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I.B. TAURIS

THE US-IRAN RELATIONSHIP

The Impact of Political Identity on Foreign Policy

Penelope Kinch holds a PhD in International Relations from the Centre for Arab and Islamic Studies at the Australian National University. Following her academic career, Kinch worked as an analyst and regional manager for a global risk and strategic consulting firm, focusing on political and security risk in the Middle East, South Asia and Africa. She is currently a global risk management adviser for a major international non-governmental organisation. During her career, Kinch has lived and worked in a range of complex environments, including Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Gaza and South Sudan.

'The literature on foreign policy analysis of Iran and the United States, and within that detailed scrutiny of IRI–US relations has been a major field of research since before the 1979 revolution. But US interventions in the region since 9/11 have added a new urgency to analysis of US–Iran relations in a much less predictable regional environment. Indeed, given the positive developments on the nuclear front, and the commensurate negative ones following the deepening regional crises which impact the interests of both Iran and the United States, interest in the conduct of these two major MENA regional actors will remain high. To understand their behaviour and their policies going forward one needs a strong analytical rudder, one which can explain the drivers of these states' policies as well as their motives, and I think we have that in Kinch's new innovative study of US–Iran relations through the lens of the interaction between identity and policy.'

Anoush Ehteshami, Nasser al-Sabah Professor of International Relations, Durham University

'Since the 1979 Iranian revolution, few international relationships are more fraught with obstacles to mutual understanding than the Iranian–American one. While Penelope Kinch frames her analysis within constructivism, she solidly grounds political science theory in history, including the use of new oral and archival sources. Consequently, her important analysis, clearly expressed, invites a broad readership.'

Gene R. Garthwaite, Professor Emeritus of History, Dartmouth College

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To all those friends, family and colleagues who supported this project

INTRODUCTION

Since the 1978–9 Islamic Revolution in Iran and the subsequent severing of diplomatic ties with the US, conflict and contention have been the predominant features of interactions between these state actors. The relationship between Iran and the US during this period has been variously characterised as 'troubled and difficult'[1], 'confounding' and 'grave'[2], with each nation representing 'the perfect villain'[3] to the other. The mythology of mutual distrust constructed by both states – each 'prone to a moralistic air of self-righteousness'[4] – has led to a challenging foreign policy environment.

An intriguing metaphor recurs in studies of the relationship between Iran and the US: that of 'the married couple who can only show their close emotional connection to each other by fighting'.[5] Kenneth Pollack likens the pain and recrimination characterising interactions as each nation strikes out at the other to the emotions and behaviours associated with being 'jilted'.[6] This is symptomatic of the close proximity of these state actors in the global environment, whereby the interests of each constantly intersect and collide with those of the other. As a result, each nation holds a unique place in the political identity of the other, reproduced and compounded by the influence of history and experience on collective memory.

Iran and the US have the distinctive experience of having been close allies until 1979 and the bitterest of enemies in the ensuing period, recent negotiations notwithstanding. These circumstances are unusual in international relations. The resultant lack of communication and consultation between two important actors in the international

community provides a fertile ground for constructing myth and misunderstanding. These circumstances create the stage for this book.

How does the construction of political identity impact on the manner in which a state views itself and its own role in the international community, as well as its interactions with other state actors? In this instance, Iran and the US in the period following the Islamic Revolution provide the framework to answer these questions. The nature of the troubled relationship between the US and Iran can be better understood by an analysis of the development of political identity, and the impact of that identity on foreign policy, in these nations.

The construction of political identity includes an inherent component of myth, creating a challenging environment in which these two actors operate within the international community. Political myths are a product of the imagined national discourse of states, informed by experiential memory and identity.[7] They provide a narrative within which political rhetoric and policy making can operate. The legitimacy and authenticity of state actors and acts are limited by the construction of each state's political identity and are reinforced through myth.[8]

In order to define the political identity of a state, an in-depth analysis of the origins of political culture is necessary. This work entails a comprehensive review of the development of political identity in both Iran and the US, in order to identify salient themes, as well as continuity and change over time. This process will allow myths of identity to be recognised, shedding light on the challenges that have arisen in the international arena as a result of the construction of political identity and its inherent mythology. Of particular interest is the collision of American and Iranian interests in the Gulf region, where issues of security and pre-eminence are of significance to both nations. The experience of US intervention in Iraq is of particular relevance, as is the potential threat posed by Iran's nuclear programme. While contemporary issues such as these are politically contingent and therefore subject to change, the driving forces behind foreign policy decisions remain. Gary Sick has stated that both nations possess a 'missionary quality' in the operation of their foreign policy and that an exaggerated view of self-importance can create challenges in this context.[9] The origins and consequences of this missionary quality are central to this book.

It is essential to clarify parameters at the outset. This book focuses on the *political* identity of Iran and the US: the manner in which each state defines itself and the way in which actors reproduce and enact that identity. I will not address this question from the standpoint of *national* identity, that being the manner in which Iranians or Americans as individuals or groups define their sense of self. To do so would be to venture into a separate field of study, for which there is insufficient scope here. Nevertheless, it is important to recognise that the inputs and impulses that serve to establish national identity can also have a significant normative role in the creation of political identity; cultural, historical and social values are integral to the construction of political identity. I recognise that a substantial void may often exist between the perspectives of political identity and national identity.

Apart from the historical narratives providing empirical evidence of the influences on developing each state's political identities, which are crucial foundation stones, the scope of this book focuses predominantly on the decades that have passed since the Islamic Revolution in Iran, the key international issues during this period and the challenges they entail. However, in constructing the political identity of Iran and the US, considerable historical analysis has been undertaken into the pre-1979 era.[10] I also look to recent political and diplomatic developments in order to evaluate the prospects for the countries' future relationship.

The troubled relationship between Iran and the US is deserving of a fresh and balanced assessment. Numerous works on Iran, the US and their respective foreign policies already exist.[11] However, much recent literature published on the specific arena of interactions between Iran and the US, and the reasons behind those interactions, has been non-academic, written from an American perspective,[12] or focused on a single international issue such as the Iranian nuclear programme. This book is motivated by a desire to bridge a gap in the scholarly archive by comprehensively reviewing political identity as a basis for challenges in international relations. Redressing the balance of perspective by approaching the research question with relatively equal emphasis on both Iran and the US, it delves into the origins of political culture in both nations in order to identify the challenges in this international interaction.

The relative novelty of the constructivist approach to the study of international relations provides an original insight into this field.

By approaching questions of political identity from a constructivist theoretical standpoint, this book will illuminate new perspectives on an international scenario that has already attracted much interest.[13] For example, the initial inspiration for this area of research was sparked by William Beeman's 2005 work *The 'Great Satan' vs the 'Mad Mullahs': How the United States and Iran Demonize Each Other.*[14] Beeman refers to myths of identity in seeking to explain the beleaguered relationship between the US and Iran. Such a concept presented scope for a deeper analysis of these and other myths, and resultant challenges in international relations. I develop Beeman's theory of myths, while also providing a comprehensive study of the means by which myths of identity are created. For this reason, extensive study of the role played by history and experience in the construction of political identity has been undertaken. I move beyond Beeman's work and advance research in this area by assessing the issues he raised through the prism of an international relations framework, rather than an anthropological approach.

The body of the book is structured in seven chapters. The first chapter is largely theoretical, outlining key issues within an international relations context. The theoretical framework utilised is one of constructivism, elucidated by historical narrative and empirical data. Chapter 1 explains the selection of this framework and assesses its benefits and limitations in the context of key conceptual issues, such as identity and political myth. It also defines critical themes and the parameters within which a constructivist theory of political identity is analysed.[15]

The development of Iranian political identity is traced and discussed in Chapter 2. This section demonstrates the aspects of Iran's history and experience that have constructed the political identity of the modern nation. The relevance of political culture, religion and foreign influence are central themes in this chapter. Also assessed in the chapter are myths of identity that have been constructed as institutions of the political identity of the Islamic Republic. This involves an analysis of the political theory of Ayatollah Khomeini and the revolutionary movement, identifying aspects of the political identity of the new regime that have been maintained since 1979, as well as those that have been reconstructed in forging the Islamic Republic. Receiving particular attention is the significance of anti-Americanism as a pillar of Iranian identity, its origins and repercussions. This provides crucial context for discussion later in the book of the foreign policy challenges experienced

in Iran's relationship with the US. Each element of the chapter provides insight into Iran's predisposition to enact certain foreign policy directions and its view of its own role in the international community.

A similar approach to the development of political identity, but this time in the US context, is undertaken in Chapter 3. The history and experience of the US as a nation has had a profound impact on the manner in which that state actor views its position in the international arena. This is of central relevance to explaining the deterioration of the relationship with Iran following the inception of the Islamic Republic. Of particular relevance is the American sense of mission in the projection of its political identity in world affairs, as well as the political consequences of failure and humiliation. The strong sense of moral responsibility in managing global affairs is an institution in American political identity and has a significant impact on the world view of the US. Identifying themes from the construction of US history provides insight into the myth of American power and the resultant foreign policy challenges.

Iran's present status as something of a pariah in the international community is propelled primarily by the intersection of its foreign policy with that of the US. Chapter 4 includes analysis of the myths and challenges that have arisen from the encounters each state has had with the other since the Islamic Revolution in Iran. This includes an analysis of the myth of American power, as well as the implications of US interaction with political Islam in Iran. In addition, key international incidents – such as the US Embassy hostage crisis of 1979–81 and the Iran–Iraq War – and a legacy of miscommunication are placed in a context of political identity as developed in Chapters 2 and 3. This forms the basis of a discussion of dialogue, misrepresentation and misunderstanding between the US and Iran to elucidate the challenges that have arisen between the two states in the initial post-revolutionary period.

The contemporary international issues that have the most significant impact on the relationship between the two countries are assessed in the following chapters. A comprehensive analysis of Iran's nuclear programme and associated concerns with security form Chapter 5. This is a critical issue in the context of intersections of American and Iranian political identity in the international arena. An assessment of the reasons behind Iran's stance on nuclear technology, the US response and the

prospects for a permanent resolution to the problem provides significant insights into the political identity of each nation.

Also of particular relevance to current international issues is the US relationship with Israel and Iran's position on the Jewish state; these are addressed in Chapter 6. This chapter also assesses areas of common and disparate interests between the US and Iran, and the reasons behind them. Following 11 September 2001, Iran identified some common interests with the US and assisted in the invasion of Afghanistan and the removal of the Taliban from power. Iran was instrumental in the instigation of the Bonn conference that resolved tribal difficulties in establishing a stable government for Afghanistan in 2002. However, no sooner had this occurred than President George W. Bush declared Iran part of an 'axis of evil', destroying any achievements made in the *rapprochement* process. More recently, diplomatic exchanges have occurred between the US and Iran, first brokered as a means of addressing mutual concerns over the future of Iraq during the height of sectarian conflict in 2007, and subsequently in the form of direct negotiations over the future of Iran's nuclear programme. In recent years, there has been a growing awareness that a successful solution to the ongoing crisis of security and stability in Iraq cannot be resolved without the involvement of its most powerful neighbour, Iran. The dawning of this awareness in some American political circles in the latter stages of the George W. Bush presidency marked a turning point in perspective. This avenue has been explored in more depth in connection with both Iraq and the conflict in Syria during the administration of Barack Obama.

Despite the changing international concerns that have involved Iran, the US has maintained a largely negative foreign policy position on Iran since gunmen stormed its Tehran embassy in 1979 and took American hostages as part of an internal revolutionary struggle. Ayatollah Khomeini's glowering countenance and images of mobs chanting 'Death to America' besieged TV screens in the US for 444 days, and – with the exception of President Barack Obama's partially realised foreign policy – since that time it has largely not been in the interests of successive US administrations to seek an alternative position on the country's relationship with Iran. This was particularly the case in the early 2000s; Ali Ansari contends that after 11 September 2001, US policy towards Iran turned 'away from "traditional" realism and towards an ideological construction of international relations driven emphatically by myths'.[16]

The constraints on prospects for change in this relationship, in the light of present circumstances, are encompassed in Chapter 7. This chapter also reviews the role played by flawed communication patterns in reinforcing these constraints. The most common American media image of Iran since 1979 has remained that which dominated the hostage crisis period. This representation is as much a product of ongoing identity myths as is the image of America as the 'Great Satan' and potent political rhetoric, on both sides, which in many ways is unrepresentative of the true state of relations between the two countries. This chapter assesses the possibilities for future relations in the light of the findings regarding political identity in earlier chapters.

My research draws upon two principal methodological techniques: archival research and elite interviewing. Both are integral to the success of the research for different reasons, and both gave rise to operational challenges.

Elite interviewing as a methodological approach was of particular importance in considering the Iranian perspectives on this topic. Accessibility challenges meant that literature in the Persian language was difficult to obtain and comprehensively analyse. As a result, information obtained by direct access to experts was critical and invaluable, in order to ensure the research question could be answered from both the American and the Iranian point of view. This is a key reason for the large number of Iranian academics interviewed in the course of fieldwork research. Audie Klotz and Cecelia Lynch explain that interviewing experts and decision makers is a critical substitute in situations where lack of access to archival material is a factor.[17] In addition, this technique is often used to obtain information on issues of current policy making relevance. One topically similar recent example is found in Mustafa Kibaroglu's article 'Good for the shah, banned for the mullahs: the West and Iran's quest for nuclear power'.[18] This article utilises interviews with analysts and politicians in Iran to provide evidence that was unavailable in published form at the time of his writing. As a result, Kibaroglu was able to present a reasoned argument addressing Iran's nuclear ambitions from an extremely contemporary perspective. Elite interviewing is similarly valuable in the context of this book.

Archival information relating to the operation of the bureaucracy, the presidency and policy-makers was infinitely simpler to obtain in the US

than in the Islamic Republic. A consequently larger proportion of archival research, in comparison to interviewing, was undertaken in the US. Thus, some imbalance in the application of the two research techniques utilised in this book must be acknowledged, with more interviewing and less archival research for Iranian issues and the converse approach in the US.[19]

Robert Peabody *et al*. acknowledge that almost all fields of political science research benefit from the use of elite interviewing, in the form of focused interviews.[20] This is a recognised method of obtaining unpublished information and eliciting opinion from those with firsthand or superior knowledge of the research area.[21] Indeed, Lewis Dexter writes: 'Interviewing is the preferred tactic of data collection when [. . .] it appears likely that it will get *better* data or *more* data or data *at less cost* than other tactics.'[22] In the case of this research area, given language limitations and the complexities of translation, more data could be obtained through interviewing, and undoubtedly in less time, which can be viewed as a cost in Dexter's terms. As already identified, redressing these limitations was particularly valuable in conducting research in Iran.

Obtaining 'on the record' information using elite interviewing as a methodological approach is a recognised challenge of this research process.[23] The ability to do so will initially depend on the general topic area, and on the interview questions in particular. The subject matter that constructs this book is complex and often sensitive, most particularly in the Islamic Republic of Iran. As a result, some barriers to free expression, or 'bars to spontaneity', could be anticipated.[24] The recognised method of reducing this barrier lies in the assurance of confidentiality.[25] In the interests of reducing 'bars to spontaneity', and to ensure that the participants in interviews were comfortable in discussing the research topic, a series of options were available to the interviewee at the outset of questioning, regarding the level of attribution in the resultant writing.[26]

I recognise the following:

> The informant's statement represents merely the perception of the informant, filtered and modified by his cognitive and emotional reactions and reported through his personal verbal usages.[27]

There are several aspects of this statement that are particularly important in this case. The first significant point is that the perceptions of the informant are conditional upon his or her experience and the social context within which the interview is being conducted. Under the circumstances of this book, as long as this fact is acknowledged and anticipated, analysis within this normative environment serves only to reinforce the constructivist framework on which the research relies.

Secondly, the issue of 'personal verbal usages' was significant when undertaking interviews in Iran, primarily because of language constraints. To ensure details were not 'lost in translation' a solid understanding of the Persian language by the researcher was a pre-requisite. In any circumstance where word meaning was in doubt, or where definition may be ambiguous, the Persian term would be notated and followed up in the transcription of the interview. In most circumstances, however, the English language skills of the respondent were more than sufficient to the task, and only portions of some interviews were conducted in the Persian language.

John Dean and William Whyte also refer to the problem of 'ulterior motive' in outlining the potential flaws in the process of elite interviewing.[28] In general, the potential for research results to be skewed by the interviewee operating with ulterior motives depends on the ability of the interviewer to influence a particular situation on behalf of the interviewee.[29] If the interviewer has no power of influence, and in particular no sponsorship or backing that might open a conflict of interests, the concern of ulterior motives is nullified.[30] In the case of this project, the interviews were conducted with only academic-level sponsorship.

In general, though challenges in the methodological approach are present, potential problems have been anticipated and solutions identified in advance, limiting the impact of complications on the eventual result. We now have a foundation on which to outline the theoretical framework that structures this book.

CHAPTER 1

IDENTITY AND MYTH

Political Identity

The primary theoretical challenge presented by this book is that of how to approach the question of identity, and more specifically political identity. 'Identity has been indissociable from the business of politics, much of which is about the formation and dissolution of such identities.'[1] Forming a definition of political identity and how to negotiate its development requires a review of the theoretical approaches in international relations that could be applied to the study of identity. The constructivist school of thought is intuitive to the scope of research undertaken here. Alexander Wendt defines this approach to international relations theory:

> Constructivism is a structural theory of international politics that makes the following core claims: 1) states are the principal actors in the system; 2) the key structures in the states system are intersubjective rather than material; and 3) state identities and interests are in a large part constructed.[2]

Wendt's definition clarifies the assumptions that form the basis of the theoretical approach taken in this book.

John Baylis and Steve Smith define identity as:

> The understanding of the self in relationship to an 'other'. Identities are social and thus are always formed in relationship to others.

> Constructivists generally hold that identities shape interests; we cannot know what we want unless we know who we are.[3]

It is imperative, at this point, to differentiate political identity, as it relates to this research, from national identity. Political identity describes the identity of the state and the role of state actors, rather than the sociological interpretation of identity as 'sense of self', which relates to national identity.[4] I do not seek to define the Iranian or American 'sense of self' here; rather I specifically examine political identity in foreign policy development and international relations. As a result, the definition of Baylis and Smith applies to the identity of the state as an actor, how its identity in the international arena influences foreign policy, and the impact of domestic policy concerns on the projection of political identity in international relations. It is the relationships between state actors that presuppose the development of political identity. However, it is important to note that political identity is not created only by interaction with other states; it is also created and reinforced domestically.[5] It is for this reason that the construction of political identity in the US and Iran must be addressed individually before an analysis of the interaction between those identities on the international stage can be attempted.

Parameters need to be defined within which to determine the construction of political identity. Christian Reus-Smit offers three mechanisms that assist in explaining how political identity is developed, and how interest is shaped by these forces: [6]

1. **Imagination:** Limitations, perceived or otherwise, impose institutionalised norms in society that condition what the actor (state or individual) can imagine. An actor forms its understanding of other actors through norms and practices in its imagined experience. Ted Hopf develops this concept one step further, suggesting that an actor requires an acknowledgement of legitimacy from the relevant community in a social context before it is 'even able to act as its identity'.[7] Cultural memory as an aspect of the development of political identity is closely linked to this mechanism, providing an accepted socio-cultural environment in which that identity can operate. Cultural memory also provides a narrative within which political myth is constructed. An appreciation of how myths of identity develop benefits greatly from an understanding of Reus-Smit's concept of imagination. For example,

the myth of the US as the 'Great Satan' has become an institutionalised, or even ideologised, norm in conservative Iranian political rhetoric, to the extent that a departure from this expected condition would require an acknowledgment of legitimacy. The use, and even manipulation, of the media as an ongoing means to reinforce expected conditions makes this force all the more potent. This phenomenon allows political rhetoric to resonate within the realities of political culture, because it is understood in terms of imagined and accepted norms. This leads to Reus-Smit's second mechanism for the construction of political identity.

2. **Communication:** This mechanism operates within the imagined norms in society as outlined above. Actors appeal to accepted norms of conduct in the international arena, and in this manner an exchange of information 'stabilises expectations about the future'.[8] International institutions, as non-state actors, are a key element of communication, whether in the form of organisations such as the United Nations (UN) or the International Criminal Court, or in the form of treaties or protocols.[9] The United States and Iran have been lacking the framework of communicative action both as a result of severing diplomatic ties following the Islamic Revolution in Iran and the degree of belligerence exercised on both sides with regard to international institutions. Instead, communication takes the form of political rhetoric via secondary conduits of information such as the media, which has accompanying complications. Debate and reasoning in diplomacy must have legitimate rules of conduct, which can only 'resonate with pre-existing, mutually recognised higher order values'.[10] As such, political rhetoric can only be communicated through imagined political identity; rhetoric has no value if it is not practised and understood within imagined norms. The limits of communication have an impact in a variety of areas of international relations. One such example is that of intervention in the domestic affairs of other state actors, which can be rationalised in terms of internationally accepted judgment operating through forums such as the UN. Similarly, conflict can arise from the violation of perceived norms in the rules of intervention.

3. **Constraint:** Ideas can only be rationalised if the social context provides them with moral force. Justification is a constraint on action because behaviour must be consistent with accepted principles. Even if constructivism does not allow that international affairs are controlled by a 'central enforcer' or immutable rules, institutions, economic factors

and social context can have an impact on state interests, operating as a constraint on the state actor.[11] Constraints can assume a variety of guises, such as systems of material incentives or the balance of power, but significant to the constructivist argument is how these constraints act to reproduce identity.[12] Excessively dramatic foreign policy rhetoric in both the US and Iran is understood and rationalised because of experience and socially accepted sentiments. In this sense, accepted norms that provide a mechanism for the development of political identity also act as a constraint.

An example of Reus-Smit's mechanisms in operation may be seen in the lengthy US occupation and descent into sectarian conflict in Iraq following the 2003 invasion: the assumptions of state actors such as the US and Iran may be in opposition because of differing perceptions of the accepted rights of international intervention. The imagined norms of international intervention are a product of the political identity of each state actor, but cannot necessarily be reconciled in the international community. This coincides with Hans Morgenthau's claims that states cannot be obliged to observe a common morality or right because no such universal order exists.[13] Wendt describes this function as follows:

> A fundamental principle of constructivist social theory is that people act towards objects, including other actors, on the basis of the meanings that the objects have for them. States act differently toward enemies than they do towards friends because enemies are threatening and friends are not.[14]

As a consequence of this principle, political identity is a crucial function in comprehending challenging scenarios in international relations, and the interests that inform them.

Interest and Identity

In terms of the relationship between interest and identity – a central theme of constructivist research – the term 'interests' is understood in the sense of 'policy interests', which James Bill defines as 'the personal, economic and political interests' pursued by state actors.[15] This takes into account national security interests, material interests and socio-cultural interests, all of which bear a relationship to political identity,

and to the development of foreign policy. David Campbell defines foreign policy in the constructivist frame as follows:

> Foreign policy (conventionally understood as the external orientation of pre-established states with secure identities) is [...] to be retheorized as one of the boundary-producing practices central to the production and reproduction of the identity in whose name it operates.[16]

The intertwined construction of interest, foreign policy development and political identity is fundamental.

Interests, as identified here, 'depend on a particular construction of self-identity in relation to the conceived identity of others'.[17] Or to express this in another fashion, 'identity is a relational concept insofar as it only makes sense to talk about the self when a relationship with the other is present.'[18] The definitions of terms such as 'enemies' and 'friends' are determined on the basis of those experiences that have collective meaning, or what is described as 'organisational learning'.[19] Identity is acquired through the activity of participating in a group, community or society with organisational learning or collective meaning. It is the vehicle that allows an actor to comprehend its relationship to the external environment.[20] This also applies between state actors; if more than one state actor develops a sense of collective identity, this becomes the basis for 'common purposes or interests'.[21] It is by this means that alliances are created, but the inverse process does not necessarily follow: having common purposes or interests does not establish a sense of collective identity. This is a key facet of the challenges facing the US and Iran in international relations (see Chapter 6).

International relations can only be comprehended through what people believe.[22] Political actors seek to use value systems, history and ideology to strengthen their positions and discredit opponents, and emotionally charged terms imbue meaning to discourse.[23] 'Others' are defined in the same way; they are identified as acting outside of the group. When dealing with friends, 'one's identity is reinforced by affirming the links and characteristics that make that specific other an ally', while an opposite process occurs when dealing with an enemy.[24] 'Categories help us order the environment and make it meaningful', allowing similarities within a group and differences between groups to

be identified.[25] Political identity describes this process on the level of state actors operating within the accepted constraints of the collective meaning of that state.

Political identity is defined by political interest, which is, in turn, determined in the process of defining situations.[26] This is closely aligned to the 1950s theory of Nelson Foote, who claimed that identity must be formed by motivating factors, which provide the actor with 'the energy appropriate for performing'.[27] The foreign policy stances of Iran and the US are replete with this 'energy', as both derive domestic and international results from the projection of their political identity. In addition, Wendt tells us that 'conceptions of self and interest tend to 'mirror' the practices of significant others over time.'[28] Iran and the US are 'significant others' in the foreign policy formulation of each as a state actor. The relationship reflects the three principles of constructivism, which suggest that actions are constrained by experience and imagination.

Identities and interests are not only created by interactions between state actors, they are also sustained this way, which creates certain expectations about these identities. The previous experience of one actor classifies its understanding of another's political identity and presupposes its response to new experiences.[29] By construing an event in a particular way, an actor is unduly confident that others will view the event in a similar way, creating expectations.[30] Attainable expectation introduces a level of predictability that is a necessity in the international order, predictability that can be maintained through stable identities. Interested parties in the political system can deliberately maintain elements of these expectations, to preserve balances and to incite anticipated responses from other actors. Expectation provides a policy with social context and moral force, and by doing so constrains actors to anticipated activity. This is a feature of the relationship between the US and Iran, and the constraints it engenders act to sustain the perception that each nation holds of the other.

The identity of a state has inherent preferences and resultant actions that are produced and reproduced through its daily social practices. Hopf raises the issue that the producer of the identity is 'not in control of what it ultimately means to others'.[31] This suggests that the understanding one state holds of a second state's identity is largely unrelated to the meaning that second state ascribes to its own identity. The ascribing of meaning belongs to a subjective arbiter, and this

meaning may oppose the intended meaning of the state or individual. This produces a 'problem of construal', in that an actor may be unable to recognise alternative norms, thereby limiting their ability to make empathetic judgements.[32] By this means mythical identities are created and reproduced by imagination and experience. An actor may also deliberately exhibit a political identity that does not reflect the preferences of the state, in order to achieve certain ends either domestically or internationally.

Security and Identity

If the international world is a historical creation – a human construction rather than an external, objective reality determined by immutable forces, as many international relations theorists would argue – then it is open to reconstruction and is meaningful to those who live within the identities it creates.[33] For example, Anthony Lott uses constructivism as a framework to review US security strategy and considers that constructivism can solve some of the questions unanswered by a realist approach. In particular, he refers to the means by which 'threats are recognised, how enemies are labelled, and how groups come to imagine danger'.[34] This approach is central to understanding how the US and Iran each perceive the other to represent a threat to their own security.[35]

'Constructivists see "security" as a relationship historically conditioned by culture rather than an objective characteristic determined by the distribution of military capabilities'.[36] David Campbell identifies this approach to security studies as offering an opportunity. By moving away from the concept that international relations are subject to exogenously given circumstances, Campbell is able to allow a state to alter the questions it asks and the policy assumptions that it makes. Rather than overcoming the 'existential issue of insecurity' the state can contemplate the origins of the insecurity and how its history is tied to the state's identity.[37] The social environment provides a new realm in which the theorist can understand the origins of insecurity.

The relationship between security and identity is significant in the context of this book. Bill McSweeney considers that identity and security 'share a similar dependence on subjective awareness',[38] a position that is closely aligned to the mechanisms of constructivism. Security interests are embedded in cultural environments, which 'affect

not only the incentives for different kinds of state behaviour but also the basic character of states'.[39] Security policies that identify or objectify a danger or threat do so as a result of political identity, rather than security policy being a cause for political practices.[40] As a result, interests become 'a function of other sociopsychological factors',[41] or what is determined as the emotional dimensions of state identity.

The manner in which constructivism approaches the emotional dimensions of political identity – trauma, humiliation, cultural memory – is crucial in excavating symbolic meaning from history and experience.[42] The experience of sudden undermining of security or of trauma or humiliation is a significant origin of Foote's 'energy', for example in constructing US political identity. In the post-Vietnam era, the politics of humiliation has had significant history as a motivating force. A recent example of this was witnessed in post-11 September 2001 foreign policy. Andrew Ross stated: 'narrative constructions of identity and other symbolic representations of the [US] were intensified after 9/11.'[43] The invocation of historical experiences such as Pearl Harbor increased, as did a revitalisation of foreign policy aspirations, exemplified by the removal from power of Saddam Hussein. Wartime sentiments became applicable, such as the acceptance of new security policies and the politics of fear.[44] It can be argued that the US employed the politics of humiliation after they 'lost' Iran as an ally in 1979, a loss that was intensified by the embarrassment of the 444-day hostage crisis.[45] Experiences of trauma can disrupt otherwise stable political identities.[46]

Constraints and Challenges

Constructivism has been accused of excessive focus on values and what Fred Halliday terms the 'ideational' elements of social and political action. This suggests that the vantage points of actors can be coloured by their own illusions.[47] Assuming that this flaw is acknowledged, it can be managed. Indeed, the concept that illusion alters the perception of identity is in itself a crucial part of myth construction. A critical approach to constructivism aids in understanding how the illusions come to exist, and how people come to believe myths, by analysing how these same myths became part of identity formation.[48] Therefore, a central criticism of the constructivist approach to international relations

may be seen as an advantage to this research. In subsequent chapters, I demonstrate that the 'ideational' notion of myths is inherent in the construction of political identity in Iran and the US. I also establish that this process has a significant impact on the foreign policy challenges that have been a feature of relations between the two countries since the Islamic Revolution in Iran.

Much political analysis is founded on rationalist or realist theories that reflect the manner in which Western commentators have viewed world affairs. The pervasiveness of Western culture has resulted in an inability in rationalist theory to effectively place world affairs in the context of their cultural heritage.[49]

> Much more is going on when states interact than realism and rationalism admit. Yes, international politics is in part about acting on material interests in given anarchic worlds. However, it is also about the reproduction and transformation, by intersubjective dynamics at both the domestic and systemic levels, of the identities and interests through which those incentives and worlds are created.[50]

International affairs cannot be divorced from their cultural relevance, as those experiencing them will always do so from within a cultural or societal context. Redressing the neglected 'politico-social' aspects of international relations is the aim of any constructivist analysis, by providing context to the events of world affairs. Seeking explanations for global movements and international systems, the target of rationalist and realist theoreticians, in addition to the social identities that these factors engender, is what distinguishes the constructivist approach.[51]

Throughout this book some deference is paid to the principles of realism, particularly when discussing national interests. That one must accept imperfect compromise as a reality in this field of research and that moral judgements cannot be made without the benefit of hindsight are elements of realist theory that are acknowledged in the context of this book, much as Nikolas Gvosdev allows that the realist can take into account values and the character of state actors.[52] Halliday warns that realism has limitations in the study of the Middle East, suggesting that realist theory is less applicable to states that have long been subject to the global power structures of other states.[53] In addition, a realist approach

'ignores domestic politics of sovereign states and considers them international actors with determinate geopolitical interests'.[54] Discounting the impact of domestic politics is a hazardous choice, given that the foreign policy of a state is always constructed in the context of a domestic audience. This is particularly the case in post-revolutionary nations, such as Iran, in which international interests can be blurred by internal concerns.

In an attempt to avoid generalisations, constructivism requires a 'context-specific analysis', suggesting that some historical framework is critical to a constructivist assessment of the relationship between state actors.[55] 'It is not only the present politics that reconstruct the past, but it is also the historiography's task to provide recognition to a regime and legitimise its authority by refashioning the political culture.'[56] Although many international relations theorists would warn against the inclusion of historical narrative, choosing instead to 'talk as if history did not exist', I make reference to historical events as illumination rather than explanation. This approach avoids the limitations imposed by history's impulse to overstate the continuity of events.[57] For this reason, in discussing the construction of political identity, historical evidence is selected for its ability to exemplify certain aspects of political identity and provide empirical substantiation. 'Contextualisation of meaning helps to avoid (but cannot completely preclude) the penchant for projecting contemporary concerns and concepts onto people's conceptions in earlier eras.'[58] In the context of this book, particular attention is paid to the use of historical context as explanation of or motivation for myth construction in foreign policy.[59]

The existence of the theoretical debate in international relations is evidence that no single theory can entirely account for all facets of the discipline. Reus-Smit argues that constructivism does not in fact have to constitute a rival theory, rather that it offers 'theoretical illumination through the systematic analysis of empirical puzzles in world politics'.[60] This being the case, a constructivist approach to the analysis of relations between the US and Iran will provide significant elucidation to the question of identity formation.

Political Myth

In constructivist literature, social, political and cultural activity operates within a symbolic network, or what Chiara Bottici terms the 'social

imaginary'. Central to this network is the creation and function of myths. Ronald Brunner explains that 'myths provide basic premises that are beyond our capacity to justify by reason.'[61] George Egerton defines political myth as 'a dramatic didactic narrative or projection of events, social conditions, and human actions, an imaginative presentation of history and destiny with intense meaning for a social group or class.'[62] States maintain myths that have political significance, embodying the assumed political values of a society.[63] These myths may be about themselves or about actors with which they are involved on a variety of levels.[64] 'Political myths are difficult to analyse because they are not only a part of the world that we experience, they are also, and foremost, the lens through which we see this world.'[65] To embark on an analysis of the specific myths that are relevant to the political identities of Iran and the US, it is necessary to determine the meaning and function of political myth.

When analysing political identity from the standpoint of myths it is a difficult task to separate the political myth from the cultural. However, while the two are undoubtedly linked, Bottici suggests that 'political myths are oriented towards action' and in being so address the need for common action within a group, contributing to that group's political identity.[66]

> What renders a myth specifically political, and, as a consequence, renders political the identity that it can contribute to shaping is the way in which it interacts with the context and, thus, the specifically political conditions that are given each time. [...] These considerations [...] suggest that political myths can play an important role in the making of common political identity.[67]

Mark Roelofs takes a more extreme stance on dividing the cultural from the political in myth-making. While myths in general are born in culturally shared dialogue, they can only be labelled elements of that community's political myth when they are drawn into the ruler/ruled dialogue and elevated into the definition of communal identity and the legitimisation of the regime.[68] For this reason, Roelofs claims, modern representational democracies find less of a role for political myth than do authoritarian regimes, in which myth has a direct role in governing. The active role of myth in authoritarian rule is not in dispute, but I

demonstrate how significant a role political myth can indeed play in one of the world's most enduring representational democracies, the US.

Myth cannot be created in abstraction from the social and historical context provided by the group in which it operates.[69] Without this context no relationship to accepted discourse can be established, and the narrative that is embedded in myth will fail to resonate.

> The function of myth is not to reflect and report the superficial realities of this or any other moment. The domain of myth is not empirical reality but imagination, and the source of its sustenance is not reason but faith. One of the functions of myth is to provide people with a deeper story, a narrative that can encompass their own individual stories and give them meaning, worth and hope.[70]

In the context of political myth, this invocation of a faith-based narrative can provide legitimacy to a regime, or justification or rationalisation for a policy.[71] Maurice Halbwach described this in 1941 as the use of collective memory to produce a 'reconstruction of the past [that] adapts the image of historical facts to the beliefs and spiritual needs of the present'.[72] This coincides with Jonathan Friedman's expression: 'the politics of identity consists in anchoring the present in a viable past.'[73] The success of the myth depends on the myth-maker's ability to reference the practical experience of those to whom it is addressed.[74] The more closely related the myth is to the audience's perception of reality, the more legitimising force it provides the political actor. This relates closely to all three of Reus-Smit's mechanisms for the construction of political identity – imagination, communication and constraint.

Henry Tudor uses an example to illustrate this concept: that of totalitarian regimes that endeavour to rewrite history in order to legitimise the manner in which power was taken or the means by which it is reproduced and reinforced.[75] 'Political myth is comprised of the most basic assumptions that justify and explain the possession and use of power – whether or not the assumptions are true.'[76] In situations where history is sought as a sanction by those actors seeking precedents for action, political myth can have significant value in invoking a narrative in which norms accepted as a matter of faith are reinforced from the perspective of the present.[77]

> The myth supplies the theoretical argument with a concrete
> reference and a temporal perspective it would otherwise lack; and
> the theoretical argument endows the myth with academic
> respectability and a certain timelessly abstract significance.[78]

In this manner ideologies operate as a form of myth, as they are given
practical effect by being a part of a tradition that operates within a
historical context. Egerton claims 'political myth serves ideology as a
vehicle for the dramatization, communication and socialization of
political values and belief.'[79] These elements of political myth adhere
closely to the mechanisms that construct political identity, connecting
the two concepts.

Tradition features highly in American interpretations of political
movements, fostering a sense of identity. The traditions of American
political history, and their role in political consciousness, also help to
define 'other' ideologies as separate and often hostile. John Kane
describes ideologies as a 'modern, highly rationalised form of myth'.[80] In
this way, political identity can be maintained as part of the 'social
imaginary', or what Reus-Smit terms 'imagined norms', as part of the
historical narrative that can foster a sense of collective meaning.

Frances Keller suggests that as primary purveyors of tradition and
national memory, historians make choices regarding the manner in
which narratives are told – unavoidably with some tainting by their
own opinions or experiences.[81] In this manner, history 'is constructed
according to the conditions and desires of those who produce historical
texts in the present'.[82] The process of selecting these 'fictions' can
create or perpetuate myths, sustain ideologies and cause protest, in
conjunction with non-historical narratives such as the scientific or the
religious.[83] Bottici qualifies this line of argument by contending that
while historical narrative has a level of organisation, which suggests
the selection of material, in theory at least this does not imply that the
events have been dramatised or superimposed with additional
meaning. 'Historical narratives necessarily presuppose the sequence,
but not the drama.'[84] History must be written in a context, which
suggests it may be subordinate to an identity in the time in which it is
written, but it is also applied in a universal context, whereas myth is
directed towards a certain group in the present.[85] Myths are always
told from the perspective of the present, and 'this carries the

implication that, as the circumstances in which men find themselves change, so they reconstruct their myths.'[86]

Having reached this point, it is important to note that myths are not necessarily inventions, rather they are constantly reinforced interpretations of accepted events. The myth is distinct from the fable or parable, which, in the interests of providing moral edification or enlightenment, is generally told from a wholly fictitious perspective.[87] The political myth in particular must relate to accepted events in order to provide significance and motivation for action. It is the notion of 'acceptability' that is the key to the construct of myth.

> We can tell that a given account is a myth, not by the amount of truth it contains, but by the fact that it is *believed* to be true and, above all, by the dramatic form into which it is cast.[88]

The nature of its being a *political* myth is no different; this is merely a question of subject matter. A political myth is successful only as far as it is believed to be true. Without such belief it ceases to be a motivating force and loses its practical significance, and in so doing would also lose its relevance in the construction of political identity.

