary cause, a transformation that kept the *ummah* mission in the background until the end of the conflict. Discursively, the "nation" became sacred.

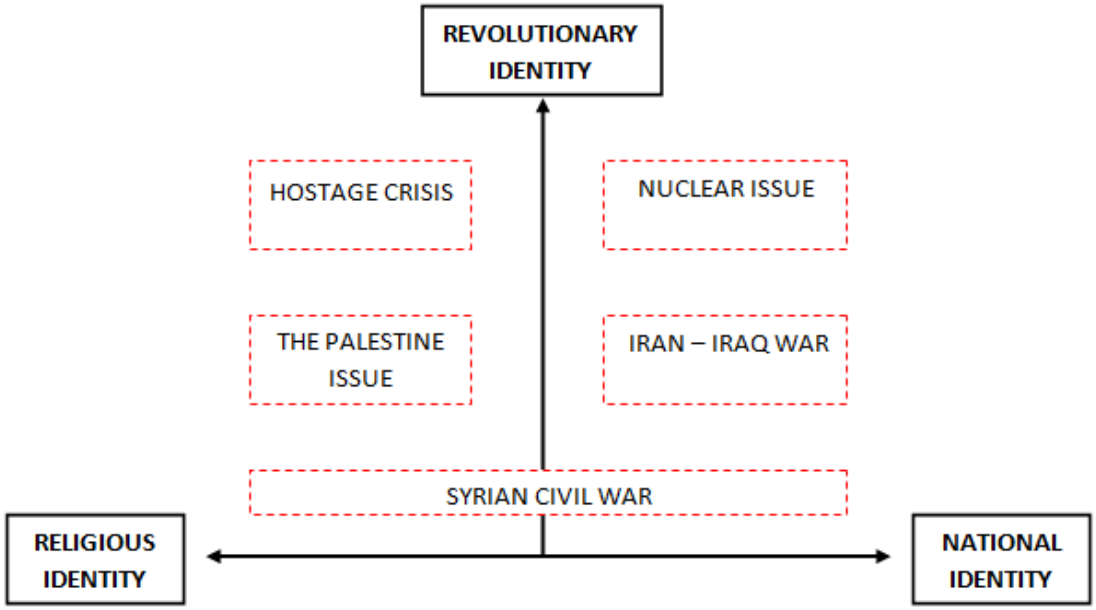
In portraying the Palestine issue, as the third case addressed in the study, the leaders of the IRI used*ummah-centric* rhetoric to expand its ideological and political influence throughout the Muslim world; it was also integrated with the components of revolutionary ideological values. The IRI explicitly defined the self as the supporter of *mustazafin* to spread Iranian revolutionary influence. This also reflected the struggle of so-called “global arrogance”, a term routinely used to refer to Zionism and the US.

In the fourth case, that of the nuclear issue case, the IRI approached nuclear ambitions as wasteful and un-Islamic in the post-revolutionary period. However, the Iraqi invasion revived fear of an external other, and increasing nationalist discourse affected its nuclear options. Iran's main argument was that nuclear talks or agreements were not just in Iran's interest, but the interest of the entire oppressed Muslim world because they share the same enemies. Hence, the nuclear issue was not only used to unify the Iranian nation but also the Islamic community as a whole, *the Islamic Ummah* in rhetoric. The nuclear issue also includes elements of being revolutionary. This issue has long been a symbol of Iran’s struggle with imperialism and search for self-sufficiency.

In the Syrian case, the final case examined in this study, the anti-imperialist and pro-Palestine stance of Iran and post-revolution alliance experiences increased the cooperation between Iran and Syria.Iran continued this alliance in the Syrian civil war, and continued to support the Assad regime. While there has been a growing nationalist discourse on the Syrian issue, opposition nationalism has criticized Iran's presence in Syria, and this was felt in protests

across the country. On the other hand, the presence of Iran in Syria has been described by revolutionary and Islamic rhetoric. In this discourse, the war in Syria was associated with the Karbala narrative, and the Revolutionary Guards in Syria were seen as pavingthe way for Imam-Al Mahdi.

Table –**2:** Multiple Identities in Iranian Foreign Policy



This study has presented an examination of the post-revolutionary era. The results of the discursive interpretation of Iran's approach towards the five cases mentioned above show that firstly, designating a state's foreign policy requires understanding its state identity. Governments are actively engaged in building and redefining their state identities. The multiple state identities are constructed through the socialization process that develops international or regional standards, perceptions of allies and enemies, “self and other” creation, and leader discourse. Following the Islamic Revolution in Iran, new principles and ideologies have changed the definition of “self” and “other”. This study contributed to the understanding of the role of self and other in state identity in terms of the foreign policy understanding of the Iranian authorities.

Secondly, Iranian state identity under the Islamic Republic has embodied competitive and frequently complementary identities. These identities are alterably employed by Iranian officials as required by domestic or regional Iranians – politicians and constituents – who prefer certain policies because of how they identify themselves and others. Moreover, the

identity choices made by Iranian elites constrained them. For instance; national identity took precedence until the Iran-Iraq War; however, Iranian elites used various identities to mobilize support for the war against Iraq. Iranian leaders mobilizing popular support during the war with Iraq argued that identity could only be an intermediate variable between external threat and internal mobilization.

The challenge of this research was that understanding identity and its impact on a country's foreign policy requires contextual interpretation that extends beyond simple descriptive classification. Due to constraints of scope and time, everything could not be evaluated. However, the impact of the established context needs to be studied further.

Using the selected cases, this thesis has provided a theoretical framework for studying state identity narratives. This paradigm can be used to investigate several aspects of Iranian foreign policy. The cases within the scope of the study, according to the discursive changes in Iran, will be interesting to examine. Indeed, new regional developments may be available shortly to test some of the findings in this study, and to gauge whether Iran's multiple identities play the role presented here.

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