This is not to assert that myths cannot distort reality: indeed the opposite could be claimed. The continual process of reinventing and reinforcing myths can grossly warp, even pervert, the accuracy of information. In the case of the US and Iran, the lack of communication between the two countries has given rise to a fertile ground for distortion of myths. The more ingrained the myths have become within the imagined – and believed – norms of each country's political identity, the greater the resultant distortion, or even 'paranoid' delusion. N. Cohn suggests that actors project into everyday life conflict that exists only in their psyche.

> The megalomaniac view of oneself as the Elect, wholly good, abominably persecuted yet assured of ultimate triumph; the attribution of gigantic and demonic power to the adversary; the refusal to accept the ineluctable limitations and imperfections of human existence [. . .] the obsession with inerrable prophecies – these attitudes are symptoms which together constitute the unmistakable syndrome of paranoia.[89]

Examples of this 'syndrome' are provided at various points in this book.

The role and purpose of the political myth is a little-researched field in international relations, often becoming 'lost in the woods' of more familiar fields of study.[90] There is not a great deal of substantive literature on the issue of political myth, perhaps because it is only in the modern world that political myth has been separable from religious and cultural myths.[91] Egerton suggests that what literature does exist is 'sometimes a spillover from the general study of myth or ideology'.[92] However, in the context of a constructivist study of political identity, political myth is an important, if not essential, area of interest. As such, its role forms a central theme of this book, providing new insight and understanding on the foreign policy challenges faced in the relationship between the US and Iran.

CHAPTER 2

IRANIAN POLITICAL IDENTITY

Iranian political identity is a multifaceted construct, which makes defining it a complex undertaking. The relationship between Iran's Islamic and pre-Islamic history and how each contributes to the national character is of particular relevance in this chapter. Iran's history and experience have come to define its political identity and the way in which it perceives its role in the international community. In this chapter I investigate the development of Iran's political culture, in order to understand the relationship between political interest and identity. The impact of specific historical events on the construction of Iranian political identity is also analysed.[1] In addition, several political myths are ascertained and discussed in relation to their role within the imagined norms of Iranian political identity.

Political identity in Iran has been described by both external analysts and prominent Iranians as diverse, sometimes paradoxical, and difficult to define.[2] An understanding of political culture requires accounting for political, economic, social and cultural-ideological considerations.[3] Fed by millennia of history and experience, the current Iranian political identity is a combination of both its Islamic and pre-Islamic identity, and also a more modernising, secular, national identity. Locating these often competing elements of identity within the institutions of the Islamic Republic is a challenging task, and one which is clarified by taking a constructivist view on the developments in Iranian political culture. Adopting this theoretical framework is advantageous in dissecting the complex elements of Iranian political identity: indeed a senior Iranian academic believes it to be the only method by which one

can understand the paradoxes that make up the Iranian political system.[4] Through adopting this methodology, it also becomes possible to assess the construction of myths of political identity.

Origins of Iranian Political Culture

Iran has an extremely long and complex history, many aspects of which feed into the political identity of the modern Islamic Republic. Civilisation in the area now known as Iran dates back many millennia and various theories abound regarding the commencement of Persian, or Iranian, history. One is that it originates with the Achaemenid dynasty of Cyrus the Great in 558 BC.[5] The Achaemenians are also the first Persians associated with the development of political culture, as Cyrus conquered the Medes and the Lydians, Phoenicia, Judea and Babylonia to create the first native Iranian empire – 'in extent perhaps the greatest empire the world had seen up to that time'.[6] This era witnessed the birth of cohesive imperial government and makes a strong case for defining the beginning of Persian civilisation as well as Iranian political culture.

On the other hand, Shapur Shahbazi takes a chiefly linguistic route to the determination that Iran was born in the third century AD, during the Avestan period; Shahbazi argues that a sense of nation and unity was born in the 'Aryan lands' amid the early stages of the Zoroastrian religion.[7] In either case it is not suggested that Iran has a coherent political identity across more than 2500 years of history; moreover, many aspects of Iranian identity are not necessarily compatible with its remote past.[8] In some instances, Iran's history has been manipulated and mythologised in the interests of glorifying monarchies or even post-revolutionary events. Despite this, this work demonstrates certain threads of continuity as linked, through various facets of Iranian political identity, to the history and experience of this ancient nation. The traditions and glories of Iran's classical history continue to be a strong source of national pride today.[9]

The Persian Empire founded by Cyrus the Great in the sixth century BC was arguably the first to use the term 'Iran' to define its territory. It also designated the difference between Iran and non-Iran (*aniran*) – the 'other'.[10] The glory of the ancient city of Persepolis, founded by Cyrus's son Darius, and the civilisational leap forward that the empire represented is the basis of Persian pride in their 2500-year history. The Persian Empire became a vision of superpower, one that was

unquestionably a reality at the time of the Achaemenids. In cultural terms, Iran has remained a superpower throughout its history and can today lay strong claims to being a modern regional superpower.[11] With the Achaemenids a tradition of existing at the forefront of might, culture and civilisation was born.

The various dynasties of ancient Persia discovered that maintaining a coherent political culture was a challenge. With a vast agricultural economy, essentially operating well into the twentieth century, the role of government was to manage the territorial area and pastoral tribes.[12] There have been numerous periods of decentralised or weak central government in Iran throughout its history.[13] Tribal groups and nomads have had a significant impact on the management of empires, often acting as semi-autonomous, militarily powerful groups. Indeed, many nomadic groups have formed coalitions or confederations that became ruling dynasties – the Achaemenians, the Sassanians, the Safavids and the Qajars all have nomadic origins.[14] As a result, identification with a distinctly 'Persian' political culture is difficult to demonstrate. Instead, consistent themes that feed Iranian political identity need to be dissected.

Iranian political culture can trace aspects of its origins to distinct eras in Iranian history. Jahangir Karami, of the Faculty of World Studies at Tehran University, describes Iran's political identity as much like an onion in construction, with layers of development over millennia:[15]

Islamic Republic: 35 yrs   Islam: 1300 yrs

Constitution: 100 yrs   Civilisation: 2500 yrs
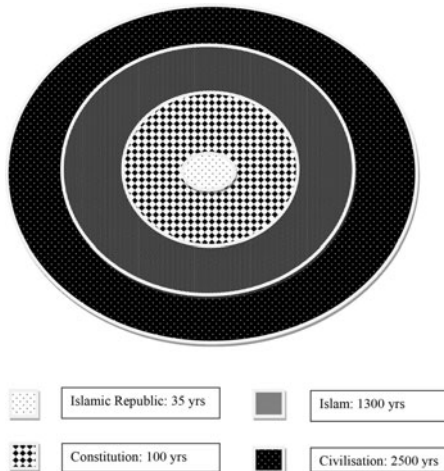
Figure 1   Layers of history influencing Iranian political identity

Key elements of each of these periods in Iran's history have played a pivotal role in the development of political culture and identity. Other Iranian academics reinforce the approach taken by Karami: there are layers of political identity born in both the pre- and post-Islamic conquest eras, and the Islamic era can be further sub-divided into the pre- and post-constitutional reform eras, followed by the revolutionary Islamic Republic period.[16] In the post-1979 era, commentators feel that conservative elements within the government believe a person should feel Muslim first and Iranian second.[17] This perception was at its height in the early stages of post-revolutionary Iran. The question thus arises of whether Islamic identity can claim to be at the root of political identity today or indeed whether the cultural and civilisational significance of the pre-Islamic era has been more influential.

Cultural aspects of Iran's past undoubtedly contribute to national identity, and poetry in particular can claim some connections to political identity. Principles of constructivism suggest that policy can only be justified if the social context provides it with moral force. An accepted context serves to rationalise activity and reproduce identity. Iran's most famous poets are one such accepted point of reference in a social context. Iran's poets' contribution to language and culture ensured the survival of Persian civilisation when its other central tenets – kingship and the Zoroastrian religion – were decimated by the Arab conquests and the arrival of Islam.[18] Their works remain as relevant today as when they were written: indeed, Hafez's *divan*, or body of work, is still commonly used as something of an oracle in Iran.[19] Given that divination is a particularly non-Islamic concept, unless using the Qu'ran as a guide, it is interesting to note that these traditions have survived the Islamic era in general and the Islamic Revolution in particular.

All of Iran's most revered poets hail from periods of trauma for the Persian state: invasion, persecution and corruption have all played roles in epic poetry. The values depicted in Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*, of the chivalric army of good combating evil, and the personification of human versions of envy, greed and false pride, can be attributed not only to contemporary events in Ferdowsi's time, but also demonstrate how challenges and ethical dilemmas can be faced in different eras.[20] Such considerations relate to modern Iranian experiences: for example to the excesses of the Qajar dynasty and the hunger for power displayed by

Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi. While not Islamic in nature – indeed Ferdowsi presented a strong theme of 'degeneration in the integrity of post-Zoroastrian kings' – the themes of power and greed are universal and applicable to politics and society.[21] Ferdowsi's work forges a link between a mythical past and a 'historical reality'.[22] As a result, Ferdowsi's poetry has become an integral part of the national narrative, both allowing Iranian history, culture and language to be understood, and political rhetoric associated with his legacy to operate within an accepted discourse.

Other iconic poets such as Rumi, Sa'di and Hafez all wrote during the rule of the Mongols (thirteenth and fourteenth centuries), during which hideous atrocities were committed against the Persian population. Sa'di and Hafez were writing in Shiraz, which was saved the desecration of most cities because its ruler submitted early. Shiraz is now a monument to the literary masterpieces of this era. Evidence of the universality of this poetry and its applicability to international relations is demonstrated by the inscription of a section of Sa'di's epic *Golestan* above the entrance to the UN building in New York.

Bani-Adam a'za-ye yek digarand
Ke dar afarinest za yek gawharand
Chu 'ozvi be dard avarad ruzegar
Digar ozvha ra numanad qarar

Tu kaz mehnat-e digaran bighami
Nashayad ke namat nahand adami

The Sons of Adam are limbs of each other
Having been created of one essence
When the calamity of time afflicts one limb
The other limbs cannot remain at rest

If thou hast no sympathy for the troubles of others
Thou art unworthy to be called by the name of man[23]

The message of this dictum is both clear for humanity as a whole and the responsibility of the leaders of society. Elements of this passage are also reflected in the constitution of the Islamic Republic.

> The Islamic Republic has as its ideal human happiness throughout human society, and considers the attainment of independence, freedom and just government to be the right of all peoples in the world.[24]

The poetry of these literary masters also aided the survival of the Persian language, even where Arabic superseded most local dialects in conquered nations. They preserved tales of pre-Islamic Iran for the future, which would be revived at various points in Iran's history.

For example, in 1925 Reza Shah, a military leader who installed himself as a self-styled monarch, began to focus on redefining identity by drawing on Iran's pre-Islamic history, seeking to legitimise his regime by linking it to the glories of the Achaemenian past and Iran's 2500 years of monarchy.[25] He was anti-religious establishment: he removed clerics from positions of political influence, and placed restrictions on the observation of Ramadan, the performance of passion plays and pilgrimage.[26] The wearing of Islamic dress was outlawed, a particularly unpopular move that resulted in a series of riots in 1935 that were brutally suppressed.[27] He also began to 're-Persianise' the language by removing Arabic words that had been gradually infiltrating common-usage Persian over the centuries. Given Iran's long association with Islam, Reza Shah's policies gave birth to anti-imperial sentiment within the clerical community.

Reza Shah's regime was also a period of militaristic nationalism: he expanded the armed forces and introduced military service, in an attempt to appeal to nationalist sentiments and legitimise his military origins.[28] Islam was not significant in his vision of Iranian political identity, and Gene Garthwaite believes that if World War II had not forced his abdication, he would have launched a more comprehensive campaign against the power of the *ulama* (clergy).[29] This represents one example of a modern ruler utilising aspects of Iran's pre-Islamic heritage as a means to legitimise actions. Reza Shah attempted to diminish the Islamic nature of Iran's political identity in the interests of creating a new accepted context within which to rule. The relationship between the Pahlavi dynasty's policies and the construction of modern Iranian political identity is further assessed, later in this chapter.

Iranian Political Identity and Foreign Influence

For an event to have the capacity to build political identity, it needs to fill the criteria for 'organisational learning', which is closely aligned to the principles of constructivism and collective memory. The requirements for organisational learning are that the consequences of the event be important or significant, and be demonstrated to have affected a large portion of society.[30] A number of events might have this capacity in a nation's history, and several examples are evident in the development of Iran's political identity.

Prior to the twentieth century, relations between the US and Iran were very limited. In general, American influence in the greater Middle East was negligible, and the most notable foreign influences in the pre-twentieth century period were Britain and Russia.[31] Aside from some missionary expeditions, the first official contact between the US and Iran was in 1856, when a 'Treaty of Commerce and Navigation' was signed. This treaty recognised diplomatic rights, as well as travel, merchant and trading rights, and remained in effect until 1928.[32] Communication between the two countries increased during World War I, when troops from both sides were present in Persia. This period of occupation led to a request by the Ahmad Shah Qajar for Persian attendance at the eventual peace conference, when hostilities came to an end.[33] It would be Britain that prevented Persian involvement in the 1919 Paris Conference, instead negotiating a secret treaty that ensured Britain's economic interests in Persia were realised.[34]

US assistance and involvement at this period were limited to some post-war financial aid. Expert assistance, in the form of agricultural and economic advice, was also forthcoming in the 1920s and would continue in various degrees throughout the following 30 years.[35] Assistance was provided in return for concessions for American companies with interests in railways and mines. In particular, the US invested in transport infrastructure such as the Trans-Iranian Railroad, which of course benefitted American interests as a supply route during World War II.[36]

A similar situation developed following World War II, during which foreign troops had once again occupied Iran. The Shah of Iran desperately required post-war assistance, particularly, in attempts to modernise the economy. By this time US policy towards Iran was defined

by global policy concerns, with new international complications to consider. Iran and Turkey were the first Middle Eastern nations affected by great power conflict and interests following World War II.[37] The Soviet Union and the developing Cold War, post-war national security policy, oil, diplomacy and the development of foreign aid programmes were at the forefront of American policy.[38] Iran figured, to some degree, in all of these new realities of foreign policy, but despite good relations being maintained during this post-World War II period until 1951, James Goode describes the post-war situation as 'diplomacy of neglect'[39], with other issues taking precedence over events in Iran. Despite this, Iran's perception of America was positive, and the assistance provided by this new world power was seen as benevolent and lacking the imperialist tendencies Iran had endured at the hands of Russia and Britain.[40] Iranians recalled the efforts of Morgan Shuster in 1911,[41] defending the sovereign rights of Persia, and Woodrow Wilson's efforts to include the Shah in the peace conference at Versailles.[42] The US was eager to promote the image of being a disinterested party.

Foreign interference has a central role in Iranian history and experience, beginning with major invasions by numerous external forces – the Greeks, Arabs, Mongols and Turks – over many centuries. The conquest by Alexander in 330 BC – attracted by the vast wealth of the Persian Empire – and the subsequent rule of the Seleucid generals was merely the first such example.[43] The prosperity of the Silk Road, as well as Iran's geographical location, made it particularly susceptible to plundering armies.[44]

> [This] contributed to a foreign-suspicious collective memory; a mass psychological defense mechanism that helped Iranians adjust themselves to the alien forces undermining their collective identity.[45]

Such suspicion has a distinct impact on the nationalistic elements of Iranian political identity. Mistrust is viewed in the West as a characteristic of Iran's national identity, and is often misconstrued as a flaw rather than merely the result of events in Iran's long and tumultuous history.[46] Mistrust is a common feature of developing nations or those enmeshed in the process of throwing off imperial or colonial rule. Pride in the maintenance and integrity of Iranian culture through these varied trials and interventions has given voice to a rhetoric that rejects foreign

cultures. The subsequent interference of the US in the domestic political concerns of Iran in the latter half of the twentieth century only served to reinforce national pride and further the connection between mistrust and political identity.

Success in retaining a separate cultural identity also means Iran has few natural allies. Even ethnic and linguistic kin, such as Afghans and Tajiks, have religious differences.[47] This feeds an instinct for self-sufficiency and independence. The tendency to view the surrounding world as threatening translates to protectiveness in political identity.[48] Rhetoric to this effect assumes a national character and, from an external perspective, is often construed as belligerence. A level of rejection of foreign interference could, with some justification, be considered an institution in Iranian political identity.

The foreign-suspicious collective memory has a range of consequences, none more notable than the strong sense of spiritual certainty, which is clear in Iranian political identity. In addition to this is a tendency towards the extremes of political sentiment.[49] This can be bemusing to external audiences, for example the seemingly unnecessary or overzealous responses to policy in the West, or Iran's overt defiance in the face of sanctions or pressure imposed by international institutions. Such actions function as a self-perpetuating force for political identity, and can be utilised by state actors to justify political behaviour, whether domestically or internationally.

Outsiders have often attributed apparently irrational foreign policy decisions, accompanied by belligerent political rhetoric, to revolutionary and post-revolutionary Iranian conditions. Nevertheless, Hooman Peimani considers that the roots of Iran's radical foreign policy can be traced significantly further back, to much the same origins of the foreign-suspicious political identity discussed above.[50] Insecurity leads to fear and conspiracy theory, and has been fostered throughout the last century and beyond. The Shah's response to US policy in the post-World War II era, the events of the revolution itself and then the international response to the Iran–Iraq War in the 1980s, meant that 'for a long time, crisis-making and brinksmanship were the major elements of Iranian foreign policy.'[51] Such pugnacity subsided for a period following the end of the Iran–Iraq War and the elimination of confrontational opposition forces opposed to the Islamic Republic, but was resurrected under President Ahmadinejad (2005–13) and persists sporadically.[52]

Foreign policy is addressed in the constitution of the Islamic Republic as follows:

> Article 152: The foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran is based upon the rejection of all forms of domination, the preservation of the complete independence and territorial integrity of the country, the defense of the rights of all Muslims, non-alignment with respect to the hegemonic superpowers, and the maintenance of mutually peaceful relations with all non-belligerent states.[53]

Similarly:

> Article 153: Any form of agreement resulting in foreign domination over the natural resources, economy, army or culture of the country, as well as other aspects of the national life, is forbidden.[54]

Iran's experience with foreign domination and its impact on policy making here is patently clear. Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, as key architect of the constitution, was concerned not only 'with foreign domination over Iran, but over the Muslim world as a whole'.[55] While the themes in this representation of foreign policy aims are not unexpected, the use of specific language relating to domination and the rejection of the hegemony of superpowers is unequivocal, and reflective of the constraints of and impositions on Iran's history and experience.

Religion in Political Identity

Religion has held a close relationship with Iranian political identity since the time of the Achaemenians. It plays a central role in the political identity of the Islamic Republic today, and political Shi'ism is discussed in greater depth later in this chapter. However, in the intervening period also, key aspects of political identity have been formed through the prism of religion – first through Zoroastrianism and later through Islam.

The Persian prophet Zarathustra (sixth century BC), or Zoroaster in Greek, was arguably the first proponent of monotheism, and his revelations became the primary religion of the Achaemenids and of most

Persians up to the arrival of the Arabs and Islam. Zoroastrianism, or Mazdaism as it is also referred to for its worship of the god Ahura Mazda, has been described as:

> The first religion, in this part of the world at least, to move beyond cult and totemism to address moral and philosophical problems with its theology, from an individualistic standpoint, that laid emphasis on personal choice and responsibility.[56]

It preached a personal choice between good and evil, and ascribed divine judgement to its single creator-god. The extent of Zoroastrian worship among the populace is not clearly understood, given the elitist nature of the historical record of early Iran.[57] It was the official state religion; however:

> It could well be that Zoroastrianism was largely the religion of the ruling elites and of residents of cities or of settlements and shrines closely associated with the administrative and religious leaders, and that it had little appeal for most Iranians.[58]

Whatever the case may be, it was the first religion to take on a central role as state religion and guide to policy making.[59] The tomb of Darius contains a relief of the king adoring a fire on a stone altar, below an image of Ahura Mazda.[60] Ardashir, first king of the Sassanid dynasty (208–40 AD), represented himself in rock reliefs at Naqsh-e Rostam in central Iran as having been presented kingship by Ahura Mazda himself.[61] This linked the Persian monarchy with divine rule, and the association with Zoroastrianism was a means of legitimising his rule. This period's legacy survives as an early association between religion and political identity, born in the early history of Persia.

Zoroastrianism was closely followed by another prophetic religion – Manichaeism. While not a widely followed path, Manichaeism has left some lasting impacts on Iranian identity, despite being the only religion declared impermissible by the Prophet Mohammed.[62] It has been suggested that it is Manichaeism that has had a strong influence on the defining of good and evil in Iranian thought – it is a spiritual path that permits no middle ground, and has been claimed to have been utilised in the Islamic Revolution to polarise the movement.[63] Adam

Tarock suggests that a 'Manichean lens' persists in the manner in which Iran categorises 'friends' and 'enemies', both domestically and internationally.[64] If the Shah represents evil, and the followers of Khomeini represent the good, there can be no room in this polarised juxtaposition for social revolutionaries. Similar parallels can be drawn between post-revolutionary conceptions of Iran as good and the 'other' – foreign powers such as the US – as evil.

The clergy has been involved in bureaucratic functions independent of the government, in varying degrees, since the time of the Sassanians (third century AD) – first the Zoroastrian clergy and later the *ulama* in the Islamic era.[65] This was perhaps in part because authority was highly decentralised up until the Pahlavi era in the twentieth century. Military machines might have been dominant but centres of government were weak, regional power bases were semi-autonomous and the imperial structure tribal.[66] Generations of Persian kings made use of the institution of the clergy to manage the disparate empire. In Iran, unlike many Middle Eastern countries where the *ulama* is employed by the state, the mullah relies on contributions from the faithful for his livelihood, which means he shares their prosperity or poverty. This brings the *ulama* into a central role in the community, where members of the clergy are responsible for a range of secular, as well as religious, issues.[67] As a result, religious figures could be deployed as a unifying force, and Iran might well be one of the earliest civilisations to utilise the clergy in this fashion. With the possible exception of the Safavid dynasty in the sixteenth century, it is not until the twentieth century that unified, centralised government can be identified in Iran. Under Reza Shah and his son, power was centralised around the military, the state bureaucracy and the court establishment.[68] The monopoly on power held by the Pahlavis' vast governmental system and the subsequent lessening of the bureaucratic role of the *ulama* had some importance in politicising Shi'ism in the latter part of the twentieth century.

It is significant to recognise that Shi'i Islam was by no means the dominant religion in Iran in the early part of the Islamic era. Most Iranians were Sunni, or maintained their links to Zoroastrian, Christian or Jewish roots.[69] It was the first shah of the Safavid dynasty, Ismail (reigned 1502–24), who made Twelver Shi'ism the official religion of the state, by means of a gradually imposed forced conversion.[70] To many average Iranians, matters of personal faith may have changed little, as

issues of theology and law were of concern only to the educated elite.[71] Ismail demonstrated a 'streak of extremism and intolerance' in his approach to forging a Shi'i state, perhaps in part due to ongoing religious conflict with the Ottoman Empire.[72] One key effect of declaring Shi'ism the state religion was that many Shi'i *ulama* moved to settle in Iran from around the region, bringing scholars and founding centres of study and expertise. Shi'ism began to form a part of the fabric of Iranian political culture under this dynasty.

Shi'ism is linked to government through the belief that those possessed of Imamate knowledge, through relationship to Ali or another method of receiving the divine light of Mohammed, have the right to rule Muslims.[73] The *ulama* see themselves as holding responsibility for political oversight, designed to temper the secularist notions of those in government. When Shi'ism was imposed as a state religion by a charismatic and powerful shah, the *ulama* were concerned with such an embodiment of universal rule.[74] This was a point of friction between the *ulama* and the Safavid kings, particularly Shah Abbas, as he was perceived by the clergy to be immoral, and thereby unfit to 'mediate on behalf of God'.[75] In a view that Khomeini would later echo, the *ulama* believed the leaders of Islamic jurisprudence should be the heir of political supervision during the Hidden Imam's occultation, rather than subordinate to the monarchy.[76] In order to maintain the throne, the Safavid kings largely attempted to accommodate the desired political oversight of the clergy. This brought about a close, if sometimes tense, relationship between the *ulama* and the government.

It is important not to exaggerate the importance of religion in political development in Iran.[77] Western analysts are eager to overestimate the value of religion as a key to perceived irrationality in foreign policy behaviour, which is easiest to present in the framework of a transition from a secular to a religious world view. As Vali Nasr explains:

> To Western eyes, Muslim politics is defined by Islamic values. Politics may look for truth in religious texts, but it will always do so from within a context that is not purely religious.[78]

Such a viewpoint is particularly adopted when Western analysts examine the concept of martyrdom with reference to Iran. This issue is one that has been mythologised within Western political discourse.

> Because Shi'ite religious doctrine exalts the suffering and martyrdom
> of the faithful, and because religion plays a central role in the official
> ideology of the Islamic Republic, Iran is sometimes portrayed as an
> 'undeterrable' state driven by absolute imperatives.[79]

The Iranian human wave attacks in the war with Iraq (1980–8) fostered
this impression, as has support for Hezbollah and Palestinian groups,
which use suicide bombing as a political technique. The impact of
martyrdom as a political myth is further investigated below.

Shireen Hunter has identified 'the corrosive impact' of too closely
tying Shi'ism to the establishment of political identity.[80] There are
complications to ascribing a specifically Shi'i identity to the national
political consciousness. In an ethnically diverse country, it would be
simplistic to ascribe a unifying value to religion in forming a cohesive
national identity. Such a narrow approach is unhelpful in establishing a
cohesive *political* identity, as the opposite could just as easily be claimed.
Ethnic divisions are often not resolved by a common religion; Kurdish,
Arab and Baluchi Iranians, for example, are Sunni and are alienated both
from Shi'i Persians and each other.[81] Only approximately 50 per cent of
Iranians are Persian, with groups such as Lurs, Turkomans, Qashqa'is, Arabs
and Bakhtiaris, as well as Kurds and Baluchis, predominantly speaking
indigenous languages as a mother tongue.[82] Although officially more than
90 per cent of the country is Shi'a, this figure is debatable when considering
the various ethnic elements within society. These divisions have a
significant impact on the stability of large areas of Iranian territory, and on
the perspectives of regional representatives in the Iranian political system.

It would be prudent to question the judgement that a 'Shi'i identity'
holds a unifying value in Iran's political identity. It is more reasonable to
ascribe value to the combination of an Islamic and pre-Islamic heritage
within Iranian identity, and the ties these religious elements have
traditionally had with government. It is the cultural memory this long
history provides that accords religion a unique role in the development
of a political identity.

Political Developments in the Twentieth Century

In the last century, the re-crafting of political identity has been a
national preoccupation in Iran. Momentous developments have occurred

in this period, from the excesses of the Qajar dynasty to constitutional reform in 1906–8, through nationalism, the forging of a protest movement, and the Iranian revolution, all of which enjoyed participation from a wide range of social and political forces. The resulting modern political identity is perhaps a melding of historical, national, religious and cultural aspects. After a lengthy struggle, Iran is now 'taking refuge in a constitutionalism that could make cohabitation of these so far conflicting identities not only possible but mutually reinforcing'.[83] This is a reflection of a process that Ali Ansari describes as 'intellectual inheritance', which has spawned the development of a political consciousness.[84]

The Constitutional Revolution[85] was instrumental in forming a basis for later developments in political reform and democratisation. The movement was predominantly spurred by the European-educated intelligentsia, civil servants and the *bazaar* merchants, forming a small but motivated middle class.[86] The infiltration of Western political developments in liberalism and nationalism in the latter part of the eighteenth century combined with economic problems resulting from crop failures and trade disruptions caused by the Russo–Japanese War (1904–5) to fuel the uprising.[87] A degree of motivation may also have been inspired by a similar constitutional victory in the 1905 Bloody Sunday uprising in Russia.[88] Initially a peaceful series of demonstrations, general strikes turned violent, as the pressure to ratify the constitution increased. This mass uprising forced Mozaffer al-Din Shah to create a parliament and a constitution, which he signed on his deathbed on 30 December 1906.[89] The constitution outlined that:

> The Assembly shall carry out the requisite deliberations and investigations on all necessary subjects connected with important affairs of the State and Empire and the public interests.[90]

Article 1 of the Supplementary Fundamental Laws also designated that the official religion of the state was to be Shi'i Islam.[91] Unfortunately, for the future of constitutional monarchy, Mozaffer al-Din's successor, Mohammed Ali Shah, was immediately hostile to the reforms.[92] Violent clashes across the country, which were repressed by the Cossack Brigade, descended the nation into civil war as the Shah disbanded the *majlis*

(parliament) on 23 June 1908.[93] Mohammed Ali Shah was eventually deposed on 16 July 1909, and a second *majlis* was created.[94]

The Constitutional Revolution divided Iran's Shi'i leaders, as different factions sought to maintain religious links to government.[95] The first *majlis* wrote a secular judicial code that was strongly opposed by the clergy, limiting its legitimacy.[96] This problem, in conjunction with Mohammed Ali Shah's being well respected by the religious establishment, caused many members of the *ulama* to side with the monarchy.[97] It was a key period in developing a 'political level' in the tradition of Islamic thought.[98] Grand Ayatollah Mousavi Shirazi stated in 1977 that the constitutional crisis was 'only a game, and the foreign powers launched it to bring about the separation of the spiritual powers and government.'[99] This era was also the beginning of the political career of Mohammed Mossadeq, future nationalist and reformist prime minister.[100]

In the lead up to 1906, concepts of constitutional democracy were alien and irrelevant to average Iranians. More than a century of dynastic rule from the Qajar shahs had not engendered the institutions of democracy. Generally associated with misrule, a lessening of territorial integrity and a weak reaction to external imperial interests, the Qajar period did, however, spawn some early protest movements.[101] Although the Constitutional Revolution theoretically represents the beginning of constitutional monarchy in Iran, its success was short-lived, with Regent Nasir al-Mulk shutting down the *majlis* on 24 December 1911.[102] The constitution remained in force, but under the Pahlavi dynasty (1925–79) its implementation was limited.

Despite the protests that had led to the Shah's creation of a parliament, political consciousness was still in its infancy at the time of the Constitutional Revolution, and lacked the 'intellectual inheritance', discussed by Ansari,[103] to allow broad popular involvement. When the distance between the realities of life and the political ideals of constitutional reform for most Iranians were combined with a lack of means to implement them, the political culture drifted back towards autocracy.

The revolution of 1906 remains a firm point of reference for Iranian political thought in the contemporary era, however, and its successes and failures are still examined.[104] Many elements of the early constitutional debate were utilised in the creation of the constitution

of the Islamic Republic. The perspective of Fazlollah Nuri, in particular, who proposed a form of *shari'a*-based (Islamic law) constitutionalism during this period of reform, retains a significant place in Iranian political culture for his far-sighted view of Islam.[105] There is also justification for the view that Iran's experiences with constitutional and national reform in the twentieth century have laid the ground-work for political institutions with democratic values and practice. As a result, Iran is a strong candidate for comprehensive democracy.[106] It would be reasonable to claim that the early twentieth-century experiences of Iran created imagined parameters for a more comprehensive constitutional society, certainly more so than in many of Iran's neighbours that did not enjoy a contemporary political awakening. For example, the flaw of limited constitutional experience has been amply demonstrated in some of the failed democracies of 'Arab Spring' countries.

The post-World War II period was crucial in the development of Iran's political identity. Philosophy from around the world filtered into the political system during a particularly trying period for government, in the wake of occupation and economic hardship. It was a tumultuous period in which several political movements struggled for ascendency in Iranian political discourse.[107] Members of the pro-Soviet communist Tudeh Party, who had been imprisoned prior to World War II, were released and began a series of strikes, which were particularly effective in the oil fields.[108] At the same time, developments in education led to increased political awareness, often imbued with what Ansari describes as an 'Islamic hue', due to the institutional benefits of the religious community as a means of informing the public.[109] Iran was a newly fertile ground for political activism.

Nationalism, in particular, was a key force in a variety of forms, including liberal nationalism, Persian nationalism and socialist nationalism.[110] Since nationalism is in itself not an ideology, it can exist within a wide range of ideological contexts. The most prominent figure in the nationalist movement, and the one most significant to Iranian political identity, was Mohammad Mossadeq. As leader of the Jabha-i Melli (National Front) party and prime minister in 1951, he personified the nationalist movement and was a key figure in advocating democratic reforms and an end to foreign involvement in Iran.[111] Mossadeq had been involved in Iranian politics since the days of the

Constitutional Revolution, but it was his 1943 *majlis* election that catapulted him to national and international political attention, particularly in Britain and the US.

Since the early part of the twentieth century, Britain had been determining how much it would pay Iran for its oil.[112] The Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC) paid far more in income taxes to the British government than it did royalties to the Iranian government.[113] The Iranians also resented the lack of British interest in the general affairs of Iran; they had envisaged British support in ridding Iran of Soviet occupation at the end of World War II. This assistance was not forthcoming, with Britain apparently interested only in its oil concessions, and the Iranians were forced to expel the Soviets themselves.[114] A fresh round of contractual negotiations with the AIOC from 1947–9 yielded yet another one-sided agreement, which was not passed by the *majlis*.[115] The 1950 parliamentary election campaign focused primarily on this one issue, which was giving rise to significant growth in nationalist sentiment. Conversely, in the 1940s and 50s, American oil contracts in Saudi Arabia were yielding a 50–50 profit division, which was considered much more reasonable.[116] When compared with the British, the Americans were seen as assisting Iran with its economic growth, rather than pillaging its natural resources. It was also hoped that the US would aid Iran in assuring its territorial integrity in the future, where Britain had failed.[117]

To end Britain's privileged system, Mossadeq was involved in 1951 dealings to nationalise Iran's natural resources, and after being elected prime minister in April, promptly nationalised the AIOC as well. After insisting on expanded powers for the prime ministership in 1952, he was effectively sacked by the Shah and replaced with a pro-AIOC leader.[118] However, mass demonstrations and an overwhelmingly favourable vote in the *majlis* returned him to power within days, in a monumental victory for the nationalist cause.[119] Much to the concern of the communist-sensitive US State Department under John Foster Dulles, Mossadeq appeared to be building relations with the communist Tudeh Party.[120] Loss of oil to the communist bloc was not to be countenanced, and in 1953 the CIA, with the aid of the British intelligence community, launched Operation Ajax to oust Mossadeq and reconsolidate the Shah's position on the throne.

It is arguable that the entire operation was the idea of the British, seeking armed intervention to ensure that other countries in the

region, such as Egypt, did not take a leaf from the Iranian book and look to nationalise assets, such as the Suez Canal. It is likely that Britain's warning about the communist threat to Middle Eastern oil was crucial in securing American support and even leadership of the coup.[121] The US was a willing participant, given the burgeoning fear of Mossadeq's power among the policy makers in Washington.[122] Riots spiralled towards civil war, but eventually the operation succeeded and Mossadeq was placed under house arrest, where he would remain until his death in 1967.

Although the coup that deposed him in 1953 involved both the CIA and Britain's secret service, the Americans are especially blamed. 'Iranians expected little more of the British [. . .] whereas America had raised high hopes among some Iranians in the past.'[123] The hegemonic actions of Britain over many decades had created an accepted norm in Iranian perception of British policy, but in the case of the US it was the ultimate betrayal, and hence the focus of culpability was on the Americans. The consequent restoration of the Shah may have increased his power but, concurrently, it greatly diminished his legitimacy in both his own perception and the eyes of his populace; fears over the ramifications of his reinstatement on the throne 'would haunt the Shah throughout his reign'.[124] In all of the numerous research interviews for this book conducted in Iran and with diaspora Iranians, the invocation of the CIA coup emerged in each as a central contribution to the development of Iranian political identity since then.

This event, the first of many executed by the CIA since its inception in 1947, was of overwhelming significance to the Iranian psyche. After many centuries of occupation and conquest by a series of foreign invaders, the post-World War II era promised a burgeoning of Iranian independence and nationalism. CIA support for the coup that reinstated the Shah meant that 1953 'abruptly and permanently ended America's political innocence with respect to Iran'.[125] The abrupt change in the Iranian perspective, particularly when compared to the US understanding of the events of 1953, clearly demonstrates the reality that historical events are perceived in a different manner by the various actors involved. Gary Sick outlines the problem with this situation:

The United States government has a short memory [. . .] by 1978 the events of 1953 had all the relevance of a pressed flower. In Iran,

however, the memory (or mythology) of 1953 was as fresh as if it had happened only the week before, and the popular image of the shah as a pliant creature of the United States was a vivid political reality.[126]

The interference of the US in removing both a popular leader and a developing democratic movement was a betrayal of the new political identity developing in Iran, and decades later the remembrance of this coup would play a significant role in the Islamic Revolution.

Jonathon Mercer provides an explanation of how the interpretation of historical events can disrupt stable relationships:

> Not only will people differ in their judgement of an object but they may also differ over the object that is being judged. Solomon Asch's classic example of this is the statement: "A little rebellion [. . .] is a good thing." The object of judgement changes if the statement is attributed to V.I. Lenin or to Thomas Jefferson. A conservative might agree with the statement because she thinks of Thomas Jefferson; her reaction would be different if she thinks of Lenin. [. . .] In general, we fail to recognise that others may not have a different judgement of an object, but that the very object of judgement may itself be different.[127]

The 1953 coup could certainly be viewed as an example of two sides construing an event very differently. The Mossadeq coup marks the ending of widespread popular support in Iran for American politics. Although the diplomatic relationship at the elite level progressed with leaps and bounds under Mohammed Reza Shah Pahlavi, the US lacked awareness that this relationship no longer held the support of the Shah's people.

Despite the fact that Mossadeq's government was not necessarily repairing many of Iran's political or economic problems, Mossadeq has still been awarded 'mythic status in Iranian political folklore'.[128] His policy encapsulated the foreign-suspicious collective memory that had developed over the course of decades of external intervention in Iranian affairs. He advocated an end to foreign involvement in Iran in general and the unequal relationship between Iran and the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company in particular. In doing so, Mossadeq was able to appeal to the

value-motivated understanding of Iran's political identity and communicate his policy through accepted norms. The harsh crackdown on nationalist elements in Iran's opposition following the Shah's restoration to the throne, in which the Shah's police force effectively annihilated the nationalist movement, also cleared the way for the religious community to take a greater role in political activism.[129]

Revolutionary Political Identity, Khomeini and Political Shiʿism

The Islamic Revolution, which began with street demonstrations in 1978 and burst into international significance with the triumphant return of the exiled Ayatollah Khomeini on 1 February 1979, was in many respects a manifestation of key aspects of Iranian political identity. It was also a defiance of the 'defining spirit' of revolutionary sentiment in the twentieth century, both in the Muslim world and elsewhere.[130] Secular ideology had been the dominant feature of political rhetoric across the Arab world during the 1960s and 1970s, as Arab nationalism took hold in the post-colonial era. Khomeini was essentially opposed to nationalism as a framework for political theory, particularly as it has been practised in Arab nations, believing that it recommended racial superiority and undermined Islamic universalism.[131] Khomeini defined the Iranian revolutionary spirit as one of 'moral rearmament' against the push towards modernisation, secularisation and materialism that had been a feature not only of other nations in the region but of the policies of the Pahlavi rulers.[132] Similarly, traditional veins of revolutionary thought did not appeal to Khomeini: he felt there was an 'ideological vacuum in both East and West'.[133]

In view of the facets of Iranian political identity that have been raised, Iran's drive towards a movement entirely separate from accepted political theory, and divorced from the 'right vs left' or 'East vs West' concepts that dominated the ideological scene in the 1970s, is not surprising. The ideas that typically develop in the minds of key thinkers who become engaged in revolutionary politics are informed through the major social and political events during their intellectual development.

Born in 1902, Khomeini 'witnessed the totality of Iran's modern struggles'.[134] Khomeini's early life, for example, was dominated by events – such as the Constitutional Revolution, World War I, the

overthrow of the corrupt and excessive Qajar dynasty, foreign occupation and the early career of Reza Shah – in which the power and relevance of the Shi'i clergy were seriously questioned.[135] Khomeini's formative years of study in Qom were during the monarchy of Reza Shah, which saw a comprehensive drive towards secularisation, degrading and humiliating the role of the *ulama*.[136] Each of these events has had a substantial impact on the political identity of Iran and, as a result, has informed the world-view of key political actors. It is also significant to highlight Khomeini's close relationship with Iranian political identity from his early career.

Khomeini was just one of the pivotal political thinkers of the pre-revolutionary period: several other major actors played a role in defining revolutionary ideology. A number of key figures of political thought also sought to change the tenor of leftist or secular ideology. For example, Ali Shariati helped to redefine the Shi'i nature of Iranian identity in lectures given between 1967 and 1973.[137] He combined modern political thought with Islamic philosophy and visions of political freedom, social justice and equality.[138] In particular, he was concerned that Western political doctrines and the Shah's policies were undermining the Islamic nature of Iran's national culture, and undertook a sociological analysis as a critique of contemporary Islam.[139] His theories were essentially opposed to the prospect of clerical authority, and as such were not unpopular with the Shah, who in fact offered a semi-official funeral for Shariati and issued favourable obituaries on his death in 1977.[140] Despite this, the particular popularity of Shariati's ideas among young people was recognised by the *ulama* as a means to reconcile disillusioned Iranians with their religious heritage. His ideas would become incorporated in Khomeini's political doctrine.[141] He has been immortalised within the national discourse of the Islamic Republic, though his widow has been quoted as declaring that 'if he were alive he would certainly be in prison.'[142]

Mehdi Bazargan, who would go on to be prime minister under Khomeini in 1979, was also influential in modern Iranian political thought. A product of Reza Shah's project to Westernise Iran, Bazargan was educated in Europe as an engineer.[143] On his return he became associated with Ayatollah Taleqani, and under his guidance published *Motahharat dar Islam* (Purities in Islam), which sought to associate the teachings of his scientific background with the values of his faith.[144] He

saw Islam as a practical doctrine, perceiving that religion could both control and inspire politics and was inalienable from the temporal aspects of government.[145] He was repeatedly imprisoned for his political activism and the creation of the political party Nehzat-e Azadi-ye Iran (The Freedom Movement of Iran).[146] His perspective as a non-clerical figure in Iranian politics provided a practical drive to Khomeini's theory of *velayat-e faqih* (guardianship of the jurist).

Khomeini was in exile from Iran from 1964 to 1979, during which time he resided in the Iraqi Shiʿi holy city of Najaf and, from 1978, in suburban Paris. His exile was the Shah's response to several of his key condemnations of government policy. One was the Shah's decision, in an attempt to reform and liberalise the political system in 1963 – the so-called 'White Revolution'[147] – to secularise the system, eliminating the condition of being a Muslim to qualify for electoral candidacy.[148] Khomeini condemned the bill on behalf of the clergy, sparking activism and support in Qom. Demonstrations against the Shah on 15 Khordad (5 June) became violent and were brutally suppressed, with the number of casualties anything from a few thousand to 20,000.[149] Several key figures of the revolution would become politicised at this point, including Hashemi Rafsanjani and Ali Khamenei.[150] Another major piece of legislation to which Khomeini was vehemently opposed was the Shah's Status of Forces Agreement with the US, which effectively gave diplomatic immunity to not only US military personnel but also to their families.[151] The results of the Shah's policy were 'virtual cantonments' inhabited by US personnel immune from local laws, a situation that would become symbolic of the subjugation of Iran to its Western ally.[152] Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei has referred to this period by describing Iran as 'a field for the Americans, the American military and others to graze'.[153] Khomeini believed that the Shah had sold Iran's independence and reduced the country 'to the level of a colony' of the US.[154] His vociferous reaction to the Shah's policy led to his arrest and expulsion. In exile, Khomeini continued to express his dissatisfaction with extraterritoriality rights given to American personnel in Iran. In a 1967 letter to Prime Minister Amir-Abbas Hoveida he declared, 'you have extirpated the very roots of our independence.'[155] However, in Khomeini's eyes, America was as much to blame as the Shah for not only his personal predicament, but also the problems brewing in his country. The fact that the US had orchestrated the return of Mohammed Reza Shah Pahlavi to the throne, and maintained his

dictatorship in the ensuing decades, meant that, indirectly at least, the faults of the Shah were also thus the faults of the US.

Khomeini's exile accorded him a status akin to martyrdom in Iran and made him 'a symbol of religious-political opposition to the Shah's rule'.[156] Throughout the years of banishment from his homeland, Khomeini was extremely active politically, producing large quantities of sermons, speeches and writings that were copied and smuggled into Iran for distribution amongst the faithful. It is believed that by 1978 approximately 100,000 audio-cassettes of Khomeini's speeches were in circulation in Iran.[157] The period of exile was crucial in the development of an Islamic political culture, and Khomeini's example encouraged a surge in the publication of works on socio-political reform and the politicisation of Islam.[158]

However, it was not only during his exile that Khomeini published prolifically. His first political works began to emerge as early as 1944[159] and, while studying under Ayatollah Bourujerdi in Qom in the 1950s, he began to formulate his political theory entitled *Hukumat-e Eslami* (Islamic Government). Published following a series of lectures in Najaf in 1971, while Khomeini was in exile, the manifesto outlined three distinct themes: that monarchy is 'wrong and invalid';[160] that Islam provides all necessary laws to govern mankind or what 'amounts to a complete social system';[161] and that Islam is in danger from Western influences, such as Zionism, Marxism and materialism.[162] He asserted the rights of Shi'i jurists to supervise the workings of government, using the word *hakem*, which in Arabic means religious judge and in Persian means governor.[163] This was an early phase of his development of the theory of *velayat-e faqih*, which he announced in a sermon in 1970.[164]

Velayat-e faqih translates to guardianship of the jurist. It refers to the right of suitably qualified Shi'i jurists to serve in lieu of the Hidden or Twelfth Imam, the occluded leader of the Shi'i people. In Shi'i ideology, no ruler can truly be just until the occultation of the Twelfth Imam is ended; until that time every ruler is by definition a usurper or *taghut* (tyrant).[165] This belief prompted concern from the *ulama* that opening religion to association with inherently corrupt politics would lessen the prestige of Shi'ism.[166] Khomeini's doctrine suggested that this problem could be overcome by a Shi'i jurist taking on the mantle of the ruler; indeed, it is the 'duty' of the jurist to do so.[167] Only by these means can Islam be protected from 'obsolescence and decay'.[168]

Khomeini argued that God had sent Islam for it to be implemented. No one knew religion better than the ulama, who were trained in its intricacies and who carried the Twelfth Imam's mandate to safeguard its interests. God had commanded an Islamic government, and the ulama had to rule if that command was to be executed.[169]

Secular government had begun to undermine the ability of the *ulama* to safeguard the interests of Islam:

> The fundamental difference between Islamic government and constitutional monarchies and republics, [. . .] is this: whereas the representatives of the people or the monarch in such regimes engage in legislation, in Islam the legislative power and competence to establish laws belongs exclusively to God Almighty [. . .] The jurists, as the trustees of the prophets, would emerge to implement the divine laws. Therefore, the role of the people is to choose the jurists with the guidance of the clergy themselves.[170]

Governance under this guise would strive to create the state of grace required for the Hidden Imam to return. Khomeini viewed his own 'knowledge of the law and justice'[171] to be equal to this task, thereby making him *veli-e faqih* (supreme jurist). The supreme jurist would reunite the state and the clergy, undoing the wrongs of secular, usurping monarchies.[172]

Khomeini's adoption of the title of imam appealed to the Shi'i messianic concept, legitimising his leadership and enhancing the 'mysticism of his role'.[173] While in Sunnism the term imam would merely mean leader, in Shi'ism it affirmed Khomeini's relationship with Ali and raised him above other ayatollahs. To relate himself to the Hidden Imam – though he never confirmed or denied whether he believed himself to be the Twelfth Imam[174] – was also a means of security for the regime.

> Now that the establishment of Islamic rule has actually come to pass, the Iranian population has been extremely uncomfortable in opposing it, since it seems to fulfil prophecy for many fervent

believers. To move to delegitimize Ayatollah Khomeini and the Islamic Republic would raise the question of whether one might not be warring with God himself in the eyes of many people.[175]

Khomeini's theory was by no means universally popular within the *ulama* or society as a whole at the time. Abol-Qasem al-Khoi, mentor to Iraqi spiritual leader Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, was particularly opposed to the *velayat-e faqih* doctrine, claiming it had no basis in Shiʿi theology or law.[176] The divergent aims of the various factions involved in the revolutionary movement also posed a challenge for the implementation of *velayat-e faqih*. Khomeini's plan for post-revolutionary Iran, however, was far more developed and cohesive than that of his rivals, many of whom had looked no further than the ousting of the Shah as a revolutionary goal.[177] In addition, his particular skill, with regard to assiduously tailoring his message 'to conform to Iran's core values', was critical in securing his desired Islamic Republic.[178] His intuitive political skills are comparable to those of any secular politician.[179] This enabled Khomeini to construct his political rhetoric, no matter how divorced from Iran's experience, within accepted norms of Iranian political identity.

Furthermore, the actively anti-religious nature of the Pahlavi shahs was sufficient to unite disparate groups of clerics under the revolutionary banner.[180] Mohammed Reza Pahlavi's drive towards secularisation could have been expected to entice the middle classes, if not the rural and urban poor, but his failure to concurrently incorporate democratisation and political modernisation undermined this social base.[181] Similarly, the religious establishment perceived his attachment to ancient Persian culture as excessive and corrupting, rather than appealing to nationalist sentiment. By ignoring or attempting to overpower the Islamic nature of Iran's political identity, the Shah had isolated his populace. In contrast, Khomeini's vision of freedom from oppression, foreign influence and limited participation in government was appealing to many levels of society.[182] Nationalist and leftist political groups had been so brutally repressed that the development of a cohesive activist movement was left to those promoting an Islamic political culture.[183] Khomeini argued against the separation of religion and the state:

This slogan of the separation of religion and politics and the demand that Islamic scholars not intervene in social and political affairs have been formulated and propagated by the imperialists; it is only the irreligious who repeat them. Were religion and politics separate at the time of the prophet?[184]

Khomeini was able to merge the guardianship of the Shiʿi tradition with modern political process to create a viable Islamic government.[185]

Far more than his clerical brethren, Khomeini proved to be a man of his time, and he sensed that the changing politics of Iran offered a unique opportunity to propagate his Islamic ideology.[186]

In doing so, Khomeini capitalised on the Islamic nature of Iranian political identity, but avoided the mistake that the Shah had made of negating the relevance of the non-Islamic aspects of identity. Although by no means a democrat, Khomeini was nonetheless a pragmatist, appreciating the need for popular participation in government to ensure its legitimacy. Furthermore, he believed his system of government was for the people and encouraged an active political discourse, stating 'an indifferent person cannot think for a country.'[187] He also successfully appealed to anti-imperialist and anti-foreign impulses that had become a part of the political culture.[188] Concerns such as *gharbzadegi* ('Westoxication') were common to socialists, clerics and liberal nationalists alike.[189]

From the outset, he sought to unite the totality of Iranian opposition into a cohesive anti-Western bloc. America was not just a cultural affront, but a colonial power seeking to subjugate Third World countries.[190]

Motivating forces such as freedom and independence merged with religious slogans in revolutionary discourse. Each aspect of revolutionary political communication was deliberately and directly constructed towards the creation of the Islamic Republic.[191] Khomeini's political theory appealed to imagined norms in Iranian society, providing his movement with legitimacy and Nelson Foote's 'energy appropriate for performing'.[192]

Khomeini perceived his role as not only spiritual leader of Iran, or indeed Shiʿism, but of the Muslim world as a whole.[193] He anticipated a

global Islamic movement in response to Iran's revolution. 'Our movement is for an Islamic goal, not for Iran alone,' Khomeini declared in 1979.[194] The success of the divine mission that Iran had proved viable was a mandate to export 'Iran's Islamic template'.[195] While the system of government of the Islamic Republic was born as a politicisation of Shiʿism, Khomeini felt it was not exclusive, that being Sunni or Shiʿa was not the issue. However, Nasr suggests that though many Sunni activists admired what Iran had achieved, they had difficulty accepting Khomeini's downplaying of his Shiʿi image.[196] The unique features of Iran's history and experience that had led to the revolution, combined with the Shiʿi identity inherent in the movement, made the export of Khomeini's philosophy throughout the Muslim world unlikely.

Factionalism in Post-revolutionary Iranian Political Culture

In order to comprehend the aspects of Iranian political culture that have developed since the revolutionary era, an understanding of the actors operating within the political identity of the modern Islamic Republic is necessary. The complexities of the Iranian political system are often little understood and therefore misinterpreted outside of Iran, particularly in the US.[197] According to Ali Gheissari and Nasr, Iran is more of a democracy than almost any other Middle Eastern country.[198] Democracy, while not the goal of the Islamic Revolution, is a by-product of the grass-roots political consciousness that developed in the twentieth century and has become a central thread of Iranian political discourse.[199] The clerical elite within Iran's political system at the emergence of the Islamic Republic were by no means monolithic, which split the political scene into factions.

In part a result of the Shiʿi history of decentralised power and independent seminaries and clerics who engaged in discussion and disagreement, factional debate infiltrated the political identity of the Islamic Republic.[200] Khomeini encouraged factionalism in politics during his time as supreme leader, perhaps aware of its inevitability. This was particularly the case as the realities of political power and the need for pragmatic considerations became clear.[201] All those engaged in public political activity openly declared their loyalty to Khomeini, meaning that factionalism could allow a variety of opinions to be expressed as part of the 'grand alliance' of the Islamic Republic.[202] As a

result of these elements, several distinct factions exist in Iranian domestic politics. These are the pragmatists, the reformists and the conservatives. In the post-Khomeini era each of these factions has enjoyed a two-term presidency.

The politics of populism are crucial in defining factional politics in Iran. Each faction operates as an ideological umbrella that encompasses numerous political parties, lobby groups, activists and individuals. The factions represent opposing views within the Islamist structure of Iranian politics. Khomeini's political theory could be separated into *jihadi* (combative) and *ijtihadi* (the reasoned application of Islam) elements.[203] The conservative faction looks to enforce Khomeini's revolutionary vision of the 're-Islamisation of politics and society' that has no dependence on the outside world – a *jihadi* approach.[204] This wing of Iranian politics is primarily responsible for anti-American and anti-Israeli rhetoric, and found particular cohesiveness in the defence of Iranian territory during the Iran–Iraq War in the 1980s.[205] The reformist faction, on the other hand, looks to the *ijtihadi* argument for civil society and cultural renaissance. From a foreign policy perspective the reformist faction seeks a more measured approach to dialogue and communication. The pragmatist faction operates as a centrist or balancing group, referred to as *amalgara*.[206] This faction takes its lead from economic theorists and promotes a world view that will maximise Iran's engagement with international economics and encourage foreign investment.

Given the value of charismatic personalities in the populist Iranian political sphere, the factions can wield considerable power carried by the popularity of individuals. In addition, political hopefuls entering the electoral system with the backing of one faction or another have greater access to public forums than their independent counterparts.[207] Key religious leaders will also often associate themselves with a particular faction. Consequently, senior ayatollahs who lead Friday prayers will allow allied political figures to speak after prayers, opening their views to a wide audience both in person and on television. Also, many of the daily newspapers are powerhouses of factional politics, and often a paper owner or manager will run for the *majlis*.[208] This access to the media provides greater exposure to those candidates affiliated with a faction during a political campaign. It also allows politics to operate within public forums, creating a sense – and, arguably, an illusion – of greater participation and ownership within the community, which boosts the

system's legitimacy. As a result of post-election riots in June 2009 and the subsequent violent suppression of political protest from the reformist faction, the value of the factions has been severely compromised. These events have questioned the legitimacy of that same political system.

Charismatic figures were behind the development of the factional movements in Iranian politics, and many have been prominent in the political consciousness both prior to the revolution and since the conception of the Islamic Republic. One such example is Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, the cleric at the head of the pragmatist faction. Rafsanjani has held almost every important office in the post-revolution government, including the presidency (from 1989 to 1997) and leadership of the powerful Expediency Council and the Assembly of Experts. Rafsanjani's presidency was crucial in opening up Iran to foreign investment and international loans, which greatly boosted its oil output, and thereby the economy at large, serving to extract Iran from the financial difficulties of the 1980s.[209] The pragmatists concentrate their focus on the economic development of Iran and maintaining the republican elements of the country's constitution, perceiving that in the interests of stability and growth, popular involvement in the political process is crucial.[210] This priority was evident in Rafsanjani's support for the protest movement that swept Iran in the wake of the disputed June 2009 elections.

Another charismatic former president who holds significant weight in Iranian politics is Mohammad Khatami. As the figurehead of the reformist faction and campaigner for greater political pluralism and discourse in the Islamic Republic, Khatami has a high profile both in Iran and abroad. His involvement in Iranian politics has been complicated. While a member of Rafsanjani's cabinet he was disqualified from running for the 1992 *majlis* elections, due to concerns from the conservatives over his attitudes to freedom of the press and diversity in film and music.[211] The decision to allow his campaign for presidency in 1997 has been described as a 'compromise' for the needs of the pro-democracy movement, and his unexpected election victory garnered a massive 70 per cent of the vote, or some 20 million ballots.[212] He held a substantial constituency among the middle classes, often remnants of those leftist and liberal factions that had allied with the Islamic movement in the early revolutionary

period.[213] Great hopes were held for the potential 'opening up' of Iran following his election in 1997, but few of his policies would be realised. Steps taken towards freedom of speech and the right to protest have been eroded since Khatami left office.

Perhaps more significant, from the foreign policy perspective, was the failure of Khatami's 2003 so-called 'Grand Bargain' – an attempt via a Swiss intermediary to reach out to the US on a wide range of issues and encourage the opening of a dialogue. The step towards dialogue has been very much a feature of Khatami's rhetoric, both during his presidency and since he left office. But this outreach went unanswered by its American recipients, with the end result that the apparent ineffectiveness of his foreign policy weakened Khatami, lessening the value of Iran's position both domestically and internationally.[214] The source of the bargain is much debated: in the US it is claimed that it was entirely unclear who in fact made the offer and its relevance to the relationship between the US and Iran is greatly downplayed.[215] In Iran, some claim the offer was made by then Foreign Minister Mehdi Kharroubi, some that it came from a group of diplomats and others still that it was made by the Supreme Leader's son-in-law.[216] It was made at a time of some uncertainty regarding Iran's security, with the US having just invaded Iraq and also deeply mired in conflict on Iran's eastern border, in Afghanistan. Iran was seeking to respond favourably to the US policy that 'goodwill begets goodwill', the rejection of which was evidence that behaviour change would do little to alter US policy.[217] Whatever the truth of the circumstances, its relevance to Iranian political identity lies both in the charge of weakness in the reformist camp and in the belief that any attempted outreach would merely be ignored by the US, lessening the likelihood of any further effort of the kind.[218]

The third main faction in Iranian politics is the conservative wing. Khomeini's successor, Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, is a dominating presence in this bloc as *veli-e faqih*.[219] Khamenei had been president under Khomeini, a position that at the time was largely symbolic, and he was a somewhat surprising choice as supreme leader. A politician more than a spiritual leader, his elevation was treated with 'skepticism, if not derision'.[220] The decision to raise Khamenei to this position over his many elected and recognised peers is treated with some cynicism, given that more qualified ayatollahs were overlooked because of anti-Khomeini

leanings.[221] However, the fact that despite these concerns the clerical elite accepted his position was not only a tribute to Khomeini's legacy, but also a 'testament to the inherent and immediate stability of the post-war Islamic Republic'.[222] Khomeini had been far-sighted in changing the role of the *faqih* in the constitution by plebiscite in March 1989, to invest the position with greater political and social relevance rather than a *marja-ye taqlid* (source of emulation).[223] Aware of the likely challenges in replacing so central a figure as himself, Khomeini politicised the position and lessened its mystique. Khamenei's political adroitness under the system devised by Khomeini ensured both the ongoing legitimacy of the regime and his own longevity in the role.

In the wake of Khatami's administration, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad – with the support of the Supreme Leader – led the return of conservatism to the presidency in 2005. The military and paramilitary supports of the government in the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and the *basij* militia form the operational core of the conservative faction. During Ahmadinejad's time in office, the close association between the presidency and the military was in part a reflection of Ahmadinejad's own former membership of the IRGC and his popularity in that quarter. Ahmadinejad was elected in a run-off against Rafsanjani, with a surprisingly comfortable victory of approximately 62 per cent, primarily on the basis of his popular socio-economic policies.[224] The close relationship between Ahmadinejad and Khamenei remained strong throughout the former's first term in office and during the controversial June 2009 elections. However, in the wake of the vociferous public opposition to Ahmadinejad's re-election, Khamenei gradually began to distance himself from the presidency, and indeed in the latter years of Ahmadinejad's administration the conservative press and the clerical elite began to use the President as a scapegoat to explain the deterioration in the country's economy.

The 2013 presidential elections, while devoid of the unrest that marked the 2009 polls, were politically complex and reflective of the highly pragmatic view that the clerical elite periodically demonstrates in the political sphere. The list of possible candidates was tightly curbed, with no reformist candidates on the ballot. The most moderate of the available candidates was Hassan Rouhani, a little-known cleric whose campaign slogans talked of 'change' and raised criticism of the country's previous approach to nuclear mediation, but about whom external

analysts understood little, prompting claims that his election had 'stunned almost all observers'.[225] However, in reality his success should not have been considered a surprise; while some reformist supporters may have boycotted the poll as a consequence of the absence of their faction's candidates, of those who did vote, Rouhani would likely have presented the most moderate option.

It is highly likely that Khamenei allowed Rouhani's candidature as a gesture of goodwill, a 'conciliatory act' to 'restore domestic faith in elections' as one of the core pillars of the republic.[226] Rouhani lacks the charisma of figures such as Ahmadinejad or Khatami, potentially as a deliberate attempt to present a 'pragmatic if boring face'.[227] A more cynical, though potentially not inaccurate, view would be to describe Rouhani as an opportunist[228] who is filling whatever role the clerical elite require of him to delicately manage the balancing act of international relations while also placating the domestic constituency and lessening the alienation of portions of the population over the violent 2009 elections. This perspective is supported by the consideration that for economic reasons, nuclear negotiations were critical to lessen the burden of sanctions. By presenting a new and apparently conciliatory face to the international community, the regime could serve this need while in reality changing little of its policy. The longer term implications of the 2015 tentative nuclear agreement and Iran's intentions are yet to be seen, but Rouhani was a suitable candidate for fronting that deal.[229] Rouhani himself is likely 'not a deciding factor in the direction of foreign policy, he just executes it.'[230]

As mentioned above, many principal actors in Iranian politics were closely involved in either the revolutionary activity of 1978–9, or were veterans of the Iran–Iraq War in the 1980s. Candidates for election draw legitimacy from their past activities. As early as 1992 some concerns were raised in the media as to the credibility of elected officials:

> Who is pleased with the outcome of the elections and who is annoyed? The question is not the victory of one faction or the defeat of another, but rather those who have won in the elections are not those who have been in the forefront of the struggles and the revolution. [. . .] They may have honourable intentions, but they cannot be as effective as those who have been on the front line of the struggle with the enemies of Islam and the revolution.[231]

As the revolution slips further into the past, it becomes increasingly less likely that political figures will hold revolutionary or wartime credentials. Assuming that factional politics can survive the suppression of the reformists, affiliation with factions that can maintain the candidates' legitimacy will be a key factor in future political careers.

These factions have had a significant influence on Iranian political identity. Their existence has been both evidence of and a source of vibrant political debate, within the institutions of government and also at a grass-roots level.

> [Factionalism is evidence of] a profound and vigorous debate based on pivotal questions of religion and state, idealism and national interest, isolation, globalisation and the preferred attitude vis-à-vis the outside world.[232]

All factions have wielded considerable weight in directing the course of policy making, and until recently have served to move Iran's republic far from the clerical autocracy that it is often perceived and portrayed to be. The politics of personality also hold substantial weight; evidence of this is clear in presidential campaigns that are often waged as popularity contests, to a degree comparable to the US. The lead-up to the June 2009 elections in Iran is a clear example of this, and the post-polling response to potentially erroneous election results is evidence that an inclusive political consciousness is active. The average Iranian is as well, if not more, able to engage in knowledgeable political discourse as their counterparts in any democratic nation.[233] It remains to be seen the impact that events since 2009 have had on pluralism and the value of factional politics in Iranian political identity.

International Isolation

A series of events in the decade following the 1979 revolution in Iran served to isolate the new Islamic Republic from the rest of the world.[234] The November 1979 seizure of hostages at the US embassy in Tehran, and the ensuing lengthy crisis, served to sever diplomatic ties with the US. The expansionist intentions of Khomeini's new regime, encapsulated by the pre-emptive Iraqi invasion of 1980, dispute with the United Arab Emirates over the sovereignty of Persian Gulf islands

Abu Musa, Greater Tunb and Lesser Tunb, and violent protests at the *hajj* pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia in 1987, served to alienate Iran from its Arab neighbours, fearful of a spread in revolutionary drive.[235] The US further distanced itself from Iran following the humiliation of the 1986 Iran–Contra affair, which exposed the Reagan administration's covert arms deal with the Islamic Republic and launched a congressional inquiry.[236] At this point the US took an active military role to aid Saddam Hussein in the Iran–Iraq War. A number of views have been formulated in addressing the impact of Iran's international isolation during this period.

Hunter discusses Iran's international position and the relevance of the devastation of warfare:

> The humiliating period of Iran's decline has left the strongest imprint on its national ethos. But memories of a glorious past – real or imagined – have also remained strong. This has made it difficult for Iran to come to terms with its decline and the state of dependency that has followed. It has led it to believe in its legitimate right to be an important political and cultural force in the Middle East and the Third World, thus imbuing its foreign policy with an inherent activism that only appears when circumstances permit.[237]

The 'memories of a glorious past' do indeed have a significant impact on Iran's belief in its role as a leader in the region. But this perspective seems to ignore the fact that a 'state of dependency' is a very questionable proposition in view of Iran's international position during and following the Iran–Iraq War. In addition, the war is not generally perceived in Iran as a national failure, and certainly not a humiliation. While Iran's war aims may not have been achieved, the new republic had survived against the odds, revealing unexpected strength.[238]

Similarly, Iran's international isolation during the 1980s is often viewed as a positive, having provided Iran with the opportunity to lessen its dependency on international markets. This circumstance also allowed Iran to end the war without significant debt, owing to its general inability to purchase arms, unlike Iraq.[239] Certainly there can be no doubt that isolation from the international community has been an advantage to Iran's self-sufficiency and its ability to seek its own answers

to shortcomings in technology or development.[240] The progression towards self-sufficiency is closely related to key elements of Iran's political identity. Barely an industrialised nation at the time of the revolution, Iran's isolation during the Iran−Iraq War and since then through economic sanctions imposed by the international community have aided it on the road to self-sufficiency. The decimation of the military forces during the war, as well as the unavailability of spare parts for the US-supplied arsenal of the 1970s − a result of severed economic ties and sanctions − meant Iran was forced to develop its own military industry.[241] Both sanctions and the domestic economic situation have restricted Iran's ability to purchase the quantities of military equipment it desires, so it has been selective in its international deals, focusing on warships and missile technology while producing the balance itself.[242]

In addition, the elite appears to have found the isolation imposed by sanctions beneficial to the stability of the regime, in that it has limited the growth of Westernisation and the accompanying drive towards a more liberal political system. The conservative faction has always held a strong policy stance on the promotion of self-sufficiency.[243] Sanctions have progressed conservative policies and restricted Iran's engagement with the West, though the economic impact of the 2013 round of sanctions began to outweigh their political benefit.[244] This economic driver undoubtedly pushed Iran towards appeasement of the international community since. In the age of global communications, and given Iran's young population, convincing the domestic constituency of the value of isolation has likely become an unanswerable challenge for the Iranian regime.

Nevertheless, isolation reinforces aspects of Iran's political identity. The sense of independence from the international community, originally a slogan of the revolutionary era, has become institutionalised. With its first decade dominated by war, isolation, economic hardship, internal and external opposition, assassinations, and the eventual death of the spiritual and actual leader in Khomeini, the Islamic Republic could have been extremely vulnerable. The fact that these events failed to destabilise the new nation is significant.[245] War can certainly be a powerful mechanism to galvanise a nation and eliminate opposition elements, while isolation can increase self-reliance and reinforce a sense of unique political culture.

Myths of Political Identity

Conspiracy theories

Conspiracy theories are a feature of the Iranian psyche, and are responsible for reinforcing political myths. Whether real or imagined, conspiracies create their own reality in Iranian minds.[246] In a sense, conspiracy fears abdicate responsibility for events over which political actors might be expected to have control.[247] Sick proffers some explanation of what he terms a 'penchant' for conspiracy theories:

> In my experience, Iranians assume that a simple, forthright explanation of events is merely a camouflage concealing the devious intricacies of "reality". To this is added the conviction that any significant political, economic or social upheaval in Iran must be traceable to the manipulation of external powers.[248]

As discussed above, Iran's history of occupation and hegemony by external power makes such fear of foreign intervention understandable. The Persian term *vabaste,* meaning 'linked', is used to refer to those engaged in activities that are contrary to the interests of the nation.[249] The term provides an allusion to external manipulation and is used to discredit hostile actors. The foreign-suspicious collective memory has ensured that this perception is entrenched in Iran's political identity.

Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi was particularly prone to entertaining conspiracy theories. An assassination attempt shortly after the end of World War II had inspired this habit, leading him to impose martial law while attempting to discover the culprits.[250] From this point onwards, the Shah constantly sought to read between the lines with regard to both dealings with allies and potential threats. For example, during the 1950s he became extremely nervous of a US representative at the embassy in Tehran, Gerald Dooher. Dooher was an expert on Iranian affairs, spoke Persian and was particularly adept at dealing with tribal issues.[251] The Shah was suspicious of his motives and at one point requested that the State Department withdraw him.

Staunchly supported in all possible respects by a succession of US administrations following World War II, the Shah still vacillated between complete reliance on the information and backing of the US, and a fear of a conspiracy or CIA plot against him.[252] This conviction

was reinforced by his reading of French intelligence reports that indicated the Americans may have been about to alter their policy position.[253] As the political situation in Iran degenerated in 1978 and the Shah needed American assistance more than ever, he demanded the US ambassador assure him that the US and the Soviet Union were not planning to 'divide up Iran' amongst themselves.[254] The Shah's erratic response to the various political crises of 1978 demonstrated both megalomania and insecurity – evidence of his particular predisposition to conspiracy theories.[255] Later, when in exile following his departure from Iran in January 1979, the Shah would accuse America of plotting his downfall, even though at the time of his departure he believed the US was orchestrating a grand scheme to restore him to the throne.[256]

The same series of events had the opposite effect from the Iranian public's point of view. When the US made the decision to admit the Shah into America for medical treatment in 1979, it was perceived in Iran as the beginning of a CIA coup reminiscent of the events of 1953, which had ousted Mossadeq and returned the Shah to the throne. Given Iran's experience of external intervention, Eqbal Ahmad summarises the Iranian perspective on this:

> A people who won six battles in a century[257] at heavy cost to themselves, each time to lose the war to a foreign intervention, were not going to believe in 1979 that the Shah of Iran had been flown from Mexico to a hospital in New York City only to be treated by two Canadian doctors.[258]

Ahmad's suggestion is that the Iranians could be forgiven for imagining a conspiracy. In any case, the resultant, defiant, punitive action in Iran was the seizure of the US embassy in Tehran.

More recently, a possible example of the 'penchant' for conspiracy to which Sick alluded can be seen in the government reaction to the 2009 post-election riots in Iran. The regime was quick to place blame on foreign powers for instigating the protests.[259] In this instance it was more conceivable to direct blame towards Britain than the US, presumably due to the fact that Britain maintains a diplomatic presence in Iran, whereas, due to ties severed in 1979, the US has no visible or official presence in Iran. As a result, numerous national staff members of

the British embassy in Tehran were arrested in 2009 for conspiring to undermine the regime. The decisions taken by the Iranian regime at this time adhere to an underlying proclivity to assume conspiracy, but they can also be attributed to political manoeuvring. This ambiguity is often a feature of Iranian policy making.

In addition to the imprisonment of British embassy workers, foreign press were expelled from the country as a consequence of fears over foreign engagement in Iran's domestic dispute. Khamenei spoke on Iranian state television regarding this issue:

> Two brothers in a family may confront each other [. . .] it is none of the stranger's business. The aliens who stepped into this arena through various political and propaganda lines had the aim of creating differences and discord and separation.[260]

The English-language newspaper *Kayhan International* editorialised that Western media were also portraying the post-election turmoil inaccurately, providing a false impression of Iranian politics in the international community.[261] These comments provide evidence not only of Iran's intention to blame foreign elements for the domestic crisis, but also of concern over the manner in which Iran is depicted internationally.

In addition, a sincere fear is evident in the Iranian government's intent to block the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) from launching a Voice of America-style television programme in the Persian language on satellite TV. Suspicion of the BBC, and the British government more generally, is such that the government issued a secret directive in 2008 to academics, teachers and journalists that they were under no circumstances to provide interviews to the BBC, distribute its information or discuss its coverage in class. Cooperation with the BBC could be considered grounds for imprisonment.[262] It is assumed by the government that the intentions of the BBC can only be conspiratorial, in the interests of undermining the regime. This suspicion is also conceivably linked to the November 2011 attack on the British embassy compound and residence in Tehran that prompted the closure of the facility between 2011 and 2015, though ostensibly the storming of the facilities was carried out by 'rogue elements' subsequently reprimanded by the authorities.

Anti-Americanism: The 'Great Satan'

Political myths place events or experiences within an expected context, to be applied or manipulated by political actors. Political identity is reproduced and sustained by interactions between state actors, and this process creates expectations and presupposes the response to new experiences. Attainable expectation introduces a level of predictability into the operation of political identity and allows certain elements of that identity to become institutionalised, often deliberately, by state actors preserving balance or inciting anticipated responses.

Anti-Americanism has become an expected component within Iranian policy making and, in many regards, a fuel to maintain a stable political identity for Iran's ruling elite. Chants of *marg bar Amrika* (Death to America) have long been a weekly feature at televised Friday prayers in Tehran, much as the anti-American slogans painted on the walls of the old embassy building in Taleqani Avenue are painstakingly restored to depict the US as the 'Great Satan'. William Beeman demonstrates that the imagery of the 'Great Satan' is as superbly constructed a metaphor as any in Iran's much loved poetry. The term originates as a combination of two factors: first, the Muslim concept of Satan as expressed by the term *shaitan ar-rajim*, from which God is entreated to protect the believer in prayer; and second, the non-religious myth of the White Div, from Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*, depicted as a corrupting influence on Iranian society, which is to be saved by Rustam, the Iranian national hero.[263] The term 'Great Satan' can also claim some relationship to Iran's Zoroastrian tradition and the influences of the forces of good and evil, however much these parallels between Shiʿism and Zoroastrianism might be disputed by theologians.[264] The use of the 'Great Satan' was not a direct insult to the US or its people, but rather it was symbolic of forces of corruption in Iranian society as embodied by Mohammed Reza Shah Pahlavi.

However symbolic the original intention of the 'Great Satan' image might have been in Iran, to the West it was obviously lost in translation, amid the realities, myths and subjectivity of international relations. The concept that the US might have a satanic influence over another people is the ultimate affront to a nation with a highly developed belief in the beneficence of its international activities.[265] For Iran, the beauty of the metaphor has long had political capital in the highly imagined culture of

Iranian politics. Khomeini and his political associates and successors can have had little motivation to enlighten the West as to the deeper meanings of the 'Great Satan', and it has thus been constructed into a myth of political identity that goes hand in hand with other, less nuanced, anti-American sentiment.

Anti-American sentiment in Iran's political discourse serves as much a domestic policy purpose as it fulfils an international expectation. Iran's leaders have repeatedly found that denouncing the US can be both 'morally justifiable and politically expedient'.[266] As Doug McAdam indicates, 'Khomeini and his political heirs [have been ...] routinely exploiting enduring anti-American sentiments to bolster domestic support for an otherwise fragile regime.'[267] Framing the US – and Israel – as an existential threat serves to 'legitimise the position' of the regime.[268] Certainly, the most flagrant exposition of anti-Americanism in Iranian history, the hostage crisis, was perpetuated beyond its initial purpose by Khomeini in the interests of eliminating subversive elements within the newly created Islamic Republic. Interestingly enough, a number of the hostage-takers in the 1979–81 crisis apparently enquired of their captives regarding the prospects of obtaining visas to emigrate to the US when the situation was resolved. Peter Katzenstein and Robert Keohane describe this as 'attitudinal multi-dimensionality', meaning people can be ambivalent in their anti-Americanism – both liking and disliking aspects of American society simultaneously.[269] This could certainly be argued of the Iranian population more broadly.

From the state identity perspective, however, McAdam's comments pose the question of how fragile Iran's ruling regime might be, should the pillar of anti-Americanism be withdrawn from political discourse. Khamenei is clearly hanging on tightly to anti-American rhetoric since the 2015 nuclear agreement, distancing himself from the deal and maintaining that the US remains the evil it always was. Within Iran, and particularly within the academic elite, there appear to be two very distinct schools of thought on the question of anti-Americanism as an institution in Iranian political identity. Firstly, there is the belief that the very concept of anti-Americanism as a pillar of Iranian identity is in itself an American construct, erected to create fear and to justify US foreign policy actions such as military presence in the Middle East.[270] This belief is essentially that the whole premise of anti-Americanism as

an institution is in fact a construction of American political identity and operates as part of the imagined norm of US policy. The concept that anti-Americanism is ingrained in the Iranian political consciousness gives US policy makers a stronger standpoint when formulating a position on Iran, particularly on such questions as Iran's nuclear programme or its stance on the Arab–Israeli conflict. This draws on the constructivist basis of the relationship between political identity and political interest: anti-Americanism is an expected act. The US is empowered by the expectation of Iran's resistance to its policies, because Iran is operating within imagined norms.

The second school of thought on this issue, which was only shared in a series of off-the-record personal interviews, is that the Iranian ruling elite is most fearful of the loss of the 'eternal hostility', which has so far endured with the US since the inception of the Islamic Republic. For the more 'radical segments' of the regime the loss of this pillar of the Islamic Revolution would be unthinkable, and it would greatly detract from the power of Iran's foreign policy rhetoric if the 'Great Satan' were no longer an evil influence.[271] A level of fear, or at least of wariness, is advantageous to the interests of the government, and there is no desire to remove the object of that wariness. At the time some of these interviews were conducted – in the early period of Barack Obama's presidency and amid the expectation that he would attempt *rapprochement* with Iran – the issue was particularly poignant. If Obama were willing to set aside the 'bad blood' of decades past, it would prove significantly more difficult to connect Obama with the mythology of corrupting influence around which the 'Great Satan' legend had developed. A degree of fear existed that this would undermine one of the supporting tenets of the Islamic Republic. This anticipated ability of Obama to set aside the past would emerge as at least partially premature.

The two opposing points of view expressed in personal interviews on this issue within Iran, and subsequently with analysts and observers outside of the Islamic Republic, suggest a division between the government's official position and the apparent deeper concerns within the government. Rather than seeking to estimate which viewpoint is the more accurate, it will suffice to conclude that the second perspective would be evidence that anti-Americanism is indeed institutionalised, and deliberately so. It could be considered that this aspect of Iranian political identity is being actively reinforced to create a set of

expectations – and fears – within which political actors can seek justification for behaviour. Even if the expression of the 'Great Satan' has become little more than an 'empty slogan' among all but the core of conservative politics, anti-Americanism persists as a pillar of the Islamic Republic.[272]

A variety of studies have been conducted, both within Iran and by research institutes externally, to attempt to determine the level of anti-American sentiment in the general population. Abdolali Ghavam of Shahid Beheshti University carried out research that suggests approximately 15 per cent of Iranians have a firm belief in the image of the US as a corrupting influence in its dealings with Iran, and would be unlikely to support a restoration of the relationship.[273] In a quantitative survey by an independent external organisation, this figure was placed at 24 per cent.[274] Polling is notoriously complex in Iran and often reflects some bias on the part of the participant towards the government's official policy line, due to fear or belief that an expected response is required. Therefore, a range of 15 to 20 per cent might be an acceptable figure to place on the portion of Iranian society that actively holds anti-American sentiment. It would be understandable to wonder, based on this low percentage, what domestic policy agenda Iran's anti-American stance might be held to serve.

Several domestic issues could be considered in this context. Firstly, the manner in which anti-Americanism is a foundation of domestic politics relates to the anti-American elements of the movement towards an Islamic Republic. Revolutionary anti-Americanism was 'fuelled by memories of US intervention in Iranian politics' and was a form of 'legacy anti-Americanism'.[275] The three main slogans of the revolution provide some insight into this phenomenon:

1. Independence – a break, from the West in particular.
2. Freedom – not just from the yoke of suppression but a return to indigenous culture. (This should not be confused with the liberalist interpretation of freedom.)
3. Islam – the creation of a republic that would encapsulate what Iran perceived to be her authentic self.[276]

There remains an element of these three slogans within current Iranian political discourse, along with a strong sense of the 'other', representing

those *doshman* (enemies)[277] who drag Iran away from its key principles.[278] The US is often the personification of this 'other', and that perception is kept alive by means of cultural activities, such as the regular pro-government rallies commemorating dates such as the hostage-taking at the US embassy in 1979, and it is also maintained in the school system by reinforcement in education. These aspects of reinforcement lend credibility to the concept that anti-Americanism is consciously institutionalised in Iranian political identity.

The second domestic issue is the use of the imagery of the 'Great Satan' as a means of criticising factions in Iranian politics that express willingness to come to the negotiating table with the US. They can be accused of wishing to compromise with an evil and corrupting force.[279] This was a popular means of crushing potential rivals used by Khomeini in the 1980s and has continued to play a role in more recent times, including as a criticism of Khatami's administration and means of undermining the reformist faction. The election of Hassan Rouhani in 2013 and subsequent talks with the US and European powers is an interesting manifestation of this issue. Rouhani can at most be described as a moderate conservative, and it is his very link to the conservatives that allows him to position himself as willing to negotiate; if the same tactic was used by a reformist politician, s/he would be all too easily scapegoated by the more conservative elements of the regime. The archetypal Iranian political tradition of *posht-e pardeh* (behind the curtain)[280] means we are unlikely to know the true motivations of the regime in putting forward Rouhani as the most 'reformist' of all the conservative candidates selected for the 2013 elections, or its intention with regard to *rapprochement* with the West.

The third significant objection to US policy, which has a bearing on domestic affairs, is the presence of US military in the Gulf region. Iran consciously desires a key leadership role in the Gulf region, and rejection of the right for the US to hold a permanent presence in Iran's neighbourhood is an issue with some momentum on the domestic political front. The success of the *Pax Americana*, this being the term applied to the US-allied security states of the Gulf region following the expulsion of Saddam Hussein from Kuwait in 1991, may have brought a degree of stability to the region, but with it the purpose of America's presence lessened.[281] The attempt to withdraw from Iraq following a lengthy – and resentment-building – occupation has proven fruitless, as the US and its allies have once again been drawn into conflict in Iran's

neighbourhood. Iran repeatedly claimed it wishes only to see Iraq forge its own future without foreign interference,[282] but Iran's long history in Iraq, its involvement in the post-2003 sectarian conflict and its new stake in the extermination of Sunni extremism lends this concept little weight. In this latest of unfolding scenarios, Iran's interests are aligned with the US's against the militant group Islamic State; the complexities of the connection between interest and identity are addressed later in this book.

The Politics of Deprivation and Martyrdom

The many occasions of conquest and suppression at the hands of foreign powers, which have been outlined above, have had a further distinct effect on the Iranian political identity. The manner in which this effect has manifested itself suggests it has been institutionalised as a myth of political identity. A senior Iranian academic described it as a 'sense of deprivation' that has actively persisted in political consciousness since the Qajar dynasty, which began in the late eighteenth century, but that may have origins much further back in Iran's ancient history. The Qajar dynasty has been variously described as weak, corrupt and decentralised. Under its questionable regime Russia and the UK were able to 'jostle for power' and the strategic upper hand at the cost of Iran's territorial and economic integrity.[283]

The Iranian experience of the world wars was much the same. At the Tehran Big Three conference in November 1943, US President Franklin D. Roosevelt offered his USSR counterpart Joseph Stalin a variety of lucrative deals regarding the development of Iran's national resources and acquisition of a port on the Persian Gulf. This 'casual disregard of Iranian sovereignty' was not made in the interests of Iran's growth and development but rather to sweeten a military move with the allies' eastern member.[284] The Iranians, already simmering with resentment over oil concessions for the British, were in no position to refuse the demands of their occupiers, particularly while their own leadership was in a questionable state. The 'politics of deprivation' led to extremes in sentiment and policy.

According to Hunter, in the political world view of Khomeini's revolutionary Iran, the first distinguishing factor recognised when forming policy or rhetoric was between the aggressors or oppressors and the

exploited or repressed. The next division, which must be seen in the context of the Cold War, was ideological – capitalist or socialist: Khomeini subscribed to neither, making Iran perhaps one of the only countries to be truly non-aligned. The third division, in the wake of the absence of the Cold War to provide ideological differences, was moral – those that follow the right path and those that don't.[285] The 'black or white' elements to Iran's post-revolutionary foreign policy did not completely fade with the end of the Khomeini era; they have metamorphosed into a wider reflection of Iran's experience in the international community, but are often no less polarised as a result. This dichotomy is reflective of Shi'i mythology, however, and also of a pre-Islamic world view: the polarisation of good and evil, as espoused by Zoroastrian and Manichean philosophers. Iran's experience has become a constraint on the policy making of state actors.

Martyrdom, beyond being the ultimate expression of a Shi'i Muslim's faith, is also linked to the political experiences outlined above and to revolutionary ideology. The politics of martyrdom feed into the myths of identity relating to Shi'ism by invoking the 'exemplary lessons' of the 'Shi'a origin myth', that of the martyrdom of Imam Hussain.[286] Ayatollah Motahhari defines martyrdom (*shahadat*):

> There is a concept in Islam enjoying a special sacredness. If someone is familiar with Islamic concepts [. . .] he can sense that a halo of light has engulfed this word, that of *shahid* [. . .] From Islam's point of view, whoever achieves that status of *shahadat* achieves one of the highest statuses and ranks that a human might reach in his ascending trajectory.[287]

Mehrdad Mashayekhi considers that this was not a political concept within Islam, but rather was adopted by socialist revolutionaries in the 1950s as part of the National Front movement. Since the concept of martyrdom does not exist within accepted revolutionary ideologies from Russia or the developing world, it was adapted into nationalist Iranian revolutionary discourse.[288] This is not to claim that martyrdom has not been manipulated into political contexts within the Islamic Republic, but perhaps its politicisation was not born in this manner.

In Shi'i Islam, the martyrdom of Imam Hussain, third imam and grandson of the Prophet Mohammed, is revered as sacrifice in the battle against evil and corruption.[289] Hussain's refusal to recognise the

leadership of the Damascus caliphate has led his memory to represent truth and spiritual leadership to the Shi'i. His martyrdom 'galvanised a moral resistance' and objection to tyranny.[290] Though not a violent theology *per se*, Shi'i history is fraught with struggle against oppressive or tyrannical rulers.[291] During the Iran–Iraq War, the government tried to use this history and its place in Iranian identity to motivate recruitment, casting Saddam Hussein as the oppressor and drawing comparisons with Yazdi, the murderer of Imam Hussain. The 'cult of the martyr' was encouraged by the Iranian leadership.[292] From 1980–6 this was the primary means of motivation – support was roused for the war against Iraq by the understanding that one was defending the Islamic Revolution, and the symbolism of the martyrdom of Imam Hussain was invoked.[293] Actors were even hired to dress as Hussain during the night and ride past the trenches, in the interests of buoying the spirits of troops with a 'vision'.[294] The horseman would bless the recruits and carry the message of their sacrifice.

The perceptions in the West of the human wave attacks of the Iran–Iraq War encouraged comparisons with the advent of suicide bombings and 'a dangerous tendency toward martyrdom'.[295] As a result, analysts erroneously 'collated a series of unrelated events into one emblematic myth'.[296] Ansari suggests that the human wave attacks related more closely to the trench warfare of World War I than to martyrdom and indicates that any such comparison would be similar to claiming that Japanese kamikaze pilots were responsible for 9/11.[297] Similarly, though the heroic self-sacrifice of Iranian troops was praised by their own people, it failed to meet Western visions of 'suicidal fanaticism'.[298] In Iran the veneration of returning soldiers and those killed in battle is little different to Western concepts of reverence for veterans. While there is no doubt that identifying with Hussain was encouraged, and that those killed in the war were revered as *shahid*, there is the potential for error in assembling facets of Shi'i martyrdom into a single myth.

In addition, while in theory Sunni Muslims frown on the concept that martyrdom is the ultimate test of one's faith, they have embraced the concept through suicide bombings.[299] In the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and many locations since, suicide attacks have been a popular means of disrupting political or military activity and, over a longer period, suicide bombing has been a common terrorist tactic in Palestine, also predominantly Sunni. Al-Qaeda has broadly adopted

suicide bombing, while Islamic State directly uses anti-Shiʿa sentiment as a recruitment tool for perpetrating such attacks. The idea that martyrdom is favoured only by the Shiʿa is a myth, reinforced by Western perceptions of the Muslim faith. Another common Western perception is that Shiʿism is more predominantly anti-American than is Sunnism.[300] Certainly in the 1980s, with the severing of relations between the US and Iran still fresh in Western memories and with the Shiʿi group Hezbollah engaging in anti-US activities in Lebanon, there was some truth to this idea. Khomeini was the perfect target for the fostering of these sentiments – his 'glowering visage' was the ideal face of Islamic activism generally.[301] Recent events have served to alter this view as Islamist extremism develops across Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

A senior Iranian academic has described Iranian religious intolerance as a myth. It is his belief that those in religious minorities who have migrated to the West have done so primarily for economic reasons, as they may have belonged to lower socio-economic classes and had more advantageous prospects outside of Iran.[302] In fact, Christianity is widely tolerated and, furthermore, Iran still has one of the largest Jewish communities in the Middle East outside Israel. However, and perhaps with the exception of the Baha'i, what religious intolerance does exist in Iran is closely related to its history and experience.

> The perceived history of persecution suffered by the Shiʿa did not always prompt a sensitivity to the vulnerability of other minorities once the Shiʿa became the dominant sect.[303]

Remembered wrongs have a powerful place in the imagination of a nation.

In summary, several key themes in the construction of Iranian political identity, and their adherent myths, have been identified. Amin Saikal characterises the Islamic Republic as embodying 'a public devotion to pursuing a religious-based independent course of national development and foreign policy, with an anti-US posture.'[304] A number of key terms can be noted in this statement, including 'religious-based', 'independent' and 'anti-US'. These concepts summarise the themes that have emerged in this chapter, with each playing a significant role in the development of political identity in Iran.

According to Garthwaite, the Islamic Revolution 'changed the ideology and symbols of the state but not its form'.[305] The national-civic-religious nature of the Pahlavi dynasty may have been replaced by an Islamic ideology, but Iranian political identity continues to assert itself. The nature of the regime means that 'identity has been made even more exclusive, especially through carefully monitored public morality and behaviour, controlled education and government subsidies.'[306] Nevertheless, the principles of Iranian identity, and the political institutions that have been developed over Iran's long history, have remained.

The political development of Iran cannot be analysed by using a 'modernisation' or 'Third World discourse' approach as is often applied to developing nations in the post-colonial era.[307] Its political culture has many unique elements, many of which aid in explaining what was for the West the perplexing emergence of the Islamic Republic, and which have been shown to benefit from a constructivist approach. The Islamic nature and the national character of Iran's political identity co-exist, and both are reinforced in the imagination of Iran's political consciousness. The events of Iran's history and experience have fed its political culture to a degree that Iran's political identity is too complex to belong to any one homogeneous origin. These events have shaped the manner in which Iran perceives itself, its role in the international community and the activities of other international actors, pre-empting the development of policy.

CHAPTER 3

AMERICAN POLITICAL IDENTITY

A number of elements that influence US foreign policy making are evident in the construction and development of American political identity. Of particular relevance are those aspects of American political identity that explain that country's role in the international community, and the manner in which it perceives Iran. These aspects will be analysed in the context of the three mechanisms for shaping interest and identity: imagination, communication and constraint. In doing so, the conceptual basis for the creation of myths of identity and how they give rise to misconception and foreign policy challenges will be constructed. The development of myths of identity, as they relate to American political identity, will be analysed.

In order to develop an understanding of the US's world view, it is important to delve into aspects of its history and experience. These will serve to elucidate that country's predisposition to view the world in a certain way, by shaping its imagined community or by placing constraints on its perspective. Issues of historical significance will be referred to in light of their relevance to the construction of US political identity.

Colonial Origins of US Political Identity

The colonisation of the North American continent had been undertaken in order that immigrants would enjoy liberty that had been denied them

in Europe. One of the most significant groups to embark on emigration to the colonies of the New World was the Puritans. Beginning with the arrival of the *Mayflower* at Plymouth, Massachusetts in 1620, and continuing over several generations, the New England region came to boast 100,000 inhabitants and America's largest city by the end of the seventeenth century.[1] However, the New England colonies were not the only ones to be settled in the seventeenth century.

The other principal colonies, such as those of Maryland and Virginia, were of a very different nature to those that developed in New England. The primary agricultural production of the Virginian Chesapeake Bay area was tobacco, a land-hungry crop, and settlement tended towards very large farms in relative isolation, rather than towns as was the case in Massachusetts. This limited the establishment of a societal structure capable of influencing the development of American political identity. Of course, it was this large-scale agriculture that gave birth to the mainland slave trade, which had a profound impact on American society. The *Mayflower* was travelling under the auspices of the Virginia Company, but the ship landed a long way north of its intended destination and, as a result, the New England colony was established in a different fashion to that of the Virginia region, with a tendency towards forming more urbanised communities.

For the purposes of understanding political identity, the Puritan colonies of New England, which were the most prosperous and flourishing in early American history, are of the most value.[2]

> The Puritans were not the first Europeans to settle in North America, but they were the first to undertake the logistical work and ideological justifications required for long-term colonization.[3]

R. B. Schlatter identifies five features of Puritan New England that have influenced the construction of American identity:[4]

1. Morality and religion: The 'religious tone' of a wide range of aspects of American life – the economic, the political and the artistic – has roots that can be traced to Puritan origins. Puritanism had fundamentalist elements, which can be related to modern sectarianism and revivalism in American religion, but Schlatter hastens to point out that while the Bible was an all-purpose guide for

the colonial settlers, it was read from an intellectual standpoint and carefully incorporated scientific development,[5] which leads to his next point.

2. Education and literature: the Puritans had a strong intellectual ethic and respect for education, which is most aptly symbolised by Harvard University, established only six years after the colony was carved from the wilderness. This feat is unparalleled in world history and pride in this achievement has become part of American heritage. This early interest in newly established academia also fostered a particular focus on the study of US history, in isolation from the rest of the world. It was not until the end of the nineteenth century that some acknowledgement of the relevance of the rest of the world began to filter into academic study.[6]

3. The Puritan business ethic: Some historians have drawn a link between Puritan business practices and capitalism, but probably more relevant to American identity is the focus on the 'moral dignity of work [and] a distrust of aristocratic leisure and dilettantism'.[7] This attitude was to become a key feature of revolutionary politics and political identity under leaders such as Thomas Jefferson.

4. Democracy and limited government: Although the settlers of New England were not, strictly speaking, democrats, the Puritan congregational idea of voluntary churches bound together by a covenant eventually overflowed into politics when removed from the English environment. In addition, a social contract known as the Mayflower Compact was drawn up in seventeenth century New England and became part of democratic tradition.

5. Frustrated utopianism: The Puritans had a strong sense of their mission to establish a moral, pure colony in the New World, guided by Providence. By separating from the Church of England and creating a new nation, under God's covenant, their zeal to establish the perfect society was fraught with potential downfalls.[8] The inherent idealism of the colony was soured by its failure, and 'one of the recurring themes in American culture is the bitterness of failure, the frustration of never achieving the ideal.'[9]

Each of these aspects of Puritan life is relevant to the creation and maintenance of the political identity of the US.

> The Puritans provided a powerful 'myth of America' in which colonisation was the fulfilment of scriptural prophecy and the subsequent American self was the product of divine intent.[10]

This concept, together with the five aspects of Puritan life outlined by Schlatter, forms the basis for the themes of political identity constructed in this chapter.

Revolution and Republicanism in Political Identity

One of the aims of many early settlers who travelled to the New World was securing freedom, generally from religious persecution. The importance of liberty became an increasingly significant force behind the revolutionary movement as the colonies sought independence from Britain, meaning the threat to liberty during this period brought the contemplation of it into daily life, and 'the love of liberty became a habit.'[11] Edmund Burke, in the British parliament in 1775, understood this ideal: 'This fierce spirit of liberty is stronger in the English colonies [of America] probably than in any other people on Earth.'[12] As the 13 colonies that had declared independence began to form their new government, colonial history began to be written through the prism of liberty, drawing out a strong trend of a 'destiny underwritten by Providence' that would become part of the national political discourse.[13] The mythology of the new republic built liberty into its political identity. The American Revolution was an unparalleled opportunity to apply the sociological concept of liberty as a state-founding ideology.[14]

As well as constituting a state-founding platform, invoking freedom as a mantra would permeate every era of American political history up to the present time. President George W. Bush's second inaugural address used the term 'freedom' or a synonym such as 'liberty' more than thirty times.[15] This strong rhetoric can be used to link policy to the whole gamut of values – personal, social, political and religious – on which the US ethos is based. History is sought as a sanction, as justification for policy, as it locates a politician in an imagined place, replete with norms that are socially understood.

Another sociological concept, prevalent in the revolutionary period, was that of virtue, reminiscent of Renaissance philosophy and neo-classicism. It is rather ironic that the discourse of the new Republic,

reveling in its independence from the Old World, should be based on the philosophy of Europe. However, it did give the 'American national myth [. . .] a curiously universalist overtone'.[16] Social behaviour was to be judged by self-interest, interpreted in the sense of self-like or self-worth, determining one's value in relation to how one appeared in one's own estimation and in that of one's fellow citizens. In this way, self-worth was constructed from custom and experience, and fostered the concept of the 'civic man'.[17] The civic man was rational, virtuous, frugal and would act responsibly to 'elect wise leaders to public office' for the 'public good'.[18] Civic nationalism committed the individual to association with the nation's 'political creed', strengthening identity.[19] This connection to political identity would be a part of each citizen's civic responsibility, in the interests of maintaining the liberty secured for each by the revolution. Obligation would accompany freedom for the civic man.[20] Even the city of Washington was constructed with this concept in mind, with the grandeur intended to inspire nationalism, as well as civic virtue and consciousness, through pride of possession.[21] The greater America's independence from Britain and Europe, and the more closely individuals identified with the American nation, 'the greater their sense that their virtue was their own'.[22]

The virtuous way of life could most effectively be executed by pursuit of an agrarian lifestyle. Thomas Jefferson, founding father of the new nation and later its third president (1801–9), was the champion of this concept: he was in many ways a classical republican who saw value and virtue in developing the riches of the land and in 'salt-of-the-earth struggle'.[23] Jefferson approached republicanism as akin to a 'civil religion'.[24] He believed America could learn from the experiences of ancient Greece and Rome, in much the same fashion as the Renaissance theorists.[25] He was also fearful of the fragility of republics throughout history and was acutely aware of the pitfalls that America must avoid, most of which related to the evils of Europe.

In Jefferson's view, goods should be freely exchanged at market and the role of the government should be to protect the individual's rights to pursue this lifestyle.[26] Industry should be avoided at all costs; corruption was the inevitable result of industrialisation and of the creation of 'great mobs of cities' such as those in industrial Britain and Europe.[27] Industry 'begets subservience and venality, suffocates the germ of virtue, and prepares fit tools for the designs of ambition'.[28] On the other hand,

agricultural endeavour was a virtuous activity: 'corruption of morals in the mass of cultivators is a phenomenon of which no age nor nation has furnished an example.'[29] Regardless of the truth of this claim, the traditional bucolic image of revolutionary America was to be protected against corruption at any cost. American republicanism was an experiment in blending ancient republicanism – the independent, armed citizenry prepared to defend the virtue of the republic not just against external enemies but also against the power of the executive, tendency to chose luxury over hard work, and private interest – and liberalism.[30] The concept of the protection of virtue, freedom, liberty and morality was thereby becoming a part of the imagined community of America, in a political sense, as early as revolutionary times. The American people were beginning to play a role in political discourse and framing the polarisation of political views.

This is another example of Renaissance thinking entering the development of the new American political identity. The American revolutionary movement had characterised Europe as a dark place of corruption, war and dynastic quarrels, from which America must be determinedly separate.[31] J. G. A. Pocock identifies the 'element of existential fear about the dread of corruption so prominent in eighteenth century social values', which accompanied the drive of freedom in severing ties with imperial Britain and Europe.[32] Pocock links this fear of corruption to the Classical age and the Florentine republicanism of the Renaissance period. He considers that the American system took the fear of tyranny and of corruption of power to a practical level, beyond that of an intellectual concept, which was inherent in the development of the constitution and the Bill of Rights.[33] The moral obligation to ensure that the political system did not become corrupted by the conduct of elected officials became an individual and a collective responsibility.[34] This obligation was reinforced in popular culture, in art, literature and history, to a point where it became a constraint on the accepted norms of public office and thereby an element of political identity.

The early political culture of the US was defined by partisan identity creation. It was a crucial facet in the communication of political identity, creating an atmosphere of socially accepted norms in the political sphere. Early nineteenth century disputes between Thomas Jefferson's Republicans and Alexander Hamilton's Federalists, who clashed over the economic future of the newly created republic, were the birthplace of

partisan politics.[35] Parties were strongly competitive and well funded, with the press being openly partisan and directly financed. Immigrant groups were drafted into political participation through 'ward boss' connections and guarantees of employment and protection. 'Political affiliation [. . .] was part of personal identity. Rarely did one change parties.'[36] In the nineteenth century, partisanism was in many ways a form of both social group development and entertainment, and participation in politics was closely linked to one's sense of identity. During this period it was common for more than 80 per cent of eligible voters to go to the polls. Reformation of the electoral system during the twentieth century broadened suffrage but, in doing so, made political participation less available to immigrant communities, lessening voter turnout and quietening the partisan voice to a large degree. Nevertheless, the sides of the political spectrum born in the early days of the republic play a vital part in defining the American political identity.

The early period of independence had reinforced many of the principles of the Puritan colonial era. The revolution was a glorious affirmation of those fundamental aspects of American society, for which its people had now fought against the tyranny of colonial England. Remembrance of those early struggles and developments was actively encouraged. The study of revolutionary American history quickly became a major field of scholarly interest, and a consciousness of the past was perceived to be a sign of 'cultural maturity'.[37] The reverence in which the revolutionary process was held served to reinforce the 'mythical promise', which would eventually raise questions as to the practical aspect of how this promise would be realised.[38] In any case, the 'mythical promise' created by the forging of the American republic was a central feature of the imagined community, one within which political actors could operate. Political discourse could be framed in a dialogue that appealed to the way in which Americans viewed their role in the new nation.

Iconic Figures

American history, like that of many states, is interspersed with iconic figures. In the case of the US, the 'founding fathers', who forged the movement towards independence from Britain and formulated the

constitution and the Union of the United States of America, hold a particular value in the collective memory. Names such as Washington, Jefferson, Adams and Franklin continue to be invoked, not just in American historical scholarship but in popular culture generally. A certain idealisation of America's early history, and the personalities who embody that era, means that 'qualities taken to be of perennial value to America's well-being as a society' enter political discourse.[39] The founding fathers have an almost mythical role in American politics.[40]

George Washington, in particular, retains a certain reverence as an iconic figure in modern American political identity and a patriotic symbol to emulate or admire.[41] The first president of the newly independent republic (1789–97) holds a prominent place in American mythology.

> Washington is seen in the American myth as the fearless warrior liberating the nation from tyrannical rule, and establishing democratic institutions for the people. Washington's legacy is also one of isolationism – America for Americans.[42]

His prowess in battle over eight years of warfare, followed by his reluctance to assume the presidency, has made him symbolic of the values of America. The term 'father of the nation' is often applied to Washington.[43] Collective memory of his contribution to the independence of the nation and its political naissance earns Washington iconic status in the construction of political culture.

In shaping the country's ongoing political identity, the most iconic figures in American history are undoubtedly those presidents whose administrations had lasting impacts on America's understanding of itself. Presidents such as James Monroe, Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, Franklin Roosevelt, Harry Truman, Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush have all succeeded in invoking American ideals in a manner that has contributed to the political identity of the nation.[44] The enduring impact of iconic – or even notorious – figures such as these transcends the partisan divide and the implementation of policies that might be more ephemeral. The power of the executive, and the focus on one personality managing the destiny of the country, serves to accord these political figures iconic standing in the American psyche.[45]

The Mythology of Abraham Lincoln

Henry Tudor notes that when individual figures appear in political mythology, 'they figure [. . .] as the representatives of their group or as the bearers of its destiny.'[46] A number of those iconic presidents mentioned above appear in political mythology as representatives of a particular time or group in history, which has been immortalised within the American political identity. One particular key figure, who has earned the mantle of a 'bearer of destiny' in the American psyche, is Abraham Lincoln. The sixteenth president of the US, Lincoln steered the country through one of its darkest eras, that of the Civil War (1861–5). This momentous conflict, in which the eleven states of the South attempted to cede from the Union and forge their own republic, resulted in more than 1 million casualties, the universal emancipation of slaves and the forging of a more united Union, one that had survived the 'gravest kind of internal crisis'.[47] His presidency was abruptly terminated when he was assassinated by John Wilkes Booth in April 1865.

Whether due to the significance of the events of his presidency, the fact that he was martyred or his personal charisma, the life of Lincoln has been immortalised in American history. As a historical figure, he is 'beyond reproach' and a model for behaviour.[48] In fact, in the 1920s, Lincoln's life was drawn as a parallel to Christ's 'so often as to approach cliché'.[49]

> Lincoln is seen as the protector of the integrity of the nation state. Having liberated the nation from incorrect thinking about oppression of other human beings, he has become the arch protector of freedom. He was also willing and able to wage war in defense of these ideals.[50]

Lincoln is hailed as the emancipator of the slaves, and indeed his role in enacting this task, which is central to American history, cannot be ignored. Nevertheless, his intentions for the process are often eulogised. While fighting a war in which the status of America's 4.2 million slaves was a core issue, 'he was unconvinced that America had any prospect as a truly biracial society' and intended that the slaves be resettled in the Caribbean and Central America.[51] Certainly, Lincoln never styled

himself as the 'great Emancipator', a title bestowed on him by history. He was more interested in the states managing their own emancipation decrees than making it a federal issue, despite urging from both sides of government in Washington. Only once the Civil War was headed towards the South's unconditional surrender did emancipation become a driving force in the war.[52]

According to Barry Schwartz, the vision of Lincoln as a civil rights campaigner makes his legacy 'morally intelligible', and 'his example remains recognisable because beliefs about him have outlived changes in society.'[53] Selected events of Lincoln's life are forged into ideals with which Americans can connect and identify. His humble origins can be associated with Jeffersonian ideals of the civic man, while his rise to prominence from this beginning has given rise to the idea of the self-made man, which is now often embodied by Lincoln and the 'myth of success'.[54] Another term often applied to this phenomenon is the 'log cabin myth'.[55] Regardless of the realities of his wealth or poverty, his association with the vagaries of life on the frontier lends weight to the idea of the self-made man. He was an example to Americans that the common man can become a great man.[56] This lent credence to the concept that America's government was run by working people who attained their position through virtue and effort, rather than those placed there merely by the accident of their birth.[57] It even distanced Lincoln from the American preoccupation with education, referred to in discussions of Puritan values. Woodrow Wilson made the following statement regarding Lincoln's lack of formal education, despite Wilson's being president of Princeton University at the time:

> I have been struck sometimes with the thought: would Lincoln have been a better instrument for the country's good if he had been put through the processes of one of our modern colleges? I believe in my heart he'd have been less instrumental for good [. . .] The great voice of America does not come from seats of learning. It comes in a murmur from the hills and woods and the farms and factories and the mills, rolling on and gaining volume until it comes to us from the homes of common men.[58]

Perhaps Wilson appeals here to the memory of Jefferson and the value of civic virtue rather than Puritan values. In either case, eulogising

Lincoln's inauspicious upbringing also served to further America's distance from the perceived corruption and aristocratic traditions of Europe and Britain. These elements of Lincoln's history appeal to imagined norms of American political identity, allowing the myth of his figure to continue to resonate within American discourse.

Lincoln's assassination and the manner in which he has been immortalised are also central to his mythology. 'Commemoration transforms historical facts [...] into objects of attachment by defining their meaning and explaining how people should feel about them.'[59] Events are accorded meaning and weight that can be related to people's experience in the present, and that may provide motivation and context for political actors. Context is crucial in projecting a political message, and communication in this regard is aided by reflection on the mythology of Lincoln.

Schwartz's comments pertaining to commemoration are particularly interesting in the case of Lincoln. Certainly, Lincoln's assassination glorified his political career through the guise of martyrdom, and his funeral procession, which travelled the country, aided in forging the collective memory. The belief that he was assassinated as part of a Confederacy plot to undermine the Union cause in the Civil War made the propaganda associated with his death all the more poignant for Americans. Mourning his death was a national responsibility, a moral obligation.[60] This sustained commemoration events well beyond the immediate period following his death in 1865. By 1921 a national poll indicated that 49 per cent of those questioned considered him the 'greatest American', overtaking George Washington, on 32 per cent. His monument, which stands on a rise at the foot of the National Mall in Washington, so dominates the environment in its Grecian temple grandeur that it almost serves to diminish other key monumental buildings, such as the Congress and White House. Its steps are often regaled with military choirs performing iconic national songs, and hordes of tourists gaze up to the 19-foot-high marble statue and the words: 'in this temple as in the hearts of the people for whom he saved the union the memory of Abraham Lincoln is enshrined forever.'[61]

The relevance of the Lincoln myth lies in the way his memory is evoked in American political identity. He is revered as a protector of the state, who freed the newly United States from the ideology of

oppression.[62] This tenet has been applied as a policy formulation measure, both domestically and on the international stage, from Wilson's decision to enter World War I in 1917, through John F. Kennedy's Civil Rights Act, to Bush's invasion of Iraq in 2003. From a constructivist stance, Lincoln's memory provides both an imagined norm in which actors can operate and an understood discourse through which to communicate that action. Forging a relationship with this history and experience legitimises political action.

Exceptionalism and the American Mission

In his 2004 State of the Union address George W. Bush declared: 'America is a nation with a mission and that mission comes from our most basic beliefs.'[63] This was by no means a new sentiment: it has been a feature of presidential speeches, and thereby the political discourse of the nation, for more than 200 years.[64] US presidents 'since George Washington' have expressed a belief in the uniqueness of America on the grounds of its 'civil-religious beliefs and core values of liberty, equality and self-government'.[65] As a result, the missionary quality of America's political identity is 'a historically embedded article of national faith'.[66] This belief was in part a result of the separation from European-style political discourse during revolutionary times, which ensured that America developed a unique mythological understanding that has almost become an 'article of faith'.[67] Faith is both a constraint on action, on what can be perceived as acceptable on the part of political actors, and a means by which to rationalise actions.

In 1839 John O'Sullivan wrote *Manifest Destiny*, a statement of the unique position from which America was embarking on a bold new experiment, separate from the history and trials of mankind that had gone before.

> Our national birth was the beginning of a new history, the formation and progress of an untried political system, which separates us from the past and connects us with the future only; and so far as regards the entire development of the natural rights of man, in moral, political, and national life, we may confidently assume that our country is destined to be the great nation of futurity.[68]

It is clear that even in the early part of the nineteenth century, 'Americans were thinking in terms of a distinctive national character, the uniqueness of their own experience, and the ways in which the American soul differed from that of other people.'[69] American national consciousness coalesced around the myth of American exceptionalism.[70] Similarly, 'Americans attempted to explain the uniqueness of their national character, in terms of liberty, democracy and individualism – values rooted in the American experience.'[71] To be American is almost a spiritual understanding, to be un-American a 'national sin'.[72] This is particularly remarkable when considered in the light of the levels of mass immigration occurring in the nineteenth century. People were arriving from diverse cultural, religious and ethnic backgrounds, and yet, a strong sense of national identity was being constructed and rapidly translated into political culture.

Israel Zangwill's 1908 play *The Melting Pot* suggested that America was 'God's crucible' for reforming the peoples of Europe, to instil democracy and American cultural values and cast off their ethnic heritage.[73] Early implementation of compulsory primary school education could well have played a significant role in this process: the teaching of American history and values, complete with a daily salute to the American flag, led immigrant students away from traditional identity. In addition, it should be remembered that 'practically everybody who has gone to the US has left Europe either because he considered it a bad place, or because he thought America a much better place.'[74] Being disenfranchised from or disenchanted with one's country of origin would have expedited the assimilation process and the adoption of American identity.

In the nineteenth century the American sense of moral superiority was very much confined to its domestic affairs and had little bearing on foreign policy. John Quincy Adams, then a congressman for Massachusetts and later the sixth US president, declared to the House of Representatives on Independence Day in 1821 that America supports the fight for liberty and independence around the world, 'but she does not venture abroad, in search of monsters to destroy. She is the well-wisher to the freedom and independence of all. She is the champion and vindicator only of her own.'[75] Lack of experience in international warfare and the refusal to export national ideology were a source of pride in the nineteenth century:

America is destined for better deeds. It is our unparalleled glory that we have no reminiscences of battle fields, but in defence of humanity, of the oppressed of all nations, of the rights of conscience, the rights of personal enfranchisement. Our annals describe no scenes of horrid carnage, where men were led on by hundreds of thousands to slay one another, dupes and victims to emperors, kings, nobles, demons in the human form called heroes. We have had patriots to defend our homes, our liberties, but no aspirants to crowns or thrones; nor have the American people ever suffered themselves to be led on by wicked ambition to depopulate the land, to spread desolation far and wide, that a human being might be placed on a seat of supremacy.[76]

The special moral claim to this non-interventionist policy was gradually eroded as America moved towards the wielding of force in foreign policy.

It must be noted that when John Q. Adams and John O'Sullivan were making these statements, the European powers were still very much at the centre of world domination, both militarily and economically. This state of affairs existed well into the twentieth century. Philip Kerr summarises the position of the US in the international community in 1923:

Owing to the circumstances of its position, its immense size, its withdrawal from Europe, and its geographical isolation, America has much less interest in the outside world, and does not feel the same sense of responsibility for it as we do.[77]

He suggested that though the US 'swam into the international world for the first time in 1917' it essentially maintained its position of exclusion from the global community.[78] From an external perspective, America had no particular tenure in international affairs in comparison to an imperial power such as Britain. However, despite the fact that the US had not yet ventured abroad to impose its ideals, the sense of a moral mandate remained into the twentieth century. It began to be used as justification for foreign policy, as the US assumed the mantle of world power from the Europeans.

The belief in the universality of American values has had a significant impact on the more recent move to export throughout the world the principles central to American political identity.

> An American [...] was an American not by virtue of membership
> in an exclusive class or group but because he or she represented the
> potentiality of common humanity to attain the individualistic
> ideal. The moral meaning of America necessarily extended beyond
> the confines of the American states.[79]

For Americans, evocation of the value system that has sustained the
nation since independence is in itself a key to *being* American, as a
catalyst for a sense of community or belonging.[80] The association of
American behaviour with a belief in what is right, ordinary and
acceptable is a key facet of the imagination within which US political
identity is founded. It is what William Beeman refers to as the myth of
'normalcy'. The expectation that actors in the international community
conform to what is right or ordinary can be juxtaposed against those
thought to be 'irrational, crazy or criminal' as a means to define friends
and enemies.[81] Within this construct lies the intrinsic belief that these
values should be considered universal.

> The American identity, though particular to Americans, was also
> universal in its revelation of a virtuous human nature liberated
> from the constraints of custom, superstition, social artifice, and
> tyranny. It was an understanding that would sometimes make it
> difficult for Americans to distinguish their own interests and
> opinions from the differing ones of other peoples.[82]

It might also be difficult for Americans to appreciate that other nations
may have a similar sense of their national mission as a result of their own
history and experience.

The concept of America's mission can also blur the lines between the
'idea' of America, a construct of its experience and identity, and the
reality of how that nation applies its value system, even within its own
borders. John Kane describes this as a 'permanent tension'.[83] Novelist
Francis Trollope offers a particularly eloquent expression of how these
tensions manifested themselves in the nineteenth century.

> It is impossible for any mind of common honesty not to be
> revolted by the contradictions in [Americans'] principles and
> practice. You will see them with one hand hoisting the cap of

liberty and with the other flogging the slaves. You will see them one hour lecturing on the indefeasible rights of man, and the next driving from their homes the children of the soil, who they have bound themselves to protect by the most solemn promises.[84]

In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries this tension has moved from a domestic sphere to the international community. Reconciling it in a new context has become a key element of political identity; it has created a new imagined norm.

This aspect of American political identity has had an interesting manifestation in the US's dealings with Iran in the twentieth century. The prospect of constitutional democracy as exemplified by the prime ministership of Mohammed Mossadeq, outlined in Chapter 2, could well have been an opportunity for the US to foster its political values in the Middle East.[85] Given America's apparent penchant for seeing 'a budding George Washington in every dissident or revolutionary movement',[86] the intervention in Mossadeq's administration demonstrates a key feature of post-World War II foreign policy for the US. American ideals of freedom and democracy were overridden by fear of communism. British and American intelligence felt that Mossadeq's government was 'incapable of resisting a coup by the Tudeh Party if it were backed by Soviet support'.[87] Even later, during Jimmy Carter's presidency, which had swept into the White House on the back of strong morality and human rights policies, the moral compass of the Shah's regime was of 'secondary importance' to the value of Iran as an ally bordering the Soviet bloc.[88] Cold War policy meant that any *status quo*, no matter how unjust or poorly supported popularly, would be preferable to communist leanings.[89]

The Cold War political context, which 'embodied the struggle between [. . .] two superpowers [. . .] each of which defined its identity in terms of its ideology',[90] determined that for the US and USSR it was crucial to form alliances with key nations that would embrace their ideologies. As World War II ended and the Soviet Union consolidated its influence in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, the Middle East became fundamental to much of the US's foreign policy formulation throughout the period under discussion.[91] Iran was a rapidly modernising, oil-rich nation that the US could count among its anti-communist allies in a crucial strategic location, hegemony over which would deny the Soviets

access to the Persian Gulf and restrict the falling of multiple states to communism, or what was known as 'domino theory'.[92] Also of critical importance were the two US 'listening posts' in northern Iran, central to American intelligence-gathering in the Cold War.[93] The 'loss' of Iran would be a disaster, which could benefit only the Soviet Union in the race for prestige and influence.[94]

The Shah was well aware of the American obsession with communism, perhaps seeing it as a chink in their armour. Even prior to the 1953 coup and restoration, the Shah used the communist threat to manipulate American policy making. He used US fear of Mossadeq's potential communist leanings as a means to secure financial assistance for military development.[95] Furthermore, on meeting the US ambassador to Iran, William Sullivan, for the first time, he casually discussed the Soviet 'encirclement' of the Persian Gulf and the need for 'the closest friendly attention from the United States' in protecting the region from this threat.[96] Any time the US appeared hesitant in supplying desired arms or financial investment, a subtle invocation of the communist threat would suffice to advance the Iranian cause.

Support for Iran progressed in the 1970s, with economic and military assistance under the American 'twin-pillar' policy, which viewed Iran and Saudi Arabia as strategic allies responsible for policing the Gulf region. By 1977, 70,000 Americans were living in Iran and 25,000 of those were working there, most of them connected in some way to the build-up of the Shah's military forces or with the production and export of oil from the region.[97] Although US political rhetoric may have contained overtones of nation-building and assistance with economic reform, 'oil and national security interest had begun to supersede any idealistic reasons for America's involvement in Iran.'[98]

> American policy-makers for a quarter of a century [. . .] believed that rising living standards would bring content, that Iran's armed forces using sophisticated weapons would bring stability, and that the Shah knew what was best.[99]

The imperatives of international relations had come to rate Iran's stability as central to the national interests of the US.

The US claimed to have 'no official [. . .] complicity in the political-police aspects' of the Shah's secret police force SAVAK.[100] However, it

was common knowledge in Iran that the CIA was unofficially engaged in training and intelligence-sharing with SAVAK.[101] The close relationship of the CIA with the Shah's intelligence system hindered the US's ability to gain crucial information regarding the state of Iran's political system. A post-1979 review of American intelligence efforts highlighted this problem:

> On the one hand, the CIA had historically considered itself the Shah's booster. On the other hand, it was supposed to provide sound intelligence analysis of the Iranian political situation.[102]

'These dual responsibilities were in many respects mutually exclusive,' and would have a significant impact on US understanding of affairs in Iran leading up to the Islamic Revolution.[103]

The close connection between the US and the Shah was considered crucial to maintaining strategic alliances in the region, but American involvement in Iran's domestic affairs would come to be viewed as an unwelcome intervention by some of the Shah's opponents. 'Anyone with a map' could appreciate why the US was acutely aware of the strategic importance of Iran in the post-World War II era as a bastion of pro-Western sentiment in the oil-rich Persian Gulf.[104] By the time the Carter administration came to power in 1976, it had three options with regard to policy toward Iran. Firstly, the US could continue unequivocal support for the Shah, which had been the foreign policy direction of the early 1970s. Secondly, the US could seek to disassociate itself from the Shah's regime and establish connections with opposition movements, such as the moderate nationalists or Ayatollah Khomeini's radical Muslim supporters. Thirdly, it could seek reform and constitutional government under a modified continuation of the monarchy.[105] Carter selected the first option, only on occasion suggesting to the Shah that he might consider some reforms to keep social and political progress in line with the rapid modernisation of the nation. The second option, the prospect of seeking communication with the forces of opposition, was not considered until the point of complete disintegration of the Shah's regime in November 1978.

America's tendency to view a country without particular knowledge of the intricacies of its culture and history leads to what Karl Meyer

describes as an 'asymmetry of knowledge'.[106] Meyer is particularly vehement in his assessment of the negative impact of US policy during this era:

> The underlying blame rests on the tendency of successive administrations, Democratic and Republican, to treat an ancient and resentful country as if it were a satrapy, employing the methods of indirect rule long practised in the Caribbean and Central America. [. . .] In Iranian eyes, for over a generation, America exercised power without responsibility, in the process dissipating a heritage of goodwill by seeming to prove that Washington was little different from London or Moscow.[107]

Pursuing policies such as those mentioned above, without consciousness of the flow-on effects, is evidence of American exceptionalism – the conviction that US policies were being employed for the greater good and that American principles transcended the histories of perceived backward nations like Iran. Belief in moral superiority is necessary to advance exceptionalist policy making, and it has been a feature of American political identity.

Twentieth-Century Foreign Policy Developments

As the developing accepted norms within American political identity became more defined, America took its first significant steps into the international community. The principles of twentieth-century US foreign policy are, to a large degree, a reflection of those values that underpin the nation's sense of identity. This was an opportunity to project onto a global stage for the first time those principles that had been key factors in the American concept of nationhood since independence from Britain.

> The United States came relatively late to the great power arena, after the colonial and imperial eras had run their course. This meant that the pursuit of America's strategic interests was not primarily based on territorial control but on championing *more principled* ways of organizing great power relations.[108]

Forging a new era of international relations gave the US an occasion to exercise its mission from what it perceived to be a uniquely principled stance.

Technological advances in the early twentieth century had the effect of making the world smaller – for example, the improvements in transportation made the Atlantic Ocean less of a strategic barrier – and foreign policy became increasingly significant as a result.[109] Global interests gradually evolved from an imperial perspective on colonial empires towards a focus on trade and the emerging international market economy. This was ideal for the American entrance into the world arena. Overseas investment and expansion of American companies abroad led to increased interest in the economic and political stability of countries in which they had invested.[110] The twentieth century was one of great international upheaval, but despite changing circumstances, the inputs informing US foreign policy continued to reflect fundamental elements of America's political identity. A study of twentieth century developments provides a window into the expanding accepted norms of US foreign policy, and into the manner in which international relations became an integral part of political identity.

Theodore Roosevelt assumed the presidency in 1901, from the position of vice president, following the assassination of William McKinley. An aggressive sense of nationalism pervaded the US in the wake of economic and social instability in the late nineteenth century.[111] Americans now enjoyed unprecedented economic success and held a strong belief in their anticipated international superiority.[112] Sean Cashman claims that at this point in history, America already 'had the incipient capacity for global domination'.[113] Theodore Roosevelt embraced the US's responsibilities in the international community, explaining to Congress in 1902 that it was 'incumbent on all civilised and orderly powers to insist on the proper policing of the world'.[114] For example, in the Caribbean the US, in the era of Theodore Roosevelt's presidency, considered itself responsible for leading 'the charge against nations and peoples holding back civilised society' and objected to any involvement on the part of the European powers.[115] McKinley had enjoyed a degree of success in this theatre of US foreign policy before, during the war with Spain in which America ensured Cuba's independence and in so doing annexed Puerto Rico and Guam.[116] Now, under Roosevelt, as well as policing and fostering the 'civilisation'

of Latin America, intervention was also effected in the economic interests of the US, particularly with regard to the Colombian obstructions to the building of the Panama Canal, which led to tacit US support for the rebels in the Panamanian revolution. This event is significant in the context of American political identity because it was the first example of the US exporting its political will and its mission to champion the principles that had underpinned the American Revolution in the eighteenth century.

Theodore Roosevelt was conscious of the potential significance of China in the global economic balance and continued his predecessor William McKinley's 'Open Door' policy, in the interests of keeping a close eye on East Asia.[117] His involvement in mediating the Russo–Japanese War (1904–5) is representative of his concern that Japan would crush Russia completely and, in doing so, assume hegemonic power over an unstable China.[118] Indeed, with Europe preoccupied with World War I, Japan did assert its rights in China, with the notorious 'Twenty-one Demands' in 1915, partially realising Roosevelt's somewhat prophetic belief in Japan's potential, which was that 'all of us will have to reckon with a great new force in eastern Asia.'[119] Owing in part to America's desire to stay one step ahead of the European powers by becoming involved in East Asia, developments between Japan and the US over China would continue to fuel friction, culminating in the attack on the American naval base at Pearl Harbor in 1941. Nevertheless, Roosevelt heralded his 1905 intervention in East Asia as an extension of the 'fundamental fight for morality' in American life.[120] The examples of East Asia and Latin America were crucial to the development of US foreign policy in the early stages of the twentieth century. The two concurrent issues of moralistic policing in the name of democracy and pursuing foreign intervention in the economic interests of the nation acted to presuppose the way in which the US viewed the world.

The presidency of Woodrow Wilson was in some respects a continuation of the policies of Roosevelt, despite the intervening Taft administration. Wilson, too, emerged from the school of progressive politics and was also conscious of America's role in civilising the world. He greatly enhanced America's military and economic might, albeit with accompanying rhetoric that assured the international community these developments were in the interests of 'America's service to humanity'.[121] His presidency was an era of idealism in American

politics; while many of his policies regarding international institutions would not come to fruition until after World War II, he had already cemented his longevity as an iconic American political figure.

Wilson was 'more committed than any previous American statesman to intervention abroad in pursuit of moral principle'.[122] In a speech in 1913, he stated:

> We must show ourselves friends by comprehending their interest whether it squares with our own interest or not. It is a perilous thing to determine the foreign policy of a nation in terms of material interest. It is not only unfair to those with whom you are dealing, but it is degrading as regards your own actions [. . .] We dare not turn from the principle that morality and not expediency is the thing that must guide us and that we will never condone iniquity because it is most convenient to do so.[123]

Wilson perceived the European powers as backward and barbaric, a sentiment apparently justified by their descent into brutal warfare in 1914.[124] In the wake of World War I, Wilson worked to establish the League of Nations, which was designed to temper the effects of the peace terms and direct Europe away from the expansionist impulses that lead to war.[125] Despite these moves to lead the world into peace, Wilson refused to consider membership of the league for the US, emphasising that this move would accord the US 'leadership in the world', which would not be conducive to the process of peace in Europe.[126] Following the peace negotiations, the US stepped away from the European world once again, returning the focus to its own region, to continue the process of 'protecting' the interests of Latin America from foreign domination.[127] Despite the extreme tests of the isolationist doctrine, which had eventually dragged America into the European conflict,[128] in post-World War I global politics the US continued to demonstrate a desire to separate itself from Britain and Europe, a policy conceived at the time of America's independence.

World War II reinforced the understanding that the US had held regarding its role in the international community since World War I – with the late entrance of US forces to the conflict, it could once again be claimed that the country had 'saved' the allies and bestowed a particular legacy of victory in the European and Pacific theatres of war. With the

exception of a brief period of optimism that the economic and political health of Europe and much of the world would be restored with the peace of 1945, it soon became clear that the decades following World War II would be a testing period for US foreign policy, dominated by the Cold War with the Soviet Union and its attendant conflicts with other communist nations.[129] Communism was perceived to be a particularly distasteful concept; Dean Acheson described such an ideology as essentially 'un-American'.[130] This was a popular opinion and the US Congress established a House Committee for the Investigation of Un-American Activities.[131] Faced with the spectre of communism, the US relinquished its former isolationist policies in the wake of World War II. In 1947, President Truman delivered a historic speech outlining the new global perspective of foreign policy, stating: 'I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures.'[132] The so-called 'Truman Doctrine', or the 'containment policy' was heralded as a new step for American foreign policy, but was at the same time curiously reminiscent of the policies of Theodore Roosevelt almost 50 years earlier. [133] The idea first outlined in *Manifest Destiny*, of being an icon of freedom to oppressed peoples around the world, had reasserted itself. But the expectation of John Q. Adams, that America would not venture beyond her own shores to accomplish this task, was being superseded.

In the post-World War II era, heightening tensions in the Middle East gave rise to new concerns about national security and the preservation of US interests. Soviet influence in the region and the developing Arab–Israeli conflict brought President Dwight D. Eisenhower to instigate 'emergency stopgap' policy measures to restore stability.[134] The Suez Crisis had already caused Britain to reconsider and diminish its involvement in the region, lessening Western influence. Eisenhower equated the Egyptian situation with the Soviet utilisation of armed forces to exert influence on neighbouring countries. Perceiving this as a threat to American interests in the region, the US sought to contain the Soviet Union by creating 'unassailable barriers' of friendly nations to halt the spread of the USSR's influence.[135] In 1957, Eisenhower called for a 'vigorous' campaign to exert 'moral pressure' on the Soviet Union as a result of its unwillingness to comply with UN resolutions.[136] Interestingly, however, he refused to place

similar blame on Israel for invading Egypt, claiming that the people of Israel were, like those of the US, 'imbued with a religious faith and a sense of moral values', and could therefore not be placed in the same boat as the 'evil of Soviet conduct'[137] despite the similarity of the military action. This reflects the belief, intrinsic to US foreign policy, of the righteousness of those acting from 'moral' intent, as opposed to the un-American 'evil' of communist Russia.[138] The US was able to operate its foreign policy, garnering authority from within the accepted norms of American political identity and the values inherent within it.

Enmeshed as it was in the Cold War and a general fear of communism, the US was relatively unprepared for the development of a new perceived threat to American political values, that of Islam. The US's first encounter with radical Islam was the Iranian revolution in 1978–9. Gabriel Kolko considers the Iranian situation to have marked a fundamental failure in US policy, in neglecting to recognise what was a logical step in Middle Eastern politics: the enmeshing of religion and nationalism.[139] The problems in the region were compounded by the US embassy hostage crisis of November 1979, denounced by President Carter as an act of 'international terrorism',[140] and were further complicated by the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan a month later. Without the pro-American regime of the Shah in Iran, and with a new communist threat brewing in neighbouring Afghanistan, crucial American interests, most notably oil, in the Persian Gulf were suddenly in serious jeopardy.[141] In 1980, Carter stated – apparently without irony – that:

> An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force.[142]

The Carter Doctrine demonstrated the growing significance of the Middle East to US foreign policy direction, and would become increasingly significant a decade later when the collapse of the Soviet Union allowed the US to assume a more hegemonic role in the region. Indeed, President George H.W. Bush implemented Carter's declaration through the US's threat of military action in the Kuwait crisis and that threat's realisation in the ensuing Gulf War of 1991. This reflected a new

willingness on the part of the US to activate its perceived right to protect not just itself but its economic interests abroad.

The Carter administration was brought down by the landslide victory of Ronald Reagan in 1980. President Reagan considered that Carter had been too lenient on a number of issues, not only the handling of the Tehran embassy hostage crisis, but also notably Central America, which Reagan described as a 'Red lake'.[143] He returned to a much more traditional approach to Cold War politics, on the popular wave of the professed simpler domestic and foreign policy that took him to power.[144] He also revived anti-European sentiment by admonishing Western European nations for continuing trade with the USSR after the sanctions imposed by the Carter administration.[145] The Reagan administration in some respects returned the US to the traditional policies of the early Cold War era.

Political Identity in the Post-9/11 Era

The end of the Cold War was a key moment for American political identity. The ideological battle that had encompassed a great deal of US foreign policy was over, leaving the US in what is often termed the 'unipolar moment', in which the country found itself to be the sole global superpower. This required a 'great geopolitical adjustment process' as international relationships realigned themselves.[146] It also required a reassessment of international relations theory, as questions were raised as to whether unipolarity was consistent with rule-based international order or the balance of power.[147] The undermining of traditional theory and the challenges involved with defining international relations, along cultural rather than ideological lines, gave birth to normative theory and the consideration of cultural and social context in the discipline. It also changed the manner in which threats were assessed, particularly that of terrorism.[148]

Immanuel Kant posited the theory that democracies are unlikely to go to war with each other.[149] This philosophy played a key role in US foreign policy in the post-World War II era, but it nevertheless failed to take into account the fact that liberal democracies have a history of waging war on those that are not.[150] Similarly, it is interesting to note that democracy and human rights concerns were largely overlooked in certain prominent areas of US security interests, though they remained a

declared 'foundation' of American policy.[151] Geopolitical concerns would often outweigh the importance of US policy on such issues. During the Cold War, these included supporting authoritarian regimes in the interest of curbing communism; pre-revolutionary Iran is a prime example of this.[152] Despite President Carter's strong stance on human rights in other regions of the world, he was happy to support the Shah of Iran in order to protect America's strategic policy.

In the post-Cold War era, the promotion of free trade and economic liberalism has also been a determining factor. Although democratic regimes are more likely to build larger markets due to the wider spread of wealth, stability is also extremely important. 'If authoritarian regimes can deliver [stability] better than democratic governments, American administrations are unlikely to promote the democratic cause.'[153] On occasion, the US has been viewed as a reluctant supporter of democratic reforms in previously stable, authoritarian nations. The so-called Arab Spring brought about considerable instability in a strategically significant part of the world, requiring backing from the US as the world's primary exponent of exporting democracy. However, the failure of democratic principles in Egypt during 2013 was met with weak resistance from the US, likely as a consequence of military rule being viewed as more stable – if less 'free' – than the administration of the democratically elected Muslim Brotherhood. Reflecting a similar philosophy, the World Bank is an institution that supports strong governments, regardless of the nature of the regime, as authoritarian governments may be more successful in implementing unpopular but necessary reforms.[154] The US is a central force behind the World Bank.

The Clinton administration declared a commitment to the policy of supporting democracy in the context of peacekeeping, humanitarian military missions, and nation-building efforts in post-communist and post-colonial regions. However, it may be debatable 'whether this was because of deep belief in the merits of democracy, or merely because it best suited American interests.'[155] Military commitments towards this end during Clinton's presidency could be judged selective at best. Although initially elected on a platform of promising to scale down America's overseas commitments,[156] his successor President George W. Bush subsequently took the support of democratisation to an entirely new level – fight a war in order to bring about democracy.

George W. Bush took office in dramatic style following a court battle contesting the validity of his electoral victory over Al Gore, immediately posing a challenge to his administration's legitimacy. At the commencement of his first term, his policy portfolio consisted primarily of domestic concerns. Almost entirely the opposite of Clinton, and intentionally so, his foreign policy stance strongly reflected traditional American values. Michael Hirsh describes Bush's position as one of traditional realism, plus some 'Reaganite neoconservatism, layered over with [. . .] Texan feistiness and Southern religious fundamentalism'.[157] During this period the Republican Party sought to rebuild its power base through the 'southernization' of politics.[158] This would change the tenor of political discourse.

The perception that George W. Bush was an adequate leader for times of peace and prosperity would be seriously tested by the 11 September 2001 (9/11) terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.[159] These events took place close enough to the end of Clinton's administration to be ascribed as reflecting all that Clinton had failed to accomplish, in the view of Bush's neoconservative set, and too early in Bush's presidency to be deemed his fault.[160] 9/11 and its consequences would define the foreign policy spectrum of Bush's entire administration.

Following 9/11, the nature of Bush's rhetoric changed, quite literally overnight, to one imbued with moral design and of struggle between good and evil. America displayed 'a sense of injured innocence in whose defense American power could again be virtuously deployed'.[161] In his speech to Congress on 20 September 2001, he stated, 'in our grief and anger, we have found our mission and our moment.'[162] His pronouncements revived militaristic visions of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, but with an added degree of outrage and righteousness, given that terrorists had attacked civilians rather than solely a military installation, and mainland US sovereign territory rather than a Pacific outstation. The motivation for decisive military action had rarely been clearer, and the path to war was smoothed by abrupt legislative changes that assumed bipartisan support, giving Bush a free reign to exercise his executive power.[163] Bush's speechmaking in this period was also instilled with an underpinning of urgency and a preoccupation with history-making immediacy.[164] The events of 9/11 had necessitated, and provided the catalyst for, a reinforcement of the positive myth of America's mission.

The threat of terrorism became the central rallying point of American political identity following the attacks on New York City and Washington DC, and would usher in a new era of foreign policy principles. The terrorist attacks on American soil threw a harsh new light on the commonly accepted, Cold War era doctrines of deterrence and containment, and the concept of pre-emption entered the dialogue of policy makers.[165] Bush clarified this new thinking in a speech to American military college graduates in June 2002.

> Deterrence – the promise of massive retaliation against nations – means nothing against shadowy terrorist networks with no nation or citizens to defend. Containment is not possible when unbalanced dictators with weapons of mass destruction can deliver those weapons on missiles or secretly provide them to terrorist allies.[166]

The perceived impotence of these traditional doctrines of foreign policy opened the door for the new policy of pre-emptive strikes, undertaken first in Afghanistan against the Taliban and later against Saddam Hussein's regime, purported to be harbouring weapons of mass destruction, in Iraq.[167] The Bush administration was able to maintain public enthusiasm for war by means of its homeland security policy, which was able to 'capture popular energies without directly appealing to people's capacities for political judgement'.[168] The principle of fighting for freedom secured broad support because the US was fighting to protect and promote its signature values.

> The American attempt to make new rules in the area of pre-emption involves both breaking and making international norms, and reconstructs the relationship between the US and other states. This is a crisis for the norms themselves and may enable great violence and injustice, but whether it produces a crisis in US power or in the international system depends on the productive process of relegitimization.[169]

In the above assertion, Ian Hurd details the reproduction of American political identity undertaken in the inception of the doctrine of pre-emption. Although the alteration of relationship norms with other state

actors may be significant, it seems likely that the values at the heart of the pre-emption policy lie sufficiently within accepted parameters to ensure legitimisation within America's imagined political identity.

The policy of undertaking a war in order to impose democracy has been questioned both within the US and abroad, and Major R. Anderson expresses his concern that the departure from military restraint means that the US can no longer hold the 'moral high ground' that defined its military engagements in the twentieth century.[170] Considering the strong focus on morality and justice, which has pervaded the American political identity since its inception, the doctrine of pre-emption could represent a departure from the accepted construction of that identity. Certainly a number of perspectives exist on this question. The late Senator Edward Kennedy considered that the 2003 action in Iraq contravened the 'kind of country' the US has always exemplified in the international community. He compared it to the Bay of Pigs crisis in 1962, in which pre-emption might have been justified but, for reasons of moral value, a middle ground was found and peace maintained.[171] Military action and regime change in Iraq was clearly not a new concept: Bush's own father, when president, had led the 1991 Gulf War campaign, and Clinton had authorised financial and military aid to Iraqi opposition forces in the interests of 'promoting the emergence of a democratic government'.[172] In a speech to the UN in 2002, Bush attempted to secure the moral high ground in claiming that it was the obligation of the international community to destroy 'outlaw groups and regimes that accept no law of morality and have no limit to their violent ambitions'.[173]

It would seem that, though the concept of pre-emption was a dramatic departure from existing US military policy, similar values had in fact been espoused since the time, almost a century before, when the US had embarked on a more active foreign policy role in the international community. This view is reinforced by J. Record, who considers that the handling of the post-9/11 foreign policy portfolio was not dissimilar to Cold War policy, particularly in the early stages, in which communism was perceived as a 'centrally directed international monolith', much as Al-Qaeda has been represented as a monolith of international terrorism.[174] The determined effort to cast undemocratic, 'un-American' activities and nations as enemies is evidence of the American belief in its own moral high ground. The duty of the US to

bring democratic principles to what it perceives as the uncivilised world remains of key importance in its political identity.

Bush tended 'to view the world through a uniquely American lens, as though all other nations are somewhere on the road to becoming American,' as so many presidents had done before him.[175] This belief could negate doubt that regime change would not be received as a positive force by those nations to which the US deployed in 2001–3. Walter LaFeber considers that 'false faith in the ability of US power to expand democracy universally' has led to a series of tragedies in the post-9/11 era, in part as a result of the erroneous application of historical experience from early America to the global realities of the twenty-first century.[176] LaFeber's perspective reflects the concept that history and experience have defined the manner in which the US has projected its political identity in the international community.

As discussed above, the sense of mission in American politics has been in existence for 200 years, as has the idea that those nations in which American values are absent be labeled 'uncivilised'. The US under Bush was defining allies and enemies in terms of those who can, or cannot, 'live up' to its value systems.[177] The rhetoric to this effect under the presidency of Barack Obama may not be as strident amid the winding down of military campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan, but the legacy of Bush's policies remains. Richard Crockatt outlines his concerns with this process:

> What is particularly significant is first, the context of war followed by nation-building in Afghanistan, followed by the same in Iraq; and second, the association of this value with what is called the 'non-negotiable demand of human dignity'. Claims are made here on behalf of America's own history and values, on behalf of American leadership in the current crisis and on behalf of the civilized world whose values are taken to be at one with those of the United States.[178]

The understanding that nations must adopt the American sense of human dignity or alternatively be labeled uncivilised means that America's value system is claiming to be both unique and universal. It attempts to negate the idea that freedom, liberty, dignity, civilisation or other values of this type can mean different things to different people: 'It is easy for apparently value-neutral uses of [terms

such as civilisation} to spill over into loaded or normative uses.'[179] Bush used this method to draw the US toward war with Iraq, despite apparently tenuous links between Saddam Hussein and the events of 9/11. In this manner, a myth of political identity can be constructed for application to those countries where the designation of 'enemy' is a valuable label for building political capital.

Neo conservative political lobbyist and adviser to presidents Reagan and G.W. Bush, Richard Perle, stated 'a number of [us] believe that US power is always potentially a source for good in the world. The contrast is with people who fear American power.'[180] No particular allowance is made for those who do not fear American power but who disagree with the manner in which it is exercised. It was precisely in this context that anti-Americanism was born, as Crockatt explains, 'first as a predisposition to doubt whether US power can ever be used for good, and second, a distaste for the way in which America goes about expressing its will and asserting its power'.[181] Crockatt qualifies this statement by allowing that anti-Americanism is primarily related more to the country with the anti-American issues than it is about America itself.[182] This may be accurate, but it is fair to state that the origin of the sentiment must still be traced to the actions of the US.

It cannot simply be the US neo conservatives who may be held responsible for this particularly parochial world view. It is very much a by-product of the manner in which American political identity was formed. As early as 1776, American revolutionary Thomas Paine wrote: 'we have it in our power to begin the world again.'[183] Undoubtedly a number of values fought for in the revolution and the independence movement of the 1770s inspired political upheaval in France, and later Europe, in the nineteenth century; this would have served only to reinforce American perspectives of the universality of that country's political values. The famous quote from George W. Bush's first inaugural address, 'I will bring the values of our history to the care of our times,'[184] was likely made in reference to domestic policy at the time, as Bush's campaign and early months in office focused predominantly on issues at home, but it would soon come to be applied to foreign policy decision making as well.

When the history of US foreign policy in the immediate post-9/11 years is more fully written, it will have to include not only the

political and policy figures who misunderstood their nation's history and, consequently, historical choices but the writers who did nothing to counter such illusions.[185]

In making this statement, LaFeber is suggesting that not just politicians and policy makers, but also analysts and historians, have a tendency to be captivated by accepted wisdom. This is a demonstration of the power of political identity and the mythology that is created within it.

The Politics of Humiliation

The concept that the bitterness of failure is a potent force in American political identity was raised in analysing the key features of Puritan society. The colonists' belief that they were creating the perfect society under God's covenant, when they arrived in the New World in the seventeenth century, placed a considerable pressure on the survival of the imagined community. Various events throughout US history have threatened the perception that America has attained the Puritan ideal. Responses to such events have not always conformed to reasoned ideals of political activity, often harming either domestic political actors or the perception of America's position in the international community.

The American Civil War could have been considered a failure of American political and societal structure, but instead it was immortalised in history as a defining moment for the nation. It had suffered division and horrifying death and destruction, and risen from the ashes as a stronger, more perfect union. In doing so, it had also realised a part of its 'manifest destiny' by liberating the south and emancipating the slaves. Along with the mythologising of wartime leader Lincoln, the Civil War earned a glorious place in the collective memory of Americans.

For much of the twentieth century, as the US role in the international community became more defined, the sense of strength and invincibility of the American nation was reinforced. The appearance of being the saviour of the Allies, with a late arrival into both world wars, was quite reasonably a potent source of inspiration for the success of the American model, as was aiding the world's economic recovery in the post-World War II era. It was not until the US defeat in the Vietnam War that Americans tasted the humiliation of not succeeding in the eyes of the

international community. A key political casualty of the war in Vietnam was the destruction of what Kane describes as the 'institutional moral capital' that the US government possessed in its international relations before the Vietnam War.[186] This moral capital, which former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger believed derived from the Wilson era but the roots of which can be traced back to colonial and revolutionary times, was 'severely depleted' by America's unsuccessful vision of fighting for its values abroad by intervening in a domestic conflict in a sovereign nation.[187]

In a covert sense, of course, the US had been undertaking this sort of activity for several decades before the defeat in Vietnam. Since its inception in 1947, the CIA had been involved in fostering US-friendly elements in a variety of locations around the world. Indeed, its first major attempt to install an ally in leadership in a foreign country was in Iran, with the replacement of Prime Minister Mossadeq with Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi in 1953. At the time, this was not perceived in the US as having had a negative impact on America's reputation, so was immune to the imagined politics of humiliation. In fact, US inability to fully comprehend the serious impact of this event at the time would cause greater humiliation later, when the event was raised as a key motivating factor in the revolution that would oust the Shah, America's key ally in the Middle East. The bewilderment of the US over the level of vitriolic discourse in Iran relating to the 1953 coup was evidence of its crucial misunderstanding of the significance of the event.

In many respects, the victory of Jimmy Carter in the 1976 presidential elections was evidence of America's dissatisfaction with the failure of Vietnam and the moral weakness of the Nixon/Ford administration. However, Carter's presidency would itself suffer yet another humiliation for US foreign policy: the Iranian revolution. The embarrassment of being 'blindsided' by an Islamic movement partially driven by its anti-Americanism and which removed one of America's most strategically important allies in the Shah was difficult to overcome. The US scrambled to form a relationship with the interim Iranian government in the early stages of 1979, but was once again stunned by the hostage-taking at the Tehran embassy in November of that year. Gary Sick claims that these events have left a 'permanent scar' and that the US did not respond well to this type of humiliation, particularly so soon after the disastrous defeat in Vietnam.[188] Carter's failure to rescue

the hostages before the expiration of 444 days, including a doomed military attempt in April 1980, in which eight US soldiers were killed, was the death knell for his presidency. Symbolically, the Islamic regime gained maximum political mileage in the hostage affair by handing back the embassy officials on the day of Reagan's presidential inauguration.

Iran's involvement in the humiliation of US presidents was by no means over, however. The Iran–Contra affair of 1986 revealed that Reagan had been secretly selling arms to Iran despite openly supporting Iran's enemy in the Iran–Iraq War.[189] This activity, undertaken despite a professed policy of 'strenuous and sustained efforts to inhibit weapons shipments to Iran', seriously discredited the Reagan administration.[190] The result was more active involvement in the war on Iraq's side, as if to compensate for the sale of weapons to the opponents: 'We will now have to redouble our efforts to restore the credibility of this policy.'[191] The scandal was a significant humiliation for the Reagan administration and significantly altered US policy on Iran.

As was the case with the Iran–Contra affair, communication between Iran and the US has largely been undertaken through backchannels and not made public, ostensibly because of repercussions on the Iranian domestic front. However, in several cases, the US has severed negotiations because of public backlash and embarrassment at home. This was the case with Reagan and Iran–Contra, and similarly when President Clinton was negotiating over arms supplies to the Bosnian Muslims: Clinton reversed his position when Bob Dole threatened to publicise the discussions.

> Dole was going to embarrass the administration so instead the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act was enacted. [. . .] Immediately, whenever there's any idea that the American public could know that the US may want to engage Iran, the US cuts those talks off.[192]

Iran's embarrassment of successive American presidents is significant in appreciating the impact of political identity on the challenging relationship between the two countries. The US has in general been unwilling to forget the wrongs perpetrated by Iran, just as Iran has been unwilling to forgive the CIA involvement in the Mossadeq coup of 1953. This history has been a building block of US communication on Iran: policy is constructed within the accepted norms of anti-Iranian

sentiment, and there is little political mileage to be gained from altering the accepted discourse. Even more recently, with the comparative success of negotiations between 2013 and 2015, the political will in favour of concessions remains limited, likely a key reason why Obama waited until his second term in office to pursue meaningful mediation.

With the exception of problems with Iran, the 1980s saw some improvement in the way in which Americans viewed the success of their country's foreign policy. By the end of this decade the Cold War was approaching its conclusion, an event that would see the emergence of the US as the sole superpower. This global context provided something of a clean slate for Bill Clinton and George H.W. Bush.[193] Bush senior reinforced this view with his measured handling of the Kuwait crisis of 1990–1 and the first Gulf War. He believed that the calculated withdrawal from the Gulf in 1991 had 'kicked Vietnam syndrome for good'.[194] Clinton saw an opportunity to return to the moralist days of Wilson, seeking to be mediator in international disputes and engaging in nation-building exercises.[195] However, this was not always a success and Clinton laid open US foreign policy to failure again, with disastrous entanglements in regional conflicts in Somalia and Bosnia. Images of US soldiers being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu had a profound effect on the American psyche and, as a result, on Clinton's willingness to engage in humanitarian military commitments.[196] This was demonstrated by his failure to send US soldiers to the conflict in Rwanda, a decision for which he was heavily criticised by the international community, but which can be viewed through the perspective of the politics of humiliation.

George W. Bush distanced himself from Clinton's foreign policy standpoint during the 2000 presidential campaign by declaring his administration would see the end of US-sponsored nation-building across the globe.[197] 9/11 forced a reversal of that policy, as pre-emption and regime change became the catch-words of his presidency. Initially, both the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan and the 2003 invasion of Iraq were heralded as spectacular victories for US and coalition forces, as both the Taliban and Saddam Hussein appeared crushed. Fledgling democracies were established in both nations, along with a fraught and tenuous grip on peace. By early 2015, with US forces largely withdrawn from an unstable Afghanistan and levels of sectarian violence in Iraq approaching levels witnessed during the height of insurgency

in 2007, both conflicts had come to be viewed as failures for the US military establishment.

Two distinct responses to the bitterness of humiliation that have accompanied US foreign policy failures in recent decades can be identified. In the case of unsuccessful military exploits from Vietnam to Afghanistan, the result has generally been to shy away from becoming further enmeshed in national conflicts where possible. However, in the case of Iran the response has been to build anti-Iranian sentiment into accepted political discourse, diminishing the prospects for amelioration of the relationship. It is relevant to identify these features as elements of current American political identity, and to trace their origins to American history and experience since Puritan times.

The US and International Institutions

In the twentieth century, the US was behind the development of numerous multilateral institutions, such as the League of Nations and its later incarnation as the UN, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the World Trade Organization and the expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Despite being the driving force in creating these bodies, the US has a history of maintaining distance from membership of international institutions. The example of the League of Nations, as previously mentioned, was the first major instance of this, with President Wilson being instrumental in the establishment of the institution yet unwilling to join it in 1919. More recent examples include the International Criminal Court Treaty, the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and the Kyoto Protocol on climate change.[198] The US has a perception that encouraging the development of international law is an extension of its own value systems that it is bestowing the benefit of its own experience on the international community while remaining apart from it.

The US strongly resists involvement in any institution that might erode its sovereignty and policy-making autonomy.[199] In general, most nations would prefer to take this position and avoid ceding sovereignty by committing to international obligations, but the power of the US makes it feasible for it to stand clear of such commitments, particularly when under a conservative administration. In particular, under the neo-conservative George W. Bush administration, America moved towards a

gradual disentanglement from alliances and international constraints.[200]
Gary Hart has expressed a view that the principles of the American republic
when it was founded in the eighteenth century have been tarnished by
entanglement in international trade, globalisation, the integrations of
world financial markets and also international institutions. This could be an
additional explanation for America's unwillingness to participate in these
organisations and protocols.[201] In addition, with non-membership often
comes immunity, and perhaps impunity.

The disregard for the sentiment of the international community was a
notable factor in the decision to invade Iraq in 2003. G. Kaufmann
considers this to demonstrate a lack of 'cooperative international
engagement [. . .] often attributed to the US-centric philosophy that
characterises the conservatives in the administration'.[202] However, this
is not a phenomenon that can be solely attributed to conservative
administrations in general, or the Bush administration in particular. The
chairman of the 1947 Policy Planning Staff, George Kennan, described
this sense of disregard as:

> This persistent American urge to the universalisation or
> generalisation of decision [. . .] We like, by the same token, to
> attribute a universal significance to decisions we have already
> found it necessary, for limited or parochial reasons, to take.[203]

An example of this may be Secretary of State Colin Powell's 5 February
2003 speech to the UN Security Council on Iraq's weapons of mass
destruction, presenting apparent evidence to doubting nations on the
potential for universal harm to be wrought by Iraq. Despite the lack of
support in the Security Council, the US proceeded with its pre-
determined plan of pre-emptive action. It seems likely that despite
the radical new approach to military action, the inputs and impulses
of US foreign policy had not altered so dramatically since Kennan's
remarks of 1947.

There is a strong sentiment in the US that institutionalised
agreements and commitments are too easily overturned to be effective.
If this is the case, there is little imperative for the great power in an
arguably unipolar international community to submit to the rules of
these institutions. It may do so when the economic interests of the
nation are involved, but in areas of military power, security alliances and

weapons management the US has little motivation to acquiesce.[204] The 2002 National Security Strategy illuminates this further:

> While the United States will constantly strive to enlist the support of the international community, we will not hesitate to act alone, if necessary, to exercise our right of self-defense by acting pre-emptively against such terrorists to prevent them from doing harm against our people and our country.[205]

This attitude to the threat of those deemed to be terrorists would seem to embody America's sense of its role in the international community and how it defines its political identity.

A number of key themes have been identified as central to the construction of American political identity. Aspects such as mission, liberty, moral righteousness, bitterness of failure and universality of values have origins in the early periods of American colonisation and independence. This is not to claim that US political identity has remained unchanged throughout its history, indeed the themes identified have undergone extensive metamorphosis over time. Revolutionary republicanism with its associated concepts of civic virtue may have been eroded in the twenty-first century by 'political individualism and material acquisitiveness',[206] but the principles of American identity immortalised in its constitution and the Bill of Rights ensure that many of the tenets of early America survive in its modern identity. Continuity in American politics means that history is ever-present and current policies are constantly being associated with founding principles.[207]

CHAPTER 4

MYTHS AND FOREIGN POLICY CHALLENGES

This chapter identifies the foreign policy challenges that result from the development of the political identities of the US and Iran, and the myths that arise within those identities. It also reviews the manner in which myths are created within a foreign policy relationship. It refers to those myths that have been constructed through the long period of miscommunication and misunderstanding between these two states. Identifying the means by which such myths have become enmeshed, and nurtured, in policy making over more than three decades is crucial to an appreciation of the challenges facing this relationship.

It is also important to analyse the role political identity plays in the enactment of foreign affairs. By 'constructing a "self" and distinguishing it from others,' identity gives symbolic meaning to terminology in international relations, such as 'enemy', 'rogue' or 'other'.[1] Any label that associates a person with a particular identity immediately creates a point of difference with everyone not associated with that label. This issue is of vital relevance to foreign policy challenges between the US and Iran, and to the manner in which myths are constructed.

'Myths are part of a cycle of misperception [...] what is important is how the other side interprets it.'[2] This concept is central to the manner in which myths have created foreign policy challenges in the relationship between the US and Iran, and it echoes the theory of Alexander Wendt: 'people act towards objects, including other actors, on the basis of the meaning that the objects have for them.'[3] The construction of political

identity contributes to this sense of 'meaning'. The political identity of one nation has a direct impact on the manner in which that nation views itself; on its predisposition to view others in a certain way; and on the understanding that it holds of its own position in the international community.

Shortly after the Islamic Revolution in Iran, the US Assistant Secretary of State Harold Saunders conceded that 'we both have strong religious heritages' and that 'the people of both countries believe in the importance of a life that is guided by moral principles.'[4] Both nations have a strong sense of bringing the ideals of their own history into politics, and of bringing their own revolutionary struggles to the rest of the world, whether in pursuit of democracy, independence or moral justice.

Despite the myriad reasons why the US and Iran struggle to find common ground in the international arena, there are prominent similarities between the two countries, even within the development of their political identities. Gary Sick claims 'both countries are prone to a moralistic self-righteousness especially in foreign policy matters' and both possess a 'missionary quality' and an exaggerated view of self-importance. Sick indicates that this is a dangerous tendency, as one is more likely to make mistakes when assured of righteousness.[5] In earlier chapters, elements of these tendencies towards both mission and self-importance have been assessed in terms of their role in the development of political identity. Nevertheless, the intersection of the political identities of these two nations, regardless of similar beliefs and intentions, creates challenges in foreign policy.

Iran and American Power

Soft power is exercised, whether intentionally or not, as a psychological means of encouraging or influencing the direction of state actors outside the US. Christian Reus-Smit adopts the position that simply because people covet American consumerist products does not necessarily mean they will 'uncritically accept America's global political tutelage'. In fact, this is almost universally untrue.[6] In 1947, President Truman declared:

> It must be the policy of the United States to support free people who are resisting attempted subjugation [. . .] The free peoples of

the world look to us for support in maintaining their freedoms.
If we falter in our leadership, we may endanger the peace of the
world – and we shall surely endanger the welfare of this Nation.[7]

The Bush policy of regime change, pre-emptive action and the
installation of democracy was the export of a political identity certain
of its global relevance. The US has a strong belief in the beneficence
of its international activities; however, it is in the juxtaposition of
this view with that of much of the rest of the world, and specifically
Iran, that the relationship between soft power and American political
values is realised.

Reus-Smit explains:

> [Much of the power of US political identity] derives from having
> a culture and ideology that are enticing, from being able to shape
> international norms to suit these, and from being able to structure
> international institutions, and, in turn, the consenting behaviour
> of states.[8]

The difference in the case of Iran, of course, as with most nations
defined as non-aligned states in the international community, is that
it actively rejects the concept that American culture and ideology
are enticing to the rest of the world. While on a personal level some
Iranians might find it appealing, the political identity of Iran as a
state actor has derived a certain level of structure from its rejection of
American culture and ideology.

> The belief in the beneficence of American power [as held by
> America] leads to ignorance of the nationalisms and perspectives
> on that power as understood by the recipient.[9]

The manner in which this theory applies to Iran is part of what makes
dealing with the Islamic Republic in the international community a
much more bewildering process for the US, one in which Reus-Smit's
'consenting behaviour' is absent. It is very much a foreign policy challenge
to sell US interests to a country not interested in acquiring them.

American power is a threat to some and an opportunity to others, but
to Iran it is neither.[10] America's bewilderment with a nation like Iran

relates to William Beeman's concept of the myth of normalcy, as Iran violates the generally accepted norm of embracing American foreign policy or, at the very least, being pressured by its economic or military strength.[11] It tests faith in the universality of American values, whereby:

> It is taken for granted that America's unparalleled material resources can be translated into political influence unproblematically, that America's cultural magnetism bolsters such influence, and the universality of American values gives Washington the right − even obligation − to embark on an ambitious, largely unilateral project of hegemonic renewal and global transformation.[12]

The US entanglement in Iraq following its swift and successful overthrow of Saddam Hussein in 2003 has also tested this assumption. It was anticipated that this display of US resources and military might would translate into political influence. Instead, the resultant descent into insurgency, bordering on civil war, mired US forces in the region. US political figures reacted to this situation with 'genuine surprise' that the global strategy of spreading American influence had ended in quagmire.[13] The result questioned the belief that:

> The United States can take down entire regimes without sustaining high costs of manpower or national treasure. The cost of war has gone down, particularly in the areas where war is most likely.[14]

For Iran, the revelation that this theory has significant flaws changes its perspective on security and on the might of American resources.[15]

The early years of the twenty-first century witnessed a marked slide in US popularity in world opinion, compared to the high levels of the 1990s. In a 2007 BBC poll, the US ranked above only Iran and Israel, and in some categories North Korea, in international ratings of esteem.[16] Another Globescan poll identified 51 per cent of respondents as believing the US has a negative impact on the world.[17] The Committee on Foreign Affairs reviewing these polls found a positive note in the fact that it appeared 'unhappiness with the US is not a rejection of US values'.[18] However, this 'positive note' is problematic: in foreign policy

development, the US relies on the universality of its values to be accepted by the international community; therefore, it should follow that other nations cannot be accepting of American values while also holding a negative perspective of US foreign policy. To many nations today, the US is identified as a negative force in the international community, as something indeed associable with Iran's concept of the 'Great Satan'. Of course, the US itself does not associate itself with that identity.[19] The perception exists that with the end of the Cold War, 'there is no other rival global ideology to the American liberal vision.'[20] Therefore, the notion that American soft power is benevolent is a myth to some international actors but not to others. This does not make the construction of this myth any less valid; it merely reflects Wendt's theory 'that people act towards objects, including other actors, on the basis of the meaning that the objects have for them'.[21]

The US and the Islamic Revolution

America's response to the developing revolutionary situation in Iran in late 1978 and 1979 demonstrates some key elements of the expression of its political identity, and the misconceptions that have since arisen as a result. 'From the very beginning of the Iranian Revolution, the West – and particularly the US – seems to have been struck by a peculiar sort of political blindness.'[22] The US had misunderstood the motivations of the revolution.[23] The reasons for this blindness, and the consequent foreign policy challenges, can be illuminated by a constructivist analysis of political identity.

The global political scene is a very different proposition today to that of 1979, when the Islamic Revolution in Iran challenged US expectations about political ideology. Edward Said, as early as 1980, described this new spectre:

Hovering like some immense yet scarcely visible monster over much of the most dramatic news of the past decade, including not only Iran but the Arab–Israeli conflict, oil, and Afghanistan, has been "Islam". Nowhere has this been more evident than in the long Iranian crisis, during which the American consumer of news has been provided a sustained diet of information about a religion no more than a poorly defined and badly misunderstood

abstraction, really always, without exception, represented as militant, dangerous, anti-American.[24]

The accepted norms of international behaviour had been thrown into confusion. Because of the Islamic Revolution's novelty, it created a complex problem for the US that would taint its policy decisions on Iran for a substantial time. The manner in which it took the US by surprise is therefore deserving of close scrutiny in understanding the foreign policy challenges facing the relationship between the two countries.

Political Islam, and in particular Iranian political Shiʿism, was a novel force for the US to grapple with on its emergence in Iran in 1979: a force for which no foreign policy strategy or even compilation of ideas existed in Washington DC.[25] Radical Islamist ideology arose as a political alternative in the midst of the East–West battle between US capitalism and Soviet communism, which between them dominated the political scene of that era. Fawaz Gerges attributes the unwillingness of the US to form a stance on radical political Islam to 'the belief that democracy, preferably America's version, is the model to which all less advantaged peoples aspire'.[26] The inherent suspicion of a political system that may be perceived as undemocratic, or of a revolution unlike any with which they were familiar, may have clouded the ability of US policy makers to appreciate the driving forces behind the revolution.[27] A consequence of the end of the Cold War was that the means of defining political ideology changed, and cultural context arose as a new focus for international relations.[28] Political Islam, perhaps more explicable along cultural rather than political lines, arrived in advance of changes to the manner in which the US defined international theory.

State Department official Henry Precht highlights the fact that US political labels are eminently unsuitable for Iranian politics: 'liberal and conservative, fanatic and moderate' do not apply and only serve to heighten Western ignorance of Iranian society and politics.[29]

Iran as a fundamentalist state – erratic, anarchic, and possessed of a dangerous tendency toward martyrdom that had been forged in the intense heat of revolution – has embedded itself within the Western mind-set and has become a staple of Western popular discourse.[30]

This mythology with which the Islamic Republic has been imbued as a result of the experience of the US, and which has infiltrated the US's decision-making process since 1979, has been reinforced and reproduced by the media.

> The news media, as well as governmental and academic experts, seemed to have agreed implicitly not to recognise political developments as political but to represent them as a cosmic drama pitting civilisation as we like it against the uncivilised and the barbaric.[31]

These perceptions become an accepted norm in political discourse, a framework in which political actors take decisions. In operating within this framework, policy makers both underestimate the complexity of political Islam and fail to recognise the extent of their own ignorance.

In 1979, the US had little concept of the importance of men such as Khomeini and of the *ulama* in the social fabric of Iranian society. Indeed, in one of the first crisis meetings after the taking of 63 hostages at the US embassy in November 1979, Vice President Walter Mondale is quoted as having asked the Secretary of Defense 'what the hell is an Ayatollah anyway?' – an answer was apparently not forthcoming.[32] Ayatollahs are experts in Islamic jurisprudence, which in the context of political Islam places the role of the ayatollah with regard to ruling on questions of *shari'a* law as extremely close to that of the US Supreme Court judge ruling on the constitutionality of legislation. It may also be noted that US criticism that the 'obscure, informal' selection of ayatollahs by means of a clerical commission is undemocratic and instils an 'inordinate degree of authority' in clerical leaders is somewhat unjustified.[33] Ironically, it is extremely similar to the process by which members of the US Supreme Court are 'selected for life by the president on the basis of their jurisprudential capabilities in protection of the Constitution, in principle over and above politics'.[34] The Iranian ayatollahs are chosen for their 'moral and judicial qualifications to ensure the ultimate Islamic correctness of state policies'.[35] Khomeini described the governance of ayatollahs as 'a rational and extrinsic matter; it exists only as a type of appointment, like the appointment of a guardian for a minor.'[36] As a result of failing to appreciate the significance of the Iranian *ulama*, US policy makers underestimated their role in political identity.

Ali Ansari describes Khomeini as the 'perfect villain' in the eyes of Western onlookers. Reaction to Khomeini amongst the policy makers in Washington DC varied from scathing insults and disgust to respect and admiration. President Carter attributes Khomeini's ability to rise to prominence to several factors, including:

> His remoteness and air of martyrdom enhanced by fifteen years of exile, his constant and unswerving opposition to the Shah, his religious beliefs bordering on fanaticism, and his militant attitude in demanding action and violence.[37]

Carter's views, with the benefit of hindsight, show some degree of appreciation for the factors that attracted loyalty and support from Iranian society. However, during the revolution and hostage crisis, Carter did not demonstrate such understanding. Khomeini's behaviour, imbued with an 'air of moral superiority' was inexplicable to the Americans.[38] Carter acknowledged 'we are dealing with a crazy group' and that though Khomeini was 'acting insanely' he was determined to pretend, in order not to inflame the situation, that Khomeini was nothing more than the leader of a typical nation with which the US had diplomatic problems.[39] Deputy Secretary of State Warren Christopher described Khomeini as 'remote and erratic', while Vance chose the terms 'charismatic and ruthless' to depict the Ayatollah.[40] Conversely, Andrew Young, of the US State Department's Human Rights Bureau and passionately opposed to the rule of the Shah, described Khomeini as a 'saint'.[41] Each of these descriptions highlights the combination of awe and fear that the cleric was able to provoke, elucidating the ability for this one figure to become inextricably linked to US perceptions of Iran. Ayatollah Khomeini had entered US mythology.

Such being the viewpoint of US leaders, it is easy to appreciate how Khomeini might have been received by the world at large and within Iran itself. He was certainly embraced by the media, which could exploit his dramatic turbaned appearance on the world stage. He became the 'darling of the western media' while in exile in Paris, where he achieved much greater publicity than when in isolation in Iraq.[42] The political figures in Iran, who became Khomeini's targets in the early revolutionary period, had less flattering terms for him. Former Prime Minister Shahpur Bakhtiar, for example, described him as 'archaic, blinkered

[and] pigheaded'.[43] To the Shah he was a 'miserable goat' and a 'raghead' with upstart ambitions and no respect for the Persian heritage of the Peacock Throne.[44] The general opinion of Khomeini, held by the Shah and increasingly by the US, led to the underestimation of the potential political force of the ideology of *velayat-e faqih*, and a sense of disbelief in his developing role as leader of revolutionary Iran. David Farber claims that Carter and his advisers 'kept hoping that wiser, saner, and more rationally self-interested men would take over Iran'.[45] However, Khomeini was not insane, he merely represented a movement with which the US had difficulty reconciling its view of what was best for Iran. He did not conform to imagined norms of rational international behaviour, damaging the prospect of communication within accepted principles of international relations.

An overwhelming gulf of understanding divided President Carter and Ayatollah Khomeini, a factor Sick describes as one of the 'great ironies in history'.[46]

> No writer of fiction could ever have conjured up a set of circumstances so ripe with contrasts and opportunities for mutual incomprehension. Each of these two national leaders embodied an aspect of his own national culture to a degree of perfection that lent itself naturally to exaggeration and caricature.[47]

In this sense both Carter and Khomeini could be perceived as personifying the political identity of their nation. The manner in which each leader was represented in the other country was an example of identity being caricaturised, producing and propagating political myth through daily social practices.

> The political culture of America lacks a sense of the tragic, the capacity to understand the anguish of a Ho Chi Minh, the sorrows of a Khomeini or the dogged determination of displaced Palestinians.[48]

The US has been accused of exhibiting a deep ignorance of the 'thinking and culture of the developing countries in the world', and Iran is a perfect example of this shortcoming.[49] But to explain the experience of America in the Islamic Revolution as a 'clash of civilisations' in which

the US could not be expected to comprehend the underlying forces is, in a sense, to 'abdicate responsibility' in seeking to explain the US's approach to Iran's revolutionary movement and the events that followed.[50] Language is crucial in the construction of political identity and in the role that myths play in constructing the framework of political activity.

Utilisation of terms such as 'clash of civilisations' is in itself subscribing to the perpetuation of political myths, inflaming the imagination of the intended audience for political gain.[51] Although scholars may have robustly criticised Samuel Huntingdon's use of this phraseology and the reasoning behind it, the media has not shied away from the 'dramatic headlines' and 'graphic imagery' that framing conflict within this mythology allows.[52] Political rhetoric cares little for academic arguments, and neither does the experiential memory of the political audience. The potential 'clash of civilisations' has stirred 'anxious imaginings' in the US and beyond.[53] In more recent times, the events of 9/11 inclined an outreach to 'charged language', with the US now enmeshed in its own apparently civilisational conflict and no longer merely observing from outside the conflicts that have besieged other nations.[54] Emotive terminology obscures understanding, but it is a feature of the manner in which political concepts are presented via the media in everyday life.[55] This aids in reproducing and reinforcing political myth within the social imaginary, providing an accepted norm within which state actors are enabled to frame policy.

International Incidents

The hostage crisis

Ayatollah Khomeini's refusal to honor the rules of international law relating to diplomatic immunity is among the most serious charges brought against his leadership. [56]

The 1979 seizure of US diplomats, and particularly the long-term holding of these hostages, at the embassy in Tehran has a number of key features that highlight elements of both Iranian and American political identity. More specifically, the negotiations over the release of the hostages are particularly revealing. The incident has been described as

'one of the most devastating non-war-related events to have ever occurred between two nations'.[57]

> Rarely in its history has the United States confronted a challenge as difficult, frustrating and emotionally charged as that of freeing the hostages captured in Iran.[58]

There has been some suggestion that if relations between the US and Iran are to be improved, the hostage crisis will have to be 'left as history'.[59] In light of the role history and experience play in developing the world view of state actors, the task of separating the reality of this event from the experiential memory of it seems a difficult one.

US diplomats were seized two weeks after the Shah had been admitted to the US for medical treatment. A group, known as 'Muslim Students Following the Line of the Imam' and equipped with supplies for just three days, initially took sixty-three personnel hostage.[60] The public response surprised even the hostage-takers, as hundreds of thousands of Iranians came onto the streets to chant *marg bar Amrika*, (death to America). It soon became clear that the embassy site was now the epicentre of the Iranian political scene.[61] If initially the expectation had been to force the US to return the Shah to Iran for trial, and for the hostages to serve as a symbol of US presence in Iran under the Shah, the dynamics changed as the days passed.[62] Proponents of Khomeini's *velayat-e faqih* system of government used the crisis to inspire support for the Hidden Imam in his struggle against forces of corruption and tyranny.[63] Former US Ambassador to Iran Harold Saunders claimed the following:

> This group took over the Embassy for the purpose of providing a rallying point for elements of the populace behind the Islamic elements of the revolution. [. . .] The resolution came only when the institutions of the revolution had finally been put in place, not before.[64]

The first part of this statement may not have been entirely accurate in the initial instance of the hostage-taking, but it soon became the reality. Ansari agrees with this perspective, stating that the decision to back the hostage-takers rather than allow the 'sit-in' protest to last the meagre

72 hours that had been intended was as much to distract attention from the internal disputes amongst the revolutionary leaders, and in order to unite Iranians against a common external enemy, as it was anything to do with the US itself.[65] 'The Islamic students' occupation of the American embassy was at least as much – if not more – a domestic political manoeuvre as an operation directed against the United States.'[66] The decision to allow the Shah into the US for medical treatment evoked the powerful remembrance of 1953 and the US-backed coup; this history, when combined with an Iranian tendency to suspect conspiracy, meant it was not a great leap 'to believe that the embassy that plotted the 1953 coup was [...] concocting a similar scheme in 1979'.[67] The embassy itself was perceived as a symbol of American complicity in the events of 1953:

> Iran's new leaders [...] charged that the United States had imposed on Iran since 1953 a government that was oppressive and corrupt, that consistently violated human rights, and was insensitive to the traditional values of Iran's Islamic Society.[68]

As such, the hostage crisis was not the first time the embassy had been targeted in the revolutionary process: it came under heavy fire from rooftops and neighbouring buildings on 14 February 1979. Although there were no casualties, Khomeini actually dispatched a delegation to apologise to embassy officials for the incident, and the provisional government undertook to protect the American station.[69] The political situation later in the year was very different, and Khomeini took advantage of the changed circumstances. The imagined treachery of the Americans provided an initial justification for the hostage-taking, appealing to the collective memory of the actions of 1953.

What Khomeini was quick to realise was that this event could be manipulated to unite public opinion and alienate the moderate provisional government of Bazargan, which was attempting to negotiate and maintain a diplomatic relationship with the US. The Islamic Revolution was at a critical stage, and the hostage incident provided an ideal catalyst for factional political manoeuvring.

> The hapless hostages proved to have remarkable utility for Iran's domestic politics, and Khomeini exploited them as a means of

radicalizing the populace, claiming that the revolution was in danger from the manipulations of America and its internal accomplices. The issue, as framed by Khomeini, was now a contest between a rapacious, satanic United States and the sublime theocracy. The revision of the constitution and the demise of Bazargan's prime ministership were now sanctioned by the struggle against America.[70]

The intention was to generate zeal; crises are very beneficial in this regard.[71]

The hostage crisis was significant as a unity measure at a critical time for the revolution. The Islamist camp was particularly concerned about the growing support for the leftist movement. During the early stages of the hostage crisis Iranian universities were closed, under what Khomeini termed a 'cultural revolution'.[72] The intention was to alienate the support base of the communist Tudeh Party and the Mojahedin al-Khalq (MEK). These groups were particularly popular among the student population.[73] Khomeini was also able to designate the failed hostage rescue mission of April 1980 as 'tangible evidence that the principal danger threatening the Iranian people was foreign intervention'.[74] The US was unable to appreciate the domestic entanglements at the time, and the consequent impact has been catastrophic on chances of an amelioration of relations between the two countries.

As discussed earlier, Iranians are acutely aware of the involvement of the US in what they perceive to be the oppression of freedom in their nation prior to the revolution. The American embassy in Tehran was a symbol of that oppression:

> Is it not a serious matter that an embassy is used to subvert the constitutional order of a country, as was done by the United States in staging the coup that brought the Shah back to power in 1953? Is it not also serious that embassy personnel evidently helped establish and train the SAVAK, the secret police that committed so many crimes against the people of Iran?[75]

Conversely, at the time 'most Americans seem[ed] genuinely astonished at the depth of the Iranian people's anger towards the United States.'[76] As Jim Wallis explained in 1980:

To isolate the taking of hostages as the only real issue involved insults the Iranian people and puts the hostages in greater jeopardy. The Carter administration has repeatedly said that now is not the time to discuss the demerits of the Shah's regime. Yet now is *precisely* the time to talk about the Shah's crimes against the people of Iran and American complicity in them. Only such an honest recognition of the truth of the past could be the basis for beginning real negotiations with the Iranians.[77]

The tendency to attempt to negotiate on the singular issue at hand, rather than address the root of the crisis, is not uncommon in US foreign policy. A similar issue has arisen more recently in the problematic discussions over Iran's nuclear programme.[78]

A senior US government official provides some insight into the 'huge humiliation' of the hostage crisis and its effect on Americans.[79] Because relatively few Americans have a 'personal connection' with modern Iran – most immigrant communities left Iran prior to or shortly after the revolution and there has been limited cultural exchange since then – people in the US have predominantly gained media-driven perspectives of Iran. Persian language television in the US, for example, is targeted towards the audience of diaspora Iranians. Association with Iranian identity is actively encouraged, *despite* the current regime, meaning that Iranians should associate themselves with an Iran that is separate to, or else not dependent on, the Islamic Republic. Nostalgia is connected to statehood, and diaspora Iranians typically desire a changed Iran.[80] Since the exodus of pro-monarchy Iranians, engagements with Iran have promulgated either the memory of violent protests, military defeat, hostages or international scandal, creating a 'generally negative perception of Iran's goals'.[81] As the hostage crisis was essentially the first event of its kind to be played out on national – and indeed international – television, it engaged the entire population of America in a 'daily, personal fashion'.[82] The ABC Network in the US commenced daily programming headlined 'America Held Hostage', showing the humiliating parade of blindfolded hostages in front of chanting crowds in Tehran.[83] The ABC programme became so institutionalised a fixture that it remained after the release of the hostages as the news programme *Nightline*. This gives some evidence of the impact the hostage crisis had on ordinary Americans.

These various factors consequentially mean that, with the exception of the Iranian–American Council, there are few community bodies lobbying for policy change or advocating dialogue, resulting in limited political motivation for an alteration in perspective.[84] Remembrance of the hostage affair has become entrenched in American cultural consciousness; it is institutionalised as an element of identity. For Iranians, the hostage crisis may be viewed as a 'triumphant blow against a superpower', but in the US it remains as evidence of 'an inhuman regime'.[85] In 2008, at a hearing of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Florida Republican Ileana Ros-Lehtinen requested that the State Department 'increase our efforts in holding the Iranian regime accountable for their [the hostages'] ordeal of being held hostage for 444 days'.[86] Some analysts feel this position originates from a desire to 'punish' Iran for the humiliation and international outrage.[87] The impact of the collective festering memory of the hostage crisis will likely continue to cause division and contention within US foreign policy development.

The Iran–Iraq War and the Iran–Contra affair

In the 1960s and 1970s, the Americans had supported the Shah of Iran as a pillar of stability in the Middle East. At this time, the fact that Iran was an ally with the potential to curb the power of Iraq, which was rapidly revealing itself as a key regional power under Saddam Hussein, was critical to the US. However, in the 1980s the converse transpired, as the US in its 'obsession with negating Iran's influence'[88] instead looked to Iraq to mediate the regional power balance.[89]

Saddam Hussein, alarmed by the rise of political Shi'ism in a nation bordering his own Shi'a-majority country, invaded Iran in the midst of its first year as an Islamic Republic. The Iranian ambassador in Iraq had, earlier that year, taken the rather 'undiplomatic position' of encouraging a Shi'a uprising to rid Iraq of its Ba'ath Party rulers, a factor that would have reinforced Saddam's decision in pre-empting a revolutionary movement in his own nation.[90] Taking advantage of international outrage over the hostage crisis, as well as the degree of political instability as Iran's new government established itself, Saddam entered Khuzestan, a predominantly Arab province of south-western Iran.[91]

Iraq's full-scale attack on Iran in September 1980 resulted in the longest, bloodiest and most costly war in the modern history of the Middle East, ending in a stalemate in 1988.[92]

Remembrance of this particularly brutal conflict has had a significant impact on current events in the region; it left an indelible mark on the Iranian psyche.

The UN termed the conflict a 'situation', rather than a war or invasion.[93] With the majority of international opinion ranged against Iran because of its violation of international diplomacy with the hostage-taking the previous year, there was little sympathy for the Iranian cause. The surprisingly strong Iranian resistance to the invasion was dismissed by the *New York Times* as little more than 'Shiʿa penchant for martyrdom'.[94] Even Iraq's use of chemical weapons was essentially overlooked by the international community. The US Secretary of State George Schultz was aware in November 1983 of the 'daily use of chemical weapons by Iraq against Iran' but took no action.[95] It was not until Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait in 1990 – at which point Iraq ceased to be an ally – that the US acknowledged the mass killing with chemical weapons of Kurdish civilians at Halabja.[96] The lack of international repercussions against Iraq's use of chemical weapons has influenced the development of Iranian political identity.[97] It further reinforces the accepted knowledge that Iran cannot trust the international community. It also introduced the belief that Iran held the high moral ground in its conflict with Iraq, serving to reiterate the facet of political identity that associates the US and its allies as corrupting and evil influences.

The Iranians were contemptuous of Saddam Hussein and disbelieving of the idea that he could plan an invasion independently.[98] Given the political situation at the time, this automatically led to the conclusion that the US was behind the outbreak of war. The US was certainly closely involved with the Iran–Iraq conflict, providing supply, intelligence and technological assistance to the Iraqi forces. US Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) surveillance provided assistance in blinding Iranian radars during key battles, and after 1987 it entered the so-called 'tanker war' whereby Kuwaiti tankers were reflagged as American to prevent oil shipments in the Persian Gulf being targeted by the Iranian navy.[99] This latter assistance to Iraq was, in part, a decision to outbid a

similar offer from the Soviets, a factor that extensively influenced US involvement in the conflict.[100] Although Iranian politics was diametrically opposed to communism, the Western perception of global politics as polarised into two ideological groups resulted in the assumption that when denied by one, a Third World or developing nation would ultimately turn to the other.

In 1988, the USS Vincennes accidentally shot down Iran Air flight 655, a commercial aircraft, killing 290 civilians.[101] The US Navy claimed the airliner had been descending towards the ship and had not responded to warning calls. In reality, however, the flight was ascending and, being a civilian airliner, was not equipped to receive military transmissions.[102] To cover the error, and instead of apologising to the Iranians, Reagan awarded the ship's captain a medal for distinguished service. In addition, the then Vice President George H.W. Bush told the UN:

> Mr President, the critical issue confronting this body is not the how and why of Iran Air 655. It is the continuing refusal of the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to comply with Resolution 598, to negotiate an end to the war with Iraq, and to cease its acts of aggression against neutral shipping in the Persian Gulf [. . . and that] by allowing a civilian airliner to fly into the area of an engagement between Iranian warships and U.S. forces in the gulf, Iran must bear a substantial measure of responsibility for what has happened.[103]

Resolution 598 referred to the UN's concerns over the continued conflict between Iran and Iraq, and most particularly to the 'widening of the conflict through increased attacks on purely civilian targets'.[104] Bush's statement seems particularly inappropriate given the reference of Resolution 598 to attacks on civilians. Both Reagan's medal conferral and Bush's speech were particularly incomprehensible and offensive to Iranians, and remain well-remembered facts in discussions of US behaviour towards Iran.[105]

Iran's international isolation during the Iran–Iraq War and the resultant military supply complications that this engendered have been raised in Chapter 2. Iran established its own military industry during this period, but resupply and spare part provision for US-made weapons

remained a problem.[106] Hashemi Rafsanjani was a key figure in the campaign to establish a covert arms deal with the US during this period.[107] This departure from foreign policy consistency in the early years of the Islamic Republic was significant, but must be viewed in context. The rise of Rafsanjani's pragmatic approach to international relations was largely born out of necessity, 'as Iran could not wage war or deal with its economic burdens and growing population with strained international relations'.[108] For the Iranians, at least, a secret arms deal was essentially no more than a means to purchase arms. For the Americans, a number of short and long-term strategic issues were involved, complicating the sale enormously.[109]

Much as concern had existed over 'great power' influence in Persian Gulf tanker warfare in the Iran–Iraq conflict, there was also some concern within the US government that Iran would turn to the USSR for arms supplies if they were not forthcoming from elsewhere, which potentially sparked US interest in the covert deal.[110] Although the US was supporting Iraq in the war, in the interests of maintaining US strategic interests in the region, the larger-scale international concerns of the Cold War outweighed the Middle East alliances. Arms deal negotiations with the Reagan administration commenced in secret in late 1985, with the US funnelling the munitions income to the Nicaraguan Contra militia, whose rebel cause the US was supporting in the Nicaraguan civil war. An additional motivation for the deal was to enlist Iranian support in freeing American hostages held in Lebanon.[111]

The underhand arms deal would eventually be revealed in Iran by cleric and senior military official Mahdi Hasemi, who was executed for his trouble.[112] The decision to punish the figure responsible for exposing the deal, rather than those involved in negotiating it in the first place, displays the clear fact that Khomeini had been party to the affair. Rafsanjani, on the other hand, who had orchestrated and participated in the negotiations, continued his political rise and indeed went on to become president only three years later.[113] Khomeini's tacit approval in this matter is evident, as is the existence of pragmatism in Iranian foreign policy even prior to Rafsanjani's presidency.[114] To the Iranians, despite the fact that the affair has been 'clouded with guilt and laden with a heavy veneer of cynicism', the pact was a legitimate negotiation for the importation of necessary arms.[115] Had it succeeded, it potentially

may have opened the door for a genuine change in Iran's relationship
with the US.

To the Americans, a rather different manifestation of scandal and
guilt applied. The association with underhand funding of Central
American guerrillas made the affair seem much more illegal and
scandalous.[116] The entire debacle draws attention to the element of
US political identity referred to as the 'politics of humiliation'. The
embarrassment and the desire to restore credibility pushed the US into a
more active role on the Iraqi side of the conflict, with the consequence
that the US entered direct conflict with Iran for the first time.[117] The
US's participation in the conflict on Iraq's side may well have had a
significant impact on Iran's refusal to agree to a ceasefire, in essence
prolonging the war.[118] The affair reflected poorly on Reagan's
administration and on the reputation of Republican governments in
general, given the scandal and disrepute experienced under Richard
Nixon, the last elected Republican president. The term 'Irangate' was
applied to the scandal in the US, in an attempt to associate it with other
Republican wrongdoings such as Nixon's Watergate affair; the 'gate'
suffix was far less commonly invoked and carried greater significance at
the time than is typically the case today.[119] Reagan sought to distance
himself from the scandal by using Iran as a scapegoat for any occasion
where 'reality contradicted policy or an embarrassment loomed'.[120]

The Iran–Contra affair offers some interesting insight into the
political identities of both the US and Iran, and into their perceptions of
each other. The negotiations, in themselves, represent a rational step
towards changing the relationship that had existed for seven years.
For Iran it also presented an opportunity to negotiate for the return
of assets frozen in the US and other nations during the hostage crisis.[121]
Iran cannot be presented as 'irrational' or 'crazy' in this particular
international dealing, as would be the accepted expectation of Iranian
foreign policy within US imagined norms. America's motivations in
negotiating with Iran may have had more complex geostrategic
implications, but the US was also acting outside of Iran's expectations.
More significant illumination comes with the events that followed
the exposure of the deal, rather than the pact itself. The reactions from
the US reveal its fear that the international community would perceive
it differently in the light of the revelations. On the other hand, Iran's
fears about the US's trustworthiness were confirmed. The activities of

Iran–Contra and its aftermath reproduced existing elements of political identity and reinforced the mythology through which each nation viewed the other.

Dialogue, Misunderstanding and Stereotyping

In 2007, US Undersecretary of State Nicholas Burns explained to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that in the period since the hostage crisis:

> We've produced the most unusual diplomatic relationship of any country in the world. We have no relationship with {Iran}.[122]

There has been no US diplomatic presence in Tehran since official ties were severed in April 1980 following the abortive hostage rescue attempt. The lack of communication between the US and Iran has been a constraint on the amelioration of the relationship for several decades. Having no diplomatic forum for discourse means that communication is generally indirect and mediated, whether by third-party negotiators, the media or backchannel discussions in which legitimacy must be called into question.[123] Public speeches become forums for commentary on other parties, sending 'signals'.[124] The 'enormous confusion' engendered by this type of communication is in addition to the fact that Iranian actors have been 'afraid to talk to Americans for fear of being "tainted" by the contact'.[125] The consequence of such inadequate communication is that misunderstanding, deliberate or otherwise, has become the norm.

This sustained disconnection or obfuscation of diplomatic communications is unique in US international affairs. In the decades since the Vietnam War, the US has repaired its relations with the Vietnamese government and people; the countries now have diplomatic ties, trade and cultural exchange.[126] In testimony to the Subcommittee on National Security, former Ambassador to the European Union James Dobbins indicates a similar position was taken in other arenas:

> We spoke to Stalinist Russia; we spoke to Mao's China. In both cases, greater mutual exposure changed their system, not ours.[127]

He further adds:

> We have a diplomatic mission in Havana [. . .] why are we talking
> to Castro and not talking to the Iranian regime? [. . .] There's a
> certain loss of face involved and conceding something now that we
> were unprepared to concede when they were behaving better. And
> the lesson I draw from that is don't put yourself in the position to
> start with, don't [. . .] say, "I'm going to hold my breath until you
> agree with me," because it just becomes progressively more
> difficult to sustain. And it's not likely to make them agree.[128]

At a separate Congress committee hearing, Suzanne Maloney, a former
State Department representative, was asked whether Iran has
conducted 'normal' relations or successful diplomatic negotiations
with any other country since the revolution. 'The Iranians have
maintained diplomatic relations with just about every other country in
the world. [. . .] I think you can find lots of examples of Iran behaving
pragmatically in its foreign policy.'[129] Iran and the US have an
unusually embedded separation from a diplomatic standpoint. The
longer arms-length communication continues, the more deeply mired
both the US and Iran become in the cycle of mistrust, increasing the
political significant of being the first party to break the silence and
show willingness to negotiate.

Iran has held negotiations with the P5 + 1 group (the five permanent
members of the UN Security Council plus Germany) on a number of
occasions since 2011 in an attempt to reach a deal on the future of Iran's
nuclear programme. The significance of these talks is further addressed
in Chapter 5; however, in the context of communication it is noteworthy
that this series of talks has led to the first direct official communication
between the US and Iran since the severing of diplomatic relations.
A deal reached in 2013 during talks in Geneva was likewise the first
formal agreement in 34 years, followed two years later by the Vienna
nuclear negotiations. The progress engendered by these negotiations
highlights the benefits of communication; however, the deal has not led
to a resumption of diplomatic ties, and a gulf still separates the position
of each country.

The US is regularly accused of failing to understand Iran, of failing to
break down barriers of ignorance that have gradually built up over the

course of their international relationship. Commentators on the relationship have identified several reasons for this. Ansari suggests that:

> In intellectual terms, the predictive quality of Western social scientific analysis could be excused because a rational and reasonable approach to foreign policy analysis had failed to accommodate the possibility of irrationality on the part of the other.[130]

In other words, conventional political theory can only be expected to accommodate that which is familiar to its experience or operating within its imagined norms. American politicians have often claimed that the Iranians do not 'play by the rules'.[131] If the Iranian revolution was considered irrational, for example, rational Western political thought could form an explanation for the unpreparedness of the US for the events of that period. Abdolali Qavam agrees with this perspective, suggesting that rationalistic approaches to studying Iran foster new misunderstandings. An inter- and intra-paradigmatic study is required to allow Western political analysts to appreciate the complex – and often paradoxical nature – of Iranian politics, and undertaking this study from a perspective of constructivist theory is extremely beneficial.[132]

In the time since the Islamic Revolution, perceptions of irrationality have been hardened by the lack of dialogue between the two nations. Virtually all communication is filtered through third parties and the media, with the exception of narrow talks on Iran's nuclear programme. Sick claims that this lack of broad-based dialogue 'breeds stereotypes' and results in a complete ignorance of issues of cultural, historical and political relevance.[133] He continues that the 'very complicated Iranian political system is simplified by the media into just a few issues', which he perceives as remarkable considering the sheer volume of both political activity and media coverage devoted to Iran.[134] The value of negative news in broadcasting and publishing across the world's media ensures that in the absence of a bilateral relationship negative discourse becomes a foundation of how each nation interprets events.[135] This feature of media colouring has meant that political myths are constantly being reinforced and propagated.

Government officials, analysts and academics in both countries share a level of agreement that the means to improving communication are

numerous and should not be exclusive to the political sphere. Cultural and sporting events have a history of being a precursor to amelioration of diplomatic relations. Former US Ambassador to the UN Thomas Pickering cites the example of ping-pong tournaments with the Chinese as a means to more tangible relations.[136] Student academic exchanges are also an excellent way to change stereotypes and a route to increased interaction.[137] This has been extremely successful for Iranian students travelling to the US, even those studying at the most conservative of universities.[138] Activities such as these open relationships without being subject to the complexities of a political discourse or absolute responses. This is particularly useful in circumstances where the possibility of introducing change or amelioration has become politically remote in both nations.

As witnessed since direct mediation commenced, substantial public and political backlash can be a major factor in both the US and Iran if meaningful discussions between the two countries are broached.[139] 'Cultural context' is against a change in the relationship, which limits the likelihood that a politician – particularly a conservative one in either country – would be 'prepared to take the domestic political risk'.[140] Alternatively, suggestions of ameliorating relations can be utilised as a power play between the two countries. For example, in 2008 the Bush administration flagged the possibility of establishing a US diplomatic 'interest section' in Tehran as a purported step towards opening a more extensive diplomatic relationship. From the Iranian perspective, this move was not perceived as well intended but rather as a base for spying, a 'Trojan horse.'[141] Additionally, the government in Tehran has no intention of allowing a situation in which queues of Iranians can be seen attempting to gain a visa at a US embassy.

> If Khatami's proposal [in 2003] was a 'Grand Bargain', then this is a 'Grand Bluff.' The US know that Iran doesn't want such a presence in Tehran. But they are seen to be making the effort which is being rejected by Iran.[142]

The establishment of an 'Iran-watch' section of the US State Department in Dubai could be seen as a step towards gaining a greater understanding of political activities in Iran. Prior to this, 'Iran should have felt overlooked in that there was only one Iran expert in the [US] State

Department.'[143] In testimony to the Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs in 2007, Suzanne Maloney expressed concern over the lack of knowledge in policy-making circles in the US:

> Unfortunately, because of the lack of contacts, because of the lack of an embassy, we simply have very little ability to understand what's happening inside the country. Secretary Rice has acknowledged that publicly in an interview she gave earlier this year, where she said we just don't know. It was shocking to me to come in [to the State Department] in 2005 and realize that there was effectively almost no one in the entire State Department building who spoke Persian who worked on Iran. That effectively remains the case.[144]

Misinformation and a lack of suitably qualified individuals involved in Iranian foreign policy prior to the Islamic Revolution was a key factor in severing relations in the first place.[145] The State Department appears to have recognised the need to increase its expertise on Iran in the interests of staffing any future mission with appropriately informed personnel. The reopening of a diplomatic presence should be a possibility in view of the 2015 embassy opening in Cuba, but in reality a Tehran embassy would be a much more difficult prospect. The image alone would be hard to reconcile for many Americans, particularly if the 2016 elections yield a Republican administration.

Foreign policy dialogue always operates for the benefit of a particular audience. For example, a state's foreign policy will always be serving some aspect of a domestic political agenda, even in regimes such as Iran where the apparatus of power means that foreign policy cannot be executed without at least the tacit support of the supreme leader.[147] A government, acting on behalf of its constituents, weighs the value of policy decisions with a variety of stakeholder interests in mind. Decision making has a key impact on the legitimacy of government. As has been demonstrated, policy rhetoric can be expressed in the interests of inciting an expected response from another state or actor. For example, an actor can deliberately exhibit a political identity that does not reflect the larger interests of the state in order to achieve certain results within a group, whether domestically or internationally.

Iran's confrontational policies, particularly with regard to the West, are generally serving domestic agendas.[148] The issuing of a *fatwa* on Salman Rushdie following his publication of *The Satanic Verses* is an example of an action taken for the benefit of a specific audience but that would have substantial international ramifications. Iran and the UK severed relations in March 1989 over the affair, but to most Iranians the international crisis was little more than a trivial irrelevance.[149] The issuance of the *fatwa* was more an expression of Khomeini's guardianship of the Islamic world – a statement for the benefit of Khomeini's Muslim audience as well as a reaction to issues in South Asia – than of any particular current of sentiment in Iran.[150] The result, however, from an international perspective was only to support increasing Western views that Iran was irrational in its foreign policy. This is certainly evidence that Iran's expression of its foreign policy, for whatever audience, can be damaging when articulated without foresight.[151]

There is substantial consensus in both nations that Iran and the US have much in common in terms of strategic and foreign policy interests.[146] Following 9/11, the US sought to remove the Taliban from Afghanistan and Saddam Hussein from Iraq. Both of these regimes represented hostile or problematic neighbours for Iran, and in some respects both were areas in which the two countries have been able to find common ground. New prospects abound for an aligning of interests in Iraq amid the spectre of Sunni extremism. The implications of Iran's and America's involvement in this region are analysed further in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 5

FOREIGN POLICY CHALLENGE: IRAN'S NUCLEAR PROGRAMME

Iran's ambition to develop indigenous nuclear technology is symbolic of its political identity. The origins of its nuclear programme and the role it plays in the construction of Iran's world view are assessed in this chapter. In addition, I analyse the manner in which the affair has been handled in the international arena, from both the Iranian and the American perspective, which demonstrates several key facets of how political identity can create foreign policy challenges. Recent developments in mediation over the nuclear programme are also assessed through the prism of pragmatism as a construction of political identity. Addressing the issue of nuclear proliferation also gives rise to insights into American security policy and its process of categorising threats. As identified in Chapter 1, security interests have a significant bearing on the construction of political identity.

Iran's nuclear programme has taken on nationalistic overtones and is evident even in daily life since the introduction of Iran's new 50,000-rial note in March 2007, which prominently features the nuclear isotope symbol alongside Khomeini's figure.[1] Iran sees the acquisition of nuclear technology as central to its foreign policy platform. It also relies on the potency of this issue to galvanise public support on a domestic level. Ayatollah Khamenei has described Iran's advancements as 'great and noteworthy', and declared that Iran's technology 'would bring progress, glory and greatness to the Islamic system'.[2] President Rouhani announced in September 2014: 'Iran will never give up its peaceful, legal

[nuclear] activity.'[3] Moreover, broad internal support exists for Iran's nuclear programme, indicating that Iran's position appeals to popularly accepted norms of foreign policy behaviour.

Conscious that foreign policy is often directed towards a domestic audience, opinions in the US take into account that the Iranian regime may be using the issue to distract from internal dissent; 'the regime seems to be viewing its quest for nuclear self-sufficiency as a way to revive its own political fortunes.'[4] Similarly, for the US the issue has domestic and international ramifications:

> The advent of a nuclear Iran – even one that is satisfied with having only the materials and infrastructure necessary to assemble a bomb on short notice rather than a nuclear arsenal – would be seen as a major diplomatic defeat for the United States.[5]

Given the history of diplomatic defeats that Iran has inflicted on the US over the past three and a half decades, this would be an unacceptable circumstance for the US to contemplate. A nuclear Iran would revive the politics of humiliation operating within US political identity.

Origins of Iran's Nuclear Programme

Iran's geographical location has long made it a key intersection of global strategic interests. Increases in the global development of nuclear technology have not altered this crucial fact; indeed they have exacerbated the strategic and security concerns that have long existed in the region.

> Iran straddles the crossroads of three vital and often volatile regions – the Middle East, South Asia, and the former Soviet republics of Central Asia. Almost one third of these countries have, or are developing, nuclear weapons. Outside of Western powers, this arena accounts for the largest array of weapons of mass destruction in the world.[6]

Although written before Iran's nuclear interests began making international headlines, the key factors of this statement remain accurate. Iran's desire to develop nuclear technologies, regardless of the

country's civilian or military intentions for their use, must be viewed in this light.

Western powers have had concerns regarding Iran's pursuit of nuclear technology since the 1980s.[7] Significant international attention has been focussed on the issue since reports emerged regarding secret development activity in Iran in 2003, as indicated by this American perspective:

> The dangers of Iran's entry into the nuclear club are well known: emboldened by this development Tehran might multiply its attempts at subverting its neighbours and encouraging terrorism against the United States and Israel; the risk of both conventional and nuclear war in the Middle East would escalate; more states in the region might also want to become nuclear powers; the geopolitical balance in the Middle East would be reordered; and broader efforts to stop the spread of nuclear weapons would be undermined.[8]

This litany of caveats summarises the key reasons behind George W. Bush's 2003 declaration that 'we will not tolerate' a nuclear-armed Iran.[9] Iran was at the time openly constructing a power plant at Bushehr with the support of Russian technology, and has since claimed to be exercising its right to civilian nuclear technology as stipulated by the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), to which it is a signatory. However, much speculation has emerged regarding the true intentions of Iran's uranium enrichment programme. Although periodically complying with international obligations under the NPT, Iran's sporadic refusal to submit to inspections from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has damaged its credibility.

An Iranian nuclear programme is by no means a new phenomenon: some of Iran's current facilities are remnants of a pre-Islamic Revolution nuclear programme initiated by the Shah with American and German assistance. In 1957, the US began providing technical assistance as well as the 'lease of several kilograms of enriched uranium'.[10] In the 1970s in particular, under President Nixon, the communist-wary US was enthusiastic about increasing Iran's strategic strength to 'deter Soviet designs on the region'.[11] With increases in oil prices during this period, financially the Shah was in a position to develop Iran's nuclear

capability. Expertise as well as technology was increasingly forthcoming from the US, with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology agreeing to train nuclear engineers.[12] Similar offers of assistance came from the European powers during this period.

> There was, of course, the possibility that the Shah would one day use nuclear technology for purposes other than producing electricity. But that did not seem to worry the West, for there is no evidence to suggest that this question was ever raised with the Shah, or that he was required to give guarantees or commitments, verbally or formally, to limit his ambitions to producing only nuclear energy and not to make nuclear weapons later on.[13]

Reports from one of the Shah's former advisers suggest that the Shah was prepared to change the status of the Iranian nuclear programme if necessary: 'The Shah told me that he does not want the bomb yet, but if anyone in the neighbourhood has it, we must be ready to have it.'[14] In fact, in 2004 the Shah's former foreign minister, Ardeshir Zahedi, confirmed this belief regarding Iran's pre-revolutionary nuclear policy.

> The Iranian strategy at that time was aimed at creating what is known as surge capacity, that is to say [...] the know-how, the infrastructure and the personnel needed to develop a nuclear military capability within a short time without actually doing so. But the assumption within the policymaking elite was that Iran should be in a position to develop and test a nuclear device within 18 months.[15]

Given that the US was a key ally and provider of nuclear skills and technology at the time, it can be assumed that the US was aware of this policy direction and chose to look the other way. The lack of concern in Washington can be explained in the context of its Cold War deterrence policy.

Initially, following the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini suspended Iran's nuclear programme, believing both that weapons of mass destruction were objectionable on religious grounds and that neither nuclear energy nor nuclear weaponry was a necessity for his country.[16] This decision was also a reaction to the integral part nuclear

technology had played in the Shah's rapid modernisation of Iran during the 1960s and 1970s; the clerics of the revolution perceived this modernisation as the source of much of the evil and corruption of the monarchy.[17] Many nuclear scientists fled Iran in the early years of the Islamic Republic as a result of the severity of anti-Shah policies. It was not until the brutal war against Iraq in the 1980s – in particular the chemical weapons attacks by Saddam Hussein – and the realisation of Iran's isolation from the international community that the nuclear programme was reignited.

The Iran–Iraq War caused Khomeini to question his belief that indiscriminate weapons violate Islamic canons of war.[18] Khomeini also began to appreciate that modern military technology, and potentially nuclear weapons, could have prevented the invasion of Saddam's forces in 1980, or at least deterred the US from actively supporting Iraq.[19]

> Experience had taught the Iranians that they should not expect help from other nations and they should develop indigenous military, conventional and non-conventional, capabilities.[20]

Khomeini commenced a search for trading partners willing to assist in the reactivation of Iran's nuclear programme – an objective he was surely aware would raise the ire of the West. To avoid the enmity of the US and its allies, Iran invited the Americans and the Europeans to be involved in the construction of a new reactor.[21] The intention was to avoid suspicion by engaging the US as a trading partner, but the invitation was not accepted. As a result, Iran turned to the Soviet Union and China, though actually securing a deal was a lengthy process. It was not until 1995 that Russia committed to an $800 million deal to build the Bushehr reactor.[22] The US missed what could have been a key opportunity to deal with Iran and oversee its nuclear development; instead, the US pushed Iran's programme outside its sphere of influence.

Despite the steps Khomeini took following the war, in principle the concept of nuclear weapons remained anathema to the tenets of the Islamic Republic. In August 2005 Ayatollah Khamenei issued a *fatwa* outlawing the development of nuclear weapons, declaring them *haram* (forbidden).[23] Chairman of the Iranian Atomic Energy Organisation Ali Akbar Salehi states that the religious conviction in Khamenei's *fatwa* should reassure the international community, as these principles and the

activities of the state are essentially one and the same.[24] The details of the *fatwa* are described as follows:

> According to the esteemed leader's fatwa which he announced at Friday prayers, the production, stockpiling and use of nuclear weapons is not allowed by *shari'a*. As a result, when the country's leader clearly states this fatwa during Friday prayer, there is no place for such a discussion. We think that when on the one hand we are members of the NPT, then we have given a legal guarantee that we are not pursuing nuclear weapons. When the Iranian leader issues such a fatwa, then we have given a political, religious, and ideological guarantee that we are not pursuing the production of nuclear weapons. As long as we are a member of the safeguards treaty and are a signatory to the NPT Additional Protocol, we have also given the technical guarantee. So to sum up, we have given political, legal, technical and religious guarantees. These objective guarantees which the Europeans are after, can't be more than these four concrete guarantees. As a result, on the whole, we don't think that it will be in the interests of our country and national security to do such a thing [pursue the production of nuclear weapons].[25]

The international community did not take Iran at its word on this issue.

The fact that the West was content to allow the Shah to operate his nuclear programme, not only unmolested but with active support, suggests to Iran that concerns over its intentions have been related not so much to potential nuclear capacity but rather to 'the complexion of the political system that has governed Iran since the revolution'.[26]

> Washington was not only complicit in the Shah's program but never asked, as it persistently does today, why an oil-rich state requires nuclear power.[27]

The US welcomed the steps taken by the Shah, but has since found the prospect of a non-allied regime following the same path to be unconscionable.

Management of the Foreign Policy Challenge

The prospect of the US government engaging in a dialogue with Iran has often been associated with the term 'unconditional', which has arisen during both the Bush and Obama administrations as a projection of America's willingness to open a relationship. However, evidence indicates that the US is in fact focused on resolving the nuclear problem first, as a separate issue, 'without putting all options on the table' with regard to wider talks.[28] This would appear to negate the prospect of 'unconditional' talks. In 2008, Congressman Howard Berman suggested an approach to 'unconditional' talks:

> We should agree to join the EU-3 [Britain, France and Germany], Russia and China in an unconditional dialogue with Iran. Or, if our partners prefer, we should meet with Iran bilaterally on the understanding that our partners would fully support crippling sanctions if Iran rejects our dialogue offer or ultimately refuses to cease enriching uranium.[29]

It appears that 'unconditional' here is a particularly loose term considering that in this example very strict conditions are already a party to the US approach to dialogue. As mediation efforts have played out since 2011, talks with the P5 + 1 grouping referred to by Congressman Berman have certainly had more success; however, they do not encompass the broad-based initiatives that the term 'unconditional' would suggest. As Gary Sick explains, the US focuses on the question of 'how can we make Iran give up its nuclear technology programme?' rather than 'how can we work with Iran towards a solution?'[30]

The problem for Iran is that the nuclear question is not as easily excised from other aspects of its foreign relations as it may be for the external actors pushing for behaviour change in Tehran. To Iran, denial of the right to develop nuclear technology is perceived as a reflection of the experience Iran has had of international intervention in its sovereignty.

> The nuclear issue for Iran is as relevant as it is to France or to Germany – it is an energy issue. But there is no trust, it is all action and reaction. Iran has a right to nuclear power. It comes

back to this question of deprivation [...] Iran's defiance is the end
of the US saying 'you do this', and we will.[31]

Iranian academic Mohammed Reza Saiedabadi outlines several
important points here. The question of trust is a key one, which has
arisen from both the Iranian side and the American side. Former US
Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice responded to Iran's protestations of
its right to develop nuclear technology by stating 'this is not an issue of
rights but of whether or not [...] Iran can be trusted.'[32] Yet, and with
reason, some within Iran believe that experience has dictated that 'Iran
cannot trust the international community.'[33] If there is indeed no trust,
the likelihood of initial deals holding in the long term is low. Given the
elements of history and experience that have nourished the tension
between the US and Iran, trust is unlikely to make a sudden appearance.
Hardline rhetoric in both countries since the 2015 Vienna deal is already
reflective of this problem.

   Another relevant point from Saiedabadi's comments is the statement
that the nuclear programme is a part of the 'question of deprivation'. It is
echoed by comments from Gholamali Chegnizadeh, who states that
Iran's nuclear ambitions relate to 'Iranians' sense of victimisation', a
perception from both Iran's pre-revolutionary and post-revolutionary
sense of identity.[34]

> The legacy of the [Iran–Iraq] war only reinforces a nationalistic
> narrative that sees America's demands for Iran to relinquish its fuel
> cycle rights under the NPT as inherently unjust. As a country that
> has historically been the object of foreign intervention and the
> imposition of various capitulation treaties, Iran is inordinately
> protective of its national prerogatives and sovereign rights. The
> rulers of Iran perceive that they are being challenged not because of
> their provocations and previous treaty violations, but because of
> superpower bullying.[35]

The sense of having been denied its international rights is a key feature
of Iran's understanding of its history, as discussed in Chapter 2. The
'politics of deprivation' is a common theme of rhetoric in Iran's foreign
policy. Appealing to this theme allows policy rhetoric to operate within
the accepted dialogue of Iran's political identity.

The energy argument is the third point worthy of discussion from this quotation. Despite its extensive oil and gas reserves, nuclear power is an important factor in improving Iran's domestic energy programme. Subject to the terms of sanctions, it would allow greater export of oil and gas, a more economically viable option than utilising these valuable commodities for power production domestically.

> Iran's ability to produce nuclear energy rather than rely solely on its natural energy reserves will also have a positive side effect for oil and gas consuming countries. For the more Iran can produce nuclear energy for its domestic consumption, the more it can export oil and gas to the West, thus better stabilising the price of these commodities.[36]

Price stabilisation is in the interests of both Iran and the West, though realistically, given the degree to which Iranian energy can be produced from nuclear sources, the global impact will be marginal. Western efforts to find a solution to the nuclear crisis have involved offering assistance to Iran in its civilian programme, effectively limiting Iran's ability to progress beyond energy.[37] The difficulty with this approach reverts once again to the question of trust.

Ironically, under the 2000–8 Bush administration it was the US that was in fact in violation of provisions of the NPT: the US did not comply with the requirement for decreasing weapons stockpiles.[38] Bush's policy in this area exemplified the US tendency (and particularly the conservative tendency) to distance itself from international institutions that limit the US's ability to formulate policy independently. From the Iranian perspective, it is not seen as reasonable to expect Iran to be held to different standards from those applicable to the rest of the world, especially given that other nations are violating the treaty, or have succeeded in avoiding being signatories at all, as is the case with India, Pakistan and Israel. As Adam Tarock queries, 'why is it taken for granted that a nuclear Iran will be more dangerous or act less responsibly than [these] countries?'[39] Former US National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski recognises this double standard.

> The [. . .] US decision to assist India's nuclear programme, driven largely by the desire for India's support for the war in Iraq and as a

hedge against China has made the US look like a selective promoter of nuclear weapons proliferation. This double standard will complicate the quest for a constructive resolution of the Iranian nuclear problem.[40]

This approach of selective proliferation is demonstrative of elements of the US's political identity. It relates to the intersection of security interests and identity in the manner in which threats and dangers are recognised. Iran, already labelled as 'enemy' through America's experience in dealing with the Islamic Republic, is preselected as ineligible for proliferation. A nation such as India, which does not hold the designation of enemy, is a potential threat but not an institutionalised one.

Israel's ability to shirk its international responsibilities, unimpeded by any form of 'world policing', is particularly galling to Iran.

There should be an acknowledgement that Iran is experimenting; they are a long way from developing weapons. The issue again comes back to Israel – they are driving American foreign policy. America itself has nothing to fear from Iranian nuclear capabilities [. . .] but the loudest voice is coming from the US because they are protecting Israeli superiority in the region.[41]

Assessing Israel's nuclear capabilities is challenging, given that 'the Israeli government has never acknowledged possessing nuclear weapons and has never published any account of its nuclear activities.'[42] However, there appears to be broad agreement that Israel possesses an 'extensive arsenal'.[43] Because Israel is not a signatory of the NPT it is not bound to submit to IAEA inspections, avoiding public discussion over its weapons programme. This 'deterrence through uncertainty' lends Israel a status of ambiguity.

By not admitting to having nuclear weapons, Israel has avoided being in violation of the global non-proliferation regime. At the same time, Israel was able to keep its enemies guessing about its military capabilities, denying them any excuse to pursue a nuclear option. Meanwhile, by not denying that it had a nuclear-weapons capability, Tel Aviv has been able to deter its enemies from posing an existential threat. In short, nuclear opacity has

given Israel military and strategic benefits without having to pay a political cost.[44]

Interestingly, Iran itself may well aspire to this same form of opacity, utilising the strategic deterrence of nuclear potential. However, as a signatory of the NPT such an option is not available to Iran. It is highly likely that a degree of envy, as well as the perception of unjust standards, is also behind Iran's objection to Israel's continuing ambiguity on this issue.

There is some irony in Iran's view that 'Americans tend to deal differently, and more respectfully, with nations that do have an atomic bomb.'[45] Admission to the 'nuclear club' would give Iran prestige and respect.[46]

> It is easy to feel the degree of public support in Iran for the nuclear programme, which is very much associated with national pride. Iranian people consider nuclear technology to be the most advanced technology, and they see Iran's nuclear capabilities as an indication of their place in the world. It is also seen as a means of equating themselves with the most powerful countries in the international arena.[47]

Given Iran's close proximity to several relatively new nuclear powers, such as India and Pakistan, Iranians look with 'rueful cynicism' on the manner in which they have been made an international pariah as a result of their nuclear programme, particularly in comparison to other nations.[48] These perspectives are at odds with the American view of the same issue.

> Iran's nuclear weapons ambitions bring it less security, not more. They set back, rather than advance, Iran's ability to play the significant regional and international roles that its history, culture and geopolitical weight should bring it.[49]

Iran is unlikely to appreciate that a nuclear weapons programme would bring it less security, given the manner in which the US treats other nuclear powers in the region and the fact that securing a weapons programme would balance Israeli power.

The international community in general, and the US in particular, have three main options in dealing with Iran's nuclear ambitions: diplomacy and sanctions, regime change and military action, or *laissez faire*. The US is not in a position to take the last option, leaving two choices. Diplomacy and sanctions tend to be utilised concurrently, in what is often referred to as the 'carrot and stick' approach. Economic incentives could be used as a carrot, for example, and further sanctions as the stick.[50] Traditionally in dealing with Iran, the US has represented the 'stick' while the European Union dangles the 'carrot'.[51] In the 1980s, this process related to limiting Iran's military capabilities. In the 1990s, Iranian economic expansion was the US's target. Sanctions have been employed against Iran for decades, initially as a means to pressure the Iranian government over hostages and more recently in the attempt to deter uranium enrichment. Recently, this approach has had some success since accords were reached in Geneva in 2013 and Vienna in 2015, allowing the relaxation of economic sanctions in return for significant concessions from Iran.

Prior to that, however, Iran largely resisted the 'carrot and stick' approach. In 2010, after the UN adopted a particularly severe round of sanctions, President Ahmadinejad stated 'experience has shown that contrary to the West's expectations, the Iranian nation has always turned sanctions into an opportunity for its progress.'[52] In stating this position Ahmadinejad framed his political rhetoric within the norms of Iran's experience with international isolation. Mustafa Kibaroglu argues that Western perceptions of the hardships of economic sanctions on Iranian people are erroneous.

> What may be an 'unbearable economic situation' for an American security analyst in Washington, DC may have no real-world meaning for an Iranian who has lived in a rather closed economy for 25 years under the sanctions imposed by the US. Therefore, what American analysts may see as an 'attractive incentive' may be too small to persuade Iranian decision makers to give up the nuclear program that is so associated with national pride.[53]

The testimony of Nicholas Burns, US State Department undersecretary for political affairs, to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 2008 is perhaps an example of the misunderstanding of Iran's position on sanctions:

Iran is not like North Korea. It's not a country that can or would like to live in isolation. It wants to be integrated economically and politically with its neighbours in the Arab world and with Europe, and these sanctions would increasingly isolate and distance Iran from those profitable relationships.[54]

Interestingly, sanctions and 'carrot and stick' diplomacy were purportedly successful in dealing with North Korea, despite its apparent enthusiasm for isolation. North Korea demonstrated a considerable level of compliance with UN Security Council Resolution 1874 (12 June 2009), making compromises regarding its nuclear programme and initially submitting to international demands once effective negotiations were opened.[55] It may be true that Iran does not enjoy the same level of isolationism as North Korea, but this should make Iran more susceptible to sanctions than North Korea, not less. Burns is overlooking the association of self-sufficiency and independence with Iran's political identity. Ayatollah Jannati has noted, 'we do not welcome sanctions, but if we are threatened by sanctions, we will not give in.'[56] The notion of the need to sacrifice and struggle on behalf of the revolution and to resist imperious international demands is an essential tenet of the hardliners' ideological perspective.[57] This recalls not only the revolutionary ideology of the twentieth century, but also the role of Shiʿism in political identity. In addition, it is worthy of mention that some Iranians may actively object to the lifting of sanctions, due to lucrative profiteering from the black market.[58] The Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corp, for example, has benefited from monopolising the smuggling of illicit items.

Ahmadinejad at various points sought to frame the sanctions as beneficial:

Some [countries] assumed that passing illegal resolutions at the Security Council against Iran will deal a blow to Iranian national economy. Instead, they should know that these resolutions have boosted national resolve to strengthen the national economy.[59]

These words appeal to recognised norms within Iran's historical context: primarily the advantages of international isolation. However, such detached expositions on the impact of sanctions are far from universal;

they apply to state actors and their accompanying political rhetoric, rather than to Iranians personally. Abdolali Qavam believes that the sizeable young population of Iran is increasingly concerned about the sanctions; they are 'loath to sacrifice their lifestyle' in the interests of international brinksmanship.[60] In the broader domestic picture, there is no doubt that the range of sanctions in place since 1996 has entailed some harsh consequences for Iran. The sanctions of 2010 and 2013 were particularly damaging to the economy, gradually eroding Iran's foreign income from oil and gas exports and forcing a rapid devaluation of the currency. This has led to significant rises in the cost of living, and the potential for internal dissent over the impact of sanctions could realistically have been a key influence on the relative success of subsequent negotiations over the nuclear programme. President Rouhani has since stated that 'sanctions must be lifted fully' and that they are harming both parties.[61] It is clear that the rhetoric of Ahmadinejad's era was just that, rhetoric.

That being said, in some circumstances the benefits of having an isolated economy justify Ahmadinejad's earlier comments. In the 2008–9 global financial crisis, Iran's stock market remained relatively stable, isolated from the turmoil that engulfed the world banking sector. Iran is obviously heavily exposed to the volatile oil price, and this is the main aspect of a global recession – and the subsequent sanctions – to have an impact on the growth of the Iranian economy. Powers negotiating with Iran need to be conscious of what was 'learned with India and Pakistan in the 1980s and 1990s: sanctions only increase the costs of going nuclear; they do not reduce the ability of a determined government to get the bomb.'[62] Any solution needs to go beyond sanctions.

For diplomatic engagement to have any positive effect, Iran will continue to seek some commitment from the international community regarding future security strategies in its region.

> In nuclear talks, if we are going to be satisfied that Iran is not to move toward a weapons-building capacity, it is going to have to have some kinds of security assurances. In the past, particularly when it offered a grand bargain to the United States in 2003, Iran explicitly asked for assurances that it was not going to be attacked, and that its regime wasn't going to be overthrown.[63]

Scott Sagan suggests that for non-proliferation efforts to be successful, global actors must 'help satisfy whatever concerns drove a state to want nuclear weapons in the first place'.[64] If seeking nuclear capabilities is related to security, then potentially Iran's nuclear programme is being used as 'leverage [. . .] to secure a more favourable security and economic relationship with the United States'.[65] Former Iranian diplomat Javid Qorban-Oghli called on those involved in the diplomatic process on both sides to acknowledge that the 'nuclear dossier is a political issue' and that, to be in a position to influence international opinion, Iran must become engaged in global forums from which it is currently 'almost completely absent'.[66] Pragmatic politics can be seen through the guise of belligerent political rhetoric from the conservatives.

Pragmatism was at the heart of the success of negotiations in Vienna in 2015, on the part of both the US and Iran; perhaps the first true example of such bilateral reasoning since the Islamic Revolution. However, while notable in its success, the agreement holds no guarantee of longer term stability. With a hostile Congress in the US and presidential elections fast approaching, the deal could yet be destroyed from within. This is probably a less likely occurrence on the Iranian side of the agreement due to the pragmatism and economic imperative noted above. If the deal fails because of US politics, that will only fuel the anti-American pillar of the Iranian state and be leveraged as further evidence of the negative impacts of relations with the US. The clerical hierarchy is likely well aware of this potential, meaning that for them the agreement is largely a 'win-win' situation. Either direction for the relationship can yet fit within the accepted norms of Iranian political identity. Optimism for the agreement's longevity cannot be stamped out entirely, there is yet scope for pragmatism to reign in both countries; if so, the deal would represent a lasting achievement of the diplomacy route in nuclear negotiations.

The second option available to the international community in dealing with Iran's nuclear programme – should the Vienna agreement fail – is that of regime change and/or military action. The Bush policy of regime change has undergone a diminution in relevance within American political rhetoric, both as a result of Obama's presidency and the military quagmire experienced in Iraq. It is plausible that the Bush policy influenced Iran's decision to raise the profile of its nuclear programme in the first place, as a deterrent to American tactics.[67]

Similarly, as rhetoric has cooled in recent years, we have seen a gradual winding back of the discussion regarding military strikes. The only country continuing to call for stronger action against Iran is Israel, in the wake of the recent nuclear agreements. We are likely to see a resurgence of any such rhetoric only if Iran fails to meet its obligations under the Vienna treaty.

However, even if interventionist policy had a renaissance – possibly in the context of the US's developing engagement in Iraq and Syria – it is doubtful whether regime change in Iran would execute the desired outcomes with regard to the nuclear programme. For example, opposition elements in Iran, while desiring a change to the system of governance in their country, would not necessarily support an end to the nuclear programme.[68] A 'unique consensus' has emerged, bridging all factions over the issue of nuclear development.[69] Reformist presidential candidate Mir Hossein Mousavi stated during the 2009 election campaign that if elected he would not suspend uranium enrichment.[70] The reformist faction remains adamant that nuclear technology is Iran's right.[71] Iran's opposition, therefore, may be of no additional assistance to US- or Western-driven efforts to end the nuclear programme. Concurrently, there is no guarantee that regime change in Iran would lead to a more moderate system of government than is presently in power. Should the current regime be destabilised, it is also conceivable that the military could step in to fill a power void, resulting in a form of military theocracy.[72] In this case, should Iran achieve full nuclear capabilities, its regime would be even more difficult to alter. Nuclear weapons change the dynamics of conflict, as with such weapons in play 'there is no mechanism for war-driven change to alter the international *status quo*.'[73] The US would not be in a position to effect regime change policy in Iran.

A largely accepted truth within academic discussion on this issue is that military strikes against Iranian nuclear facilities would be unwise and ineffective: a confrontation from which 'neither could emerge victorious'.[74] 'A military confrontation would further destabilise the Middle East.'[75] An air strike, undertaken by Israeli or American forces, for example:

> Could not destroy all the facilities and thus would leave Tehran to resume its uranium-enrichment program at surviving sites and

would give Iran strong incentives to retaliate against U.S. forces in the Middle East. Muslim sentiment throughout the world would be all the more inflamed, encouraging terrorist responses against the West.[76]

Because Iran has developed indigenous nuclear capabilities over its lengthy nuclear history, targeted strikes by the US or its allies might incapacitate sectors of the industry for a period, but Iran would likely be able to resume its activities relatively quickly.[77] The prospect of retaliation is also a very realistic concern and would likely target the US even if it were Israel that executed the strikes.

If it were to become involved, the US would be less likely to employ a broad-based military invasion than limited air strikes because of its experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan. The 'military disaster and political chaos' of those conflicts, combined with the 'unexpectedly high American casualties', would appear likely to hinder policy makers in Washington in that direction.[78] The tendency to avoid 'boots on the ground' has been witnessed in US-led military action against Islamic State extremists in Iraq and Syria, reflecting that coalition's unwillingness to become mired in another regional conflict.

In some Israeli circles, the military option is considered the only possible course of action. The Institute for National Strategic Studies at Tel Aviv University has stated that 'Iran will develop nuclear weapons unless prevented from doing so by military action' and has also expressed satisfaction that Israel is capable of executing such a strike.[79] Israel's successful preventative strikes on Syria and Iraq may encourage this option in the interests of maintaining a nuclear monopoly in the Middle East.[80]

Karim Sadjadpour drew attention to the potential consequences of military action to the US Congress's Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs in 2008.

One common point which spans the key issues in the Middle East: Iraq, nuclear proliferation, terrorism, energy security, Arab–Israeli peace, Afghanistan; Iran is the common denominator of all these points. Ignoring Iran is obviously not an option, bombing Iran will exacerbate all of these issues [. . .] and we're left with what Churchill called "the least bad option" [. . .] that is, talking to Iran.[81]

There is merit to the belief that targeting Iran's nuclear facilities will have an impact on many of America's key strategic interests in the region. Oil security is a central concern: during the height of military strike rhetoric in Ahmadinejad's administration, the president declared he would secure the Strait of Hormuz in the event of a military strike on Iranian soil.[82] Even if only temporarily successful, such a move would dramatically increase oil prices, given the volume of oil that must pass through this narrow strait to reach international markets.

Consequences of Iranian Nuclear Proliferation

It is possible that Iran's conquering of nuclear technology, and more particularly the possession of nuclear weapons, would produce a burst of proliferation in the region. Mustafa Kibaroglu suggests that Saudi Arabia would not wish to be outdone by its traditional Persian Gulf rival and that Egypt might view the prospect of nuclearisation as a means to regain some of its lost prestige in the Arab world.[83] However, there are reasons to doubt this eventuality.

> The economic and security interests of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey, unlike those of Iran, are tied to the United States and the broader global economy, and developing nuclear weapons would put those interests at risk. Egypt would jeopardise the [. . .] economic and military aid that it receives from Washington each year; Saudi Arabia, its implicit US security guarantee; and Turkey, its place in NATO. Given their extensive investments in and business ties to the United States and Europe, all three countries would be far more vulnerable than Iran is to any economic sanctions that US law imposed, or could impose, on nuclear proliferators.[84]

The Palestinian newspaper *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* raises an interesting point on the issue of proliferation in the region, stating that if US opposition to Iranian nuclear development is in part over the arms race, 'didn't Israel start the race?'[85]

Another key concern held by the US is that Iranian nuclear proliferation could lead to weapons falling into the hands of non-state actors, or terrorists. In holding this concern, the US further demonstrates

a misinterpretation of Iran's interests. Iran is not the illogical actor that it is often portrayed to be within the US.

> The Islamic Republic is not an irrational rogue state seeking such weaponry as an instrument of an aggressive, revolutionary foreign policy. This is not an 'Islamic bomb' to be handed over to terrorist organisations or exploded in the streets of New York or Washington. The fact is that Iran has long possessed chemical weapons, and has yet to transfer such arms to its terrorist allies.[86]

US understanding of this issue is coloured by that nation's own political mythology regarding states that do not conform to its perspective on the world. Practical interests form a fundamental base for the revolutionary politics practised by the Iranian regime.

> Despite its messianic pretensions, Iran has observed clear limits when supporting militias and terrorist organisations in the Middle East. Iran has not provided Hezbollah with chemical or biological weapons or Iraqi militias with the means to shoot down US aircraft. Iran's rulers understand that such provocative actions could imperil their rule by inviting retaliation.[87]

Iran wages its conflict against Israel through such proxies as Hamas and Hezbollah, but within 'distinct limits'.[88] This makes it difficult to imagine that Iran is developing nuclear technologies with the design of providing weapons to such organisations to eradicate the Jewish state.

Perspectives from the Arab Middle East provide some interesting insight into how Iran's neighbours view Iran's nuclear programme. Mohammad Shaker projected Egypt's opinion on the subject internationally, stating 'Iran should not set a bad precedent for other developing countries by foregoing the option of developing indigenous nuclear technologies under the pressure from the US.'[89] This is open encouragement for Iran to exercise its rights under the NPT as a precedent for other nations doing the same in the future.

> Those who are on the way to becoming nuclearised are [...] indebted to Iran. This is because the lawful steadfastness of the Iranians has, in practice, led to the revival of the fourth article of

the NPT which allows countries to have the nuclear fuel cycle technology for civilian purposes.[90]

Iran's Islamic neighbours appear eager to benefit from Iran's efforts and may also welcome a counterbalance to Israel's overwhelming military dominance of the region.

On the other hand, Iran's becoming a nuclear power might embolden it with regard to its relations with its Persian Gulf neighbours. Smaller Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states would be unenthusiastic about 'antagonising' Iran.[91] In addition, Iran 'might feel less restrained in instigating Shiʿi uprisings against Arab sheikhdoms in the Persian Gulf'.[92] Iran has long been supportive of Shiʿi groups expressing their political disenfranchisement within the Sunni monarchies of the region and may be less wary of angering neighbouring regimes should it possess nuclear weapons. The weight of a nuclear Iran may also have an impact on Iran's position in the oil-producing community, though James Lindsay and Ray Takeyh are hesitant about the likelihood of the limited nature of nuclear weapons having much impact on producers such as Saudi Arabia. Indeed, 'more likely, the Persian Gulf states would take even more refuge under the US security umbrella.'[93] This would surely be a negative consequence in the eyes of the Iranian regime.

Raghida Dergham suspects that those with the greatest amount to lose from a nuclear-armed Iran may be the Arab people:

> Arab leaderships will dedicate, or tell their peoples they are dedicating, budgets and funds to obtain nuclear capabilities, so as for the Arabs not to fall outside of the regional balance of power. Indeed, both Iran and Israel possessing nuclear weapons will lead to a nuclear arms race – or the pretence of one – which will take place at the expense of what the Arab region needs in terms of investments for the eradication of illiteracy, for economic and human growth, for higher education and for building state institutions and infrastructure for development.[94]

Whether funding towards an arms race would in fact have been directed to these social welfare issues in the absence of such an event is debatable, but some perspectives in the Arab region concur with American fears of an arms race. However, the basis for those fears is significantly different.

Iran's Nuclear Programme: Interest and Identity

Hillary Mann Leverett, Iran expert on the National Security Council, told the US Congress in 2007 that:

> The pursuit of a nuclear weapons option is based on regime survival. And if it's based on regime survival, even if we were to militarily strike it, I think that would further add concern to them that the regime [. . .] is at risk. And it would harden the mentality and force the program [. . .] to go underground.[95]

Her last claim is credible, that concern over military strikes would serve only to harden Iran's position on its nuclear development, particularly if Iran's current intention is only – as claimed – nuclear energy not weapons development. However, it would appear unlikely that the nuclear option is solely based on regime survival. In propagating a belligerent stance, Iran is acting both within its national security interests and its imagined political identity. Ideological considerations are also present in its foreign policy development. These mixed interests and complex inputs create a particular challenge for foreign powers seeking to disentangle Iran's foreign policy.[96]

By appealing to the imagined norms of its political identity, Iran can frame its international position on nuclear proliferation from within an accepted national narrative. It can be claimed that centuries of deprivation and interference from foreign actors can be superseded by Iran's demonstration of its independence and sovereignty. Ahmadinejad stated that Iran 'will preserve the right to take strong countermeasures against any governments that, from any corner of the world, manage to violate even one iota of the Iranians' rights'.[97] For the US to deny what Iran perceives to be its rights under the NPT merely serves to reproduce Iran's political identity.

The mythology of the past can frequently outweigh the realities of the present, and often has greater resonance in political rhetoric. However, 'when forced to choose', Iran has in the past been willing to set aside ideological considerations in the interests of the state; this is an avenue that the Obama administration and the P5 + 1 have managed to follow.[98] Nevertheless, the unpredictability of which interests Iran will choose to serve creates apprehension amongst those opposed to the

nuclear programme. Collective identity regarding the propagation of national interests could not be shared between those in opposition to Iran and the leaders of the Islamic Republic.[99] This problem greatly magnifies the threat perception of the US and its allies.

The US's projection of its political identity in international affairs has been a feature of its foreign policy in the last century. In addition, it has been demonstrated that a failure of diplomacy would be humiliating for the US. Historically, the US has not responded positively to experiences of humiliation in international relations, as has been discussed in Chapter 3. Bitterness in the event of failure, as an element of American political identity, is an input into foreign policy and national security decisions in this context. As presented earlier, security interests are embedded in cultural environments, which 'affect not only the incentives for different kinds of state behaviour but also the basic character of states'.[100] In this instance, while US national security may not be directly threatened by Iran's nuclear programme, American intervention, whether diplomatically or militarily, is an expected act in the global environment. Consequently, American political identity has constructed an interest in this foreign policy challenge, creating an incentive for state behaviour.

Both the Iranian and the American stances on the question of Iran's nuclear programme are demonstrative of elements of the political identity of each state. A variety of interests are providing impulses for foreign policy decisions in this high-stakes international issue. In this instance, there is still very little in terms of collective interest or shared purposes between the two, meaning that self-interest is the primary motivating factor. As a result, Iran's nuclear programme will likely continue to represent a significant foreign policy challenge.

CHAPTER 6

INTERSECTION OF INTEREST AND IDENTITY IN REGIONAL ISSUES

Identity is in part defined by interests, implying that political identity is directly related to the foreign policy interests of state actors. This section demonstrates the areas in which American and Iranian interests are either common or contrasting, and the manner in which that creates challenges or opportunities in relations both between these two states and in a global context. In the case of the US and Iran, interests can be shown to be shared or disparate in a number of important cases in international affairs. 'The US and Iran have a lot in common, not just in interests but in how they look at themselves [and] their role in the international community.'[1] This chapter recognises these common interests, as well as the manner in which the political identity of each nation is projected on the global stage.

Of particular bearing are areas of fundamental foreign policy relevance for both nations, such as the strife-ridden zones of Afghanistan and Iraq, the conflict in Syria and the manner in which Israel affects the decision making of Iran and the US.

It is no exaggeration to argue that Iran's relationship with the West greatly influences the direction of the conflict between the Palestinians and Israelis, the security or otherwise of the Persian Gulf states and of the wider Middle East, political stability or

instability in Iraq and Afghanistan and, to a large extent, the relationship between the West and the Muslim world.[2]

Both the US and Iran have deep and enduring interests in all of these international issues, and Iranian policy decisions in such key areas of contention have a significant impact on the success or otherwise of US strategy in the region, particularly if the following is proven true:

> Iran's foreign policy goal, in the assessment of many, is to fundamentally restructure the Middle East by reducing US influence and weakening Israel to the furthest extent possible. This goal coincides with Iran's national interest, which is to force the United States to proceed cautiously in and around Iran's borders and to be positioned to cause major harm to the United States, should it act against Iran militarily. These goals are very deep-seated. Iran has been invaded throughout its history and views itself as having been continually manipulated by great powers. This, I think, motivates Iran's foreign policy, the desire to be liberated from its historical vulnerability.[3]

An interesting – and intrinsically vital – proposition to consider is whether the US administration is appreciative of these factors in Iranian policy. These issues – and how the US responds to Iran's goals – have a crucial impact on the realisation of US interests in the region.

> Perhaps the single most important factor for [US] decline in this part of the world is a policy framework toward the Islamic Republic of Iran that is dysfunctional for US interests on virtually all of the region's key security, political and economic challenges. Getting Iran policy right will not fix everything that's wrong with America's position in the Middle East, but I would argue that if we don't get Iran policy right there is going to be little or no strategic recovery for the United States in this strategically vital region.[4]

Given this definitive recognition of the significance of Iran with regard to US interests, it is essential to analyse the inability of both nations to reconcile their interests for mutual advantage. The potency of history

and experience as inputs to political identity is critical in demonstrating these challenges.

Shared Interests: Afghanistan

As a key forum for the enactment of the US 'War on Terror' and a neighbour for Iran, Afghanistan has represented a conundrum for the foreign policy interests of both nations. With the 2014 withdrawal of most US and international forces from the conflict in Afghanistan, it is a unique occasion to reflect on this war – one that could be described as having been 'lost' by the US – in the light of common interests. In this example, the procurement of common objectives held by the US and Iran has been threatened by the history and experience of their relationship. The projection of political identity in this arena has acted as a challenge – and obstacle – to the foreign policy of both countries and, as a result, each nation has impeded its own interests.

During the Soviet occupation, Iran held ties within Afghanistan to the *Sazman-e Nasr* (Organisation of Victory), which was led by Abdul Ali Mazari. Later, Mazari would come to lead the Hezb-e Wahdat (Party of Unity).[5] Iran's support included the supply of humanitarian and military aid.[6] During the civil strife that besieged Afghanistan between the collapse of the Soviet-backed communist government in Kabul in April 1992 and the rise of the Taliban government in 1996, Iran joined its Central Asian neighbours and Russia in supporting The United Front for the Islamic Salvation of Afghanistan.[7] At the same time, Pakistan, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia were providing varying degrees of aid to the Taliban in the form of weapons and funding.[8] Saudi Arabia's positive stance with regard to the Taliban was rather short-lived, suffering when the Afghan leaders refused to extradite Osama bin Laden over the alleged bombing of US installations in Saudi Arabia in 1996.[9] Diplomatic ties were eventually severed in 1998. Iran's main concern with foreign support for the Taliban related primarily to Pakistan, owing principally to the fact that that country's key objective in defeating the United Front was to annex a stable energy supply route through Afghanistan to Central Asia, greatly harming Iran's strategic and economic interests.[10] This objection was an expression of practical, rather than political, interests.

From a political perspective, the Taliban's version of orthodox Sunni *shari'a*-based government presented a challenge to relations between Iran and Afghanistan, as it was incompatible with Iran's concept of Shi'i Islamic rule. Ayatollah Khamenei explained that 'the version of Islam practised by Iran is wholly unlike the Taliban model'[11] and described the Taliban's ideology as constituting 'barbaric stone-age ideas'.[12] The Foreign Ministry of Iran declared that 'Iran does not recognise the Taliban and has no diplomatic ties with the militia.'[13] In addition, Iran held grave reservations regarding America's support for this group, particularly the involvement of the CIA, which Iran claimed had aided in training Taliban fighters.[14] Iranian rhetoric to the effect that the Taliban was trained by the US 'must be treated with due caution',[15] and Iranian suggestions to that end likely largely constitute propaganda. In reality, it was the Pakistani military intelligence (ISI) that directly trained and funded the Taliban, not the US, though the latter was undoubtedly aware of the support Pakistan was providing.

During the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, the US had sought a variety of means to mire the USSR in conflict.[16] A disastrous military campaign for the Soviets would be advantageous to the US in both the ideological and the national interest sense, and the US actively encouraged external participants in the anti-Soviet campaign. It was in this context that support was provided to non-Afghan actors such as Osama bin Laden.[17] Mohsen Milani estimates that the US gave some \$3 billion to the effort to defeat the Soviets during the course of the 1980s.[18] The training of non-Afghan fighters led to the establishment of a Wahhabist *madrasa* education system in both Afghanistan and Pakistan:

> One of the unintended consequences of that policy was that after the collapse of the Soviet Union, many of these militants, emboldened by the victory in Afghanistan, shifted their anti-Communism attitude towards an anti-American stance and became foot soldiers of the global *jihadi* movement and al-Qaeda.[19]

A common anti-American stance was insufficient to reconcile Iran to a shared interest with the developing radical movement to its east, however.

In September 1996, the Taliban succeeded in forcing the Mujahideen government of President Burhanuddin Rabbani into the north of the country and established its own government in Kabul, which was soon recognised by Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the UAE.[20] However, the critical points for Iran were the massacre of thousands of Shi'i civilians at Mazar-e Sharif, and the invasion of the Iranian consulate and the kidnapping of diplomats, both in 1998.[21] The victory of the Taliban over the Hezb-e Wahdat and the events at Mazar-e Sharif were a defining moment for Iran's stance on the Taliban and destroyed any prospect of Iran developing a positive relationship with its eastern neighbour's hardline government.[22] Ironically, however, the consulate crisis of 1998 may also have served to assist in ending the US's tacit support for the Taliban.[23] Up to this point, Iranian interests bore little relationship to those of the US, with Iran primarily concerned with limiting Pakistan's influence in Afghanistan and Central Asia. These issues related to economic and strategic interests for Iran, while the US was pursuing political interests that did not coincide with those of the Islamic Republic.

The terrorist attacks of 9/11 vastly altered the foreign policy landscape of the US, and consequently the Afghan region. As a result of its experiences of dealing with the Taliban in the 1990s, following 9/11 Iran expressed a willingness to assist the coalition in its military ventures in Afghanistan, targeting those responsible for the terrorist acts. Removal of the Taliban would provide Iran with a strategic advantage over Pakistan, which had 'gambled high stakes by betting on the monster they created'.[24] Certain observers in the West considered that Iran's support for the United Front in the civil war served to make Iran a 'de facto member of the coalition'.[25]

> In the months after 9/11, Iran provided tangible support to US and coalition military operations in Afghanistan and robust support to US efforts to stand up opposed to Taliban political order, culminating in the Bonn Conference.[26]

It may be argued that Iran was in part interested in ousting the Taliban from government in Afghanistan because of its belief that the CIA trained the Taliban during the Soviet occupation.[27] Regardless of the intention of the collaboration, Iran embraced US policy in the region and became actively involved in the coalition's activities.

Iran also aided the coalition's cause by hosting considerable numbers of Afghan refugees in the early stages of the invasion, helping to prevent a large-scale humanitarian crisis for the US.[28] A stable Afghanistan would lessen the burden of the refugees on Iran.

> Iran's efforts for reconstruction of the war-torn Afghanistan as well as aids and loans provided by the Islamic Republic for the Afghan nation will benefit the national interest.[29]

In 2002, when this statement was made, Iran pledged some \$560 million for reconstruction costs over five years, and Iran remains one of the largest development partners in Afghanistan.[30] Iran has also collaborated with Western projects to build roads and other infrastructure, particularly in the western regions of Afghanistan.[31] More recently, Iran in August 2013 signed the Afghanistan–Iran Strategic Cooperation Agreement, a memorandum on security and law-enforcement cooperation.[32] It is clear from these commitments that Iran has significant interest in the future of its eastern neighbour. Unlike the NATO-led forces in Afghanistan, Iran has no 'exit' from the region and will need to continue to deal with its postwar neighbour.[33]

US envoy James Dobbins was involved in sideline talks with Iran over the Taliban, the early stages of the war and the creation of President Hamid Karzai's government (2004–14). He states that the Iranians offered 'significant cooperation to the United States', including drastic changes in policy such as an offer to assist in training the new Afghan army under American leadership on Iranian soil.[34] Dobbins presented this offer to the administration in Washington but, as far as he is aware, the Iranians never received a response.[35] In the early stages of its Afghanistan campaign, US forces had succeeded in ousting the Taliban from government and the Bush administration was 'supremely self-confident'; this position of superiority did not encourage or necessitate a policy change with regard to Iran.[36]

The indirect response Iran did receive from Washington following its engagements with Dobbins was delivered through Bush's 2002 State of the Union address. However, rather than acknowledging Iran's assistance in the war against terrorism, Bush included Iran in a list of states that 'constitute an axis of evil'.[37] He made the concession that 'some of these regimes have been pretty quiet since September 11, but we know their true nature,' which was perhaps a reference to Iran's expression of solidarity with the US

in the wake of the terrorist attacks and his belief in the lack of authenticity behind Iran's response.[38] The sentiment these comments must have inspired in Iran could only have been one of affront and betrayal. A former Iranian Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister described Bush's remarks as an 'untimely, hostile approach'.[39] Elements within the Iranian elite 'found it difficult to recognise themselves as part of an unholy alliance with Iraq and North Korea'.[40] Nevertheless, Ayatollah Khamenei expressed his pride that Iran was the target of the rage and hatred of the Great Satan.[41] However, Dobbins points out that Iran nevertheless continued its offers of support after the State of the Union speech.[42] In fact, some seventeen months of regular meetings occurred between Tehran and Washington.

> In the monthly meetings [envoy Hillary Mann Leverett's] Iranian counterparts repeatedly raised the prospect of broadening our common agenda, both to achieve strategic *rapprochement* between the US and Iran, as well as to provide tactical support to a prospective US attack on Saddam's Iraq.[43]

It was perhaps the most significant change in policy behaviour from Iran in more than twenty years, and arguably more so even than the Vienna agreement on nuclear issues. Conversely, the American negotiators were under explicit orders from the President and his national security team to reject overtures of *rapprochement*.[44]

In the context of the early stages of the war in Afghanistan, there are several identifiable examples of areas in which US and Iranian interests converged or where opportunities for collusion existed. In December 2001, in the interests of the international community, Iran agreed to prevent Afghan warlord Gulbuddin Hekmatyar from returning to his homeland, despite the fact that they did not desire his continued presence in Iran.[45] Iran claimed that 'it had hosted Hekmatyar upon the request of Afghanistan and some Western countries.'[46] However, rather than appreciating Iran's restricting Hekmatyar's movements, Bush in his 2002 State of the Union address instead accused Iran of harbouring terrorists.[47] In response to this, Iran released Hekmatyar, who then returned to Afghanistan and Pakistan to fight NATO forces. He remains at large; at the time of writing he was reportedly assisting Islamic State in Afghanistan.

The narcotics trade is another Afghanistan-related international issue on which the US and Iran have similar objectives.[48] Iran 'has long

suffered from the effects of opium production in its neighbourhood'.[49] Iranian law enforcement has been engaged in a long-term attempt to stem the tide of opium originating from Afghanistan and being exported across Iran's eastern provinces. The geographically challenging states of Sistan-e Baluchistan, Khurasan Razavi and South Khurasan on Iran's frontier have for decades been host to drug-related conflict, which has claimed the lives of thousands of Iranian police.[50] Despite various obstacles, Iran has achieved some success in its efforts, and has invested heavily in the project.[51] In 1999, Iran was spending approximately $400 million annually to fight the drug trade.[52] Iran feels its efforts in this field have been downplayed and would 'appreciate some assistance and recognition from the international community'.[53] In 2006, Iran requested assistance from NATO to secure its eastern border regions in the interests of curbing the drug trade. Thomas Mattair indicates that one reason for the lack of NATO interest in Iran's request could potentially have been related to US covert support for the Baluchi separatist movement in the region. If Bush were actively supporting instability in the area, he would have been unlikely to back NATO's move to quell the lawlessness.[54] Mattair suggests that NATO should have accepted this challenge in the interests of preventing narcotics income from reaching the Taliban and Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, a mutual interest of both Iran and the US. He adds that the US should have acted to place the Baluchi rebel movement on its terrorist list to assure Iran of its support for the fight against the narcotics trade.[55] American Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) operatives have attempted a similar fight from within Afghanistan, but little or no logistical or intelligence collaboration between the American and Iranian law enforcement agencies has occurred, hampering the abilities of both sides to effect tangible improvements with regard to this international problem.

Both the narcotics trade issue and the 'axis of evil' comments following Iran's support for the Afghan campaign, which in the words of Gary Sick were 'inexplicable, then and now', are certainly examples of bungled opportunities for relationship change on the part of the Bush administration.[56] However, the magnitude of the errors made may not be realised, as Hillary Mann Leverett explains:

> I want to note [. . .] that the White House has gone to extraordinary
> lengths, including outright abuse of executive powers, to keep me

from laying out the full extent of the Bush administration's mishandling of Iran policy since the 9/11 attacks. The White House censored op-ed articles in newspapers abusing powers that are designed to prevent the publication of classified material. All had been cleared as unclassified by the CIA.[57]

Common interests between the US and Iran over Afghanistan were insufficient to supersede decades of mistrust.

Shared Interests: Iraq

The removal of Saddam Hussein, the stabilisation of postwar Iraq and the fight against jihadist group Islamic State have been key facets of US foreign policy in the period since 2003. The success or failure of America's attempted regime change policy, the securing of its strategic and economic interests, and the battle against extremism have resulted in particular focus on the region. As an important neighbour and regional actor, the future of Iraq is also critical to Iranian interests. In many aspects, the interests of the US and Iran coincide with regard to Iraq, particularly in a desire to see stability restored.[58] Common interests often have significant caveats, however.

As Bush's political rhetoric began to lay the groundwork for an invasion of Iraq in late 2002 and early 2003, Iran began to consider its options. The war, 'waged by Iran's archenemy (the US) against its main regional adversary (Iraq)',[59] presented a unique situation for Iran. Ongoing enmity between Tehran and Baghdad had been the *status quo* since the Iran–Iraq War of the 1980s, with the consequence that Iran in many respects welcomed the removal of Saddam Hussein's ruling Ba'ath Party. However, invasion and occupation by American troops was not necessarily to be welcomed.[60] The presence of US military forces in Iraq as well as Afghanistan effectively surrounded Iran with unwelcome foreign troops. A reiteration of Iran's offer of assistance to the US and its allies, which had been forthcoming following 9/11 and the invasion of Afghanistan, was once again presented as a 'trial balloon' by the Khatami government, in 2003, to test the position of the US as the invasion of Iraq commenced.[61] The Iranians were 'both grateful that their two neighbouring antagonists had been removed but fearful that they would be next'.[62] The prospect of being effectively surrounded by US troops

was no minor concern. The offer, often termed the 'Grand Bargain', and its rejection by the US, has had a variety of consequences.

The Grand Bargain offered to put all issues on the negotiating table, including recognition of Israel and Iran's tangible support for Hezbollah and ideological support for Hamas.[63] As a result of 'the power of the neo-conservatives', nothing came of the offer.[64] To the Iranians, US rejection, or indeed complete disavowal, of this proposal was a clear demonstration that the US would not respond to behaviour change, despite the rhetoric to that effect that had been forthcoming since George H.W. Bush's purported policy of 'goodwill begets goodwill.'

> The Bush administration rejected this proposal out of hand and cut off the bilateral channel with the Iranians less than two weeks later. From an Iranian perspective, this record shows that Washington will take what it can get from talking to Iran on specific issues, but it is not prepared for real rapprochement. From an American perspective, I believe this record indicates that the Bush administration cavalierly rejected multiple and significant opportunities to put US–Iranian relations on a fundamentally more positive and constructive trajectory.[65]

It was damaging to the prospect of future negotiations with the US, as it indicated that concessions would not be rewarded, that cooperation held little political capital.[66] Conversely, analysts and officials in the US tended to minimise emphasis on the Grand Bargain, warning against placing too high a significance on its role in relations between the two countries.[67] The transmission of Iran's terms via a Swiss intermediary also allows the US government to doubt the actual origin of the offer.[68] Owing to the lack of diplomatic communication between the two countries, an intermediary was of course a necessity, but this form of indirect contact predicates disavowal or uncertainty. In any case, even if the offer was merely a trial to gauge US reaction, the complete lack of rejoinder was a meaningful response in itself.

William Beeman draws attention to a rumour that emerged in Washington and Baghdad in 2004 as realisation of the lack of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq was beginning to filter into the international community, damaging US credibility. Ahmad Chalabi, an Iraqi exile involved in the administration of post-invasion Iraq, who had just been

overlooked for the interim leadership of Iraq in favour of Iyad Allawi, was suggested to have had dealings with Iran. The rumour indicated that Iran had 'purposely mislead the United States by planting false information through Ahmad Chalabi' regarding Saddam's weapons programme.[69] Iran was purported to have undertaken this fraud in the interests of having the US remove Iran's 'old enemy' from power.[70] While Iran undoubtedly welcomed the removal of its long-time adversary, the likelihood it chose to trade Saddam Hussein for yet another force of American troops on its border is minimal. Even discounting the Chalabi story, Iranian influence in Iraq continues to present a challenge to the US, which – more than a decade on from the invasion – is striving to establish a stable, pro-Western democracy. An Iraqi government sympathetic to the US would allow a significantly greater regional penetration of American democracy, values and interests – an outcome entirely at odds with Iranian political identity.[71]

With the exception of Khatami's outreach in 2003, it was not in Iran's interests to further America's foreign policy in Iraq during the occupation. The US intended that Iraq be a 'bridgehead' for democracy and a manifestation of Bush's international strategy.[72] The instability of post-2003 Iraq has hardly been an encouraging picture for those considering the implementation of democratic reforms, particularly those Arab nations with substantial Shiʿi populations, such as Saudi Arabia and Bahrain. Autocratic regimes in the region viewed the example of Iraq as a reason to tighten their own grip on power.[73] In addition, American insistence on elections in Lebanon, Iraq and the Palestinian Territories 'enabled militias to enter the political process and then paralysed it in each place'.[74] This did not enhance the appeal of democracy in the Arab nations, nor did the US boycotting of the Hamas government following its legitimate election. Challenges experienced in establishing democracy in so-called Arab Spring countries since 2011 have been similarly disenchanting.

During the US occupation of Iraq, Iran supported Shiʿi militia groups such as the Mahdi Army, both to exert influence and engage burgeoning Sunni militant factions in sectarian civil conflict. The deaths of American troops at the hands of Iran-backed fighters made the issue a 'personal' one for the Bush administration and the American public.[75] A contentious issue, Iranian elites for some time distanced themselves from association with Iran's engagement in Iraq.[76] Ascertaining a definitive

answer as to the extent of Iran's involvement in supplying Iraqi militia during the sectarian conflict is challenging, but Kayhan Barzegar does make the point that a stable and secure Iraq is in the interests of the Iranian government given that insecurity could easily spread from Iraq to Iran.[77] In 2014, this priority became newly relevant as Shiʿi militias once again took up arms to fight Islamic State for control of northern Iraq.

Kenneth Pollack provides an alternative scenario, suggesting that Iran believed the eventual failure of the US military venture in Iraq would descend the latter nation into chaos and civil war, a circumstance that would require direct Iranian intervention. To restrict activities short of direct military action while the US remained in Iraq:

> Khamenei {...} allowed the intelligence services to deploy in Iraq in force and position themselves to fight a war there if necessary but not to engage in any actual belligerent activities until he ordered them to do so. So the Iranians would recruit assets; reconnoiter the terrain; secure allies; distribute weapons, money and supplies; establish safe houses and other facilities; train their personnel; and even draw up operational plans, but they would not actually be allowed to take action against either the Americans or other Iraqi groups until given permission by Tehran.[78]

The belief that the US effort would fail in Iraq was not an uncommon sentiment in the Middle East at the time, and Pollack's position is that Iran was preparing itself for this eventuality.[79] In doing so, Iran was protecting its national interests. The manner in which Iraq has destabilised in the years since the US withdrawal may not have precisely met Pollack's earlier expectations, but Iran's preparation may not have been misplaced.

The refrain of 'the future of Iraq is the Iraqis' decision' was often repeated among Iranian analysts and government officials when queried on the issue in Iran.[80] While apparently distancing Iran from any involvement in directing the course of Iraq's future, this statement also expresses a powerful subtext of desiring the US to leave Iraq to determine its own future. As former Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi declared:

> The party that will leave Iraq is the United States, because it will eventually withdraw. But the party that will live with the Iraqis is Iran, because it is a neighbour to Iraq.[81]

Ironically, Iran's statements regarding Iraq's future also provide an echo of similar statements made in the US in early 1979, when the Shah's departure allowed Iranians to determine a new future in the revolutionary period. Assistant Secretary of State Harold Saunders declared:

> Our strongly held view has been and is that no outside power should try to dictate Iran's course, to exploit instability for its own ends, or to seek control of any kind in this area. [. . .] We must in the future, as we have in the past, respect the rights of Iranians to decide how they will order their own future.[82]

This statement can be taken at face value, but the distinct note of warning to the USSR must be detectable in the construction of Saunders' statement. The declaration from Iran, that it is interested only in Iraq having the freedom to decide its own destiny, displays a similar undercurrent.

Despite Iran's repeated statements to this effect, it has not avoided a role in the postwar reconstruction of Iraq. As the insurgency and civil strife began to make the position of US forces tenuous, Washington acknowledged that Iran's input might be needed to solve Iraq's problems. This reintroduced the incentive to engage diplomacy, and the Bush administration began to seek a meeting with the Iranians in 2007.[83] As Ammar Ali Hassan summarises in the UAE daily newspaper *Al-Ittihad*, Bush was forced to acknowledge that 'all the roads that he took in Iraq ended in Iran.'[84] As a result, two direct high-level meetings took place between the two countries in Baghdad in 2007, and a further engagement took place as a sideline to EU-Iranian negotiations in July 2008.[85] These discussions were the highest-level official meetings between the two countries since diplomatic ties were severed in 1980, and they raised some hope that the quagmire of post-Saddam Iraq could hold a positive consequence as the source of an amelioration of relations.[86] There is some evidence from the US that Iranian support for militia elements in Iraq lessened following the engagements of 2007–8 in that the supply of lethal arms decreased.[87] This was one of the key

factors in allowing the US to reduce its troop numbers in Iraq, an eventuality that was clearly in the interests of both countries.

Fresh diplomatic discussions about the future of Iraq have been required in 2014–15. Once again, the US and Iran are in concert over shared interests in Iraq – and, though for different reasons, some common interests in Syria – both states are determined to combat the rise of Islamic State and its establishment of a 'caliphate' across northern Iraq and Syria. As described by a democracy advocate and Iran analyst:

> Strategically, [Iran and the US] need each other more than ever now. The region is in turmoil, while Iran is stable with an urbanised, educated population that tends to score highest in the region in polls on favourable views of America. The US and Iran have more interests in common in the region than they do in conflict.[88]

The US has indicated that it desires Iran's help against Islamic State, but has stopped short of building the Islamic Republic into any form of official coalition undertaking military action. Iran's long-term support of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad is less popular with the US and may be a contributing factor in the lack of formal ties. In any case, this situation appears to be an example of Iran and the US using each other quietly but publicly eschewing any official connection. In the context of Iraq, the developments represent an interesting u-turn in events given the US's abhorrence of Iran's support for Shiʿi militias during the former's occupation of Iraq. Iran has had 'boots on the ground' supporting the Iraqi military and Kurdish peshmerga forces against Islamic State, this time without drawing the ire of the US. It appears unlikely to have a significant influence on the state of the relationship, but reflects the adage 'my enemy's enemy is my friend'. In other circumstances, Iran's involvement in what is – at least in part – a sectarian conflict would not be accepted.

Since the end of Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq, there has been an increase in discussion about the rise of Shiʿism in the Middle East, or what Vali Nasr terms the 'Shiʿa revival'. This concept presents those of the Shiʿi faith as having a unity that has been enhanced by the end of the oppression of the Shiʿa majority in Iraq. It has leapt into focus in international relations, particularly because around the rim of the

Persian Gulf, so important to Western interests, some 80 per cent of the population is Shiʻa.[89] Iran identifies itself as something of a guardian of the Shiʻi faith, being the only nation in which Shiʻism is the state religion and indeed the basis of the political system. It has even been said that 'the Iranian religious ruling elite [. . .] attempt to present Iran as the "Vatican of Shiʻism".'[90] The seminaries of Qom have long been centres of learning within Shiʻism, particularly during the 1980s and 1990s, but before the Islamic Revolution in Iran, Najaf in Iraq could lay claim to being the seat of Shiʻi learning. Competition between Arab Shiʻism, based in Najaf, and Iranian Shiʻism, based in Qom, has intensified feelings of ethnic tension.[91]

Western analysts of Iranian-Iraqi affairs do not always perceive such distinctions. Evidence of the fear, real or imagined, of Iranian interference in Iraq has been prevalent in American political rhetoric. George W. Bush announced in a 2007 speech that US victory in freeing Iraq would 'counter the destructive ambitions of Iran'.[92] Bush's rhetoric to this effect dominated his speech-making on Iraq in 2005–7, during which time American attempts to stabilise Iraq appeared to be failing. Bush sought instead to focus on Iran's 'opportunistic' interests and the threat this posed to the regional power structure.[93] Republican senator for Indiana, Richard Lugar, echoed Bush's language regarding 'Iran's expansionist foreign policy' and its intentions to 'dominate the region'.[94] Along similar lines, Amir Taheri paints a grim portrait of the future of Iraq as it lay at the time:

> Any early disengagement by the United States in Iraq can only lead to the emergence of a pro-Iran regime in Baghdad. That, in turn, could lead to the dismemberment of Iraq under the combined pressure of Kurdish secessionism, Turkish concerns, and Sunni Arab resentment.[95]

This presupposes a high degree of Iranian influence over the direction of Iraq, based to a large extent on shared Shiʻi heritage.

The Shiʻa are by no means a cohesive unit, and the 'presumed alliance' between Shiʻi communities and Iran is often overstated in the West.[96] Iranian influence in Iraq is limited by ethnic division, as was expressed by Thomas Mattair in discussion of the US reaching out to Iran to assist in curbing the insurgency in Iraq.

> When we ask Iran to help us [in Iraq . . .] we shouldn't ask them to
> do more than they are capable of doing. We should try to
> remember that Iraqi Shias are Arabs, not Persians. They're not
> pawns of Iran. They have their own agenda.[97]

Much of Iran's recent history with Iraq has been troubled by conflict and
competition, meaning 'the prevalent Iranian view is consequently one
based on mistrust,' a factor that the removal of Saddam Hussein has not
necessarily erased.[98] Historical complications to relations between Arabs
and Iranians have provided an input to Iran's political identity, and while
Barzegar's designation of 'irreconcilable hostility' may be somewhat
overstated, it certainly dispels the notion that Iran and Iraq might
possess a 'presumed alliance'.[99]

Iran undoubtedly formed a destination of refuge for those fleeing
Saddam Hussein's ruthless suppression of the Shi'i community in Iraq
during the Ba'athist regime.[100] As the revolutionary movement in Iran
gave voice to the Shi'i *ulama*, Iran became a centre of social focus for the
Shi'i population of the region. Despite this connection, serious schisms
exist within the Shi'i elite regarding Khomeini's vision for religious
governance and the theory of *velayat-e faqih*. Many highly respected
ulama in Iraq have been stridently opposed to the Iranian system of
government, and do not advocate Iraq's following a similar path, despite
the imagined appeal of Khomeini's revolutionary rhetoric in the light of
decades of oppression of Iraqi Shi'a.[101] One of the most prominent such
figures in Iraq is the much-respected Ali al-Sistani, a cleric of Iranian
origins who shed the mantle of a retiring, scholarly intellectual as the
voice of the newly liberated Shi'a community grew.[102] The idea that an
Iranian cleric influences the scene of Iraqi political thought must also be
a gratifying reality for Iran.

Despite political divisions, however, the legacy of a socio-cultural
relationship with Iran remains. On a more practical level, shared Shi'i
heritage requires a degree of cooperation between Iran and the new Iraqi
government, given the quantity of sacred sites in both nations that are
destinations of pilgrimage for the Shi'i community. Saddam Hussein
had been opposed to the exercise of Shi'i religious festivals and
ceremonies, particularly re-enactments of the martyrdom of Imam
Hossein at Karbala in 680.[103] Since the removal of Saddam, barriers to
pilgrimage have been lifted and significant numbers of nationals from

both Iraq and Iran, as well as the broader Muslim world, have sought to visit sites previously restricted.[104]

Saddam Hussein likened the fall of Baghdad to the Americans in 2003 to its fall to the Mongols in 1258, an event that was supposedly the result of treachery on the part of a Shiʿa vizier to the caliph.[105] This provided early fuel for the insurgency by determining the conflict along sectarian lines. Gradually, concerns over sectarian conflict across the region more generally became a focus of international attention. In 2004, King Abdullah of Jordan expressed his fear that a 'Shiʿa crescent' was forming from Lebanon to Iran.[106] His use of this term was to reflect a political cohesiveness between Hezbollah in Lebanon, Shiʿi-led government in Iraq and alliances with the Syria government of Bashar al-Assad, all of which can be closely tied to Tehran, though the regional influence of the latter has since been curbed by the civil war in Syria. At the time, the increase in political dominance amongst Arab Shiʿa was seen as a reflection of Iran's influence and empowerment, evidence of a 'profound shift' in sectarian balances in the region.[107]

> Positioning itself at the core of Shiʿa power is an ideological aim and strategic asset for Iran, which helps to upgrade its regional standing and global status.[108]

Regardless of the realities of ties between Iran and Iraq, whether historical, religious or cultural, any perception of Iranian influence is a benefit to Iran's leverage over its neighbours and the US. This has provided a challenge to the US, as 'neither America nor its Arab and non-Arab allies want Tehran to be the main beneficiary of their policy failures.'[109]

The struggle to consolidate a cohesive system of governance in Iraq is perceived as something of a watershed moment for the Shiʿi communities of the region, but as Augustus Richard Norton identifies, the events that have led to a change in Iraq's circumstances are unique.

> The invasion destroyed the already dry-rotted institutions of a dictatorship, imposed an incompetent occupation on Iraq, empowered a disenfranchised majority, and did so in a country where civil society had been obliterated for years.[110]

It seems reasonable to suppose that with or without Iran, with its mantle of the 'vanguard' of Shi'i freedom, Iraq does not herald drastic changes in the sectarian circumstances of other nations in the region. However, Iran is important in determining the future of Iraq's political stability within the limits of its influence.

Iraq's political crisis of 2013–14, in which the country struggled to gain political buy-in from all communities, carry out inclusive elections and form a unity government, was watched with caution by Iran and the US alike. The US attempted to support the democratically elected government of Nouri al-Maliki, all the while encouraging a more inclusive process to prevent the fragmentation of the government structure. Iran – once highly supportive of Maliki – gradually withdrew its commitment to the Prime Minister as it witnessed the increasing isolation of Kurdistan and the growing discontent among the Sunni population against alleged pro-Shi'a policies. Sunni militants began open conflict with the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) around Ramadi and Fallujah, gradually securing territory and sponsoring an escalation of attacks in Baghdad and northern cities. When Islamic State swept across northern Iraq in mid-2014, seizing numerous cities, oil fields and key infrastructure, both countries finally pulled all support for Maliki and urged the formation of a new government in a desperate attempt to prevent the fracturing of the state along ethno-religious lines. Although not acting in concert, both the US and Iran took foreign policy positions reflective of their interests in Iraq, which once again coincided.

Disparate Interests: Israel

Both the US and Iran see Israel as a major barrier to any change in the relationship between the two countries. For the US, as an ally of Israel, Iran is perceived as an existential threat, one that according to popular rhetoric has threatened to 'wipe Israel off the map'.[111] For Iran, Israel symbolises the oppression of Muslim people and represents a puppet of US policy makers in the Middle East. Where the US has stated 'we have no permanent enemies,' Iran has declared 'other than Israel we have no permanent enemies.'[112] This caveat seems particularly important given the high value the US places on its alliance with Israel and concern for its security, or what James Bill picturesquely describes as the US 'viewing Iran through lenses manufactured in Israel'.[113] Potentially the

only recent US administration not to solely use this particular lens is that of Barack Obama, but it appears increasingly likely that his successor — from either party — will return to old habits. The origins of this deep-seated problem and the challenges to which it gives rise demonstrate key facets of American and Iranian political identity.

Israel has not always been a sworn enemy of Iran. Following the inception of the Jewish state in 1948 and the ensuing decades of warfare with Arab neighbours, Mohammed Reza Shah Pahlavi viewed the rise of Israel as a positive, balancing force in the region, and he constructed a comprehensive relationship with the burgeoning state.[114] However, the Islamic Revolution heralded the end of this relationship.[115] Israel's close relationship not just to the US but also to the Shah's regime ensured the Jewish state's designation as an avowed foe of the new Islamic Republic and an ideal target for Khomeini's regime-building language.[116] Revolutionary ideology has become institutionalised in political communication, and President Ahmadinejad, in particular, made anti-Israeli sentiment a feature of his political rhetoric. He stated that the Israeli–Palestinian conflict is the 'frontline in the fight against global arrogance'[117] and a 'stage in the historical war between "forces of arrogance" (the West) and Islam'.[118] Iran's manoeuvring to ensure its position in the centre of that stage and the close involvement of the US in issues relevant to Israel result in a unique forum for the enactment of US and Iranian political identity. The unwillingness of the US to recognise Iran's exploitation of the Arab–Israeli issue for strategic gain 'has cost the United States dearly'.[119] US exceptionalism and faith in its foreign policy values neglect to acknowledge the political momentum to be garnered from a perspective so divorced from its own.

Ahmadinejad's brash policies and inflammatory rhetoric on this issue have often been represented as an existential threat to Israel, an 'apocalyptic warning call [that] has become a mantra'.[120] But as Gawdat Bahgat explains, 'fiery calls to destroy Israel are meant to mobilise domestic and regional constituencies.'[121] Iran's regime 'needs this threat to legitimise their position'.[122] This threat has been somewhat less relevant to Iran's policy requirements since the end of Ahmadinejad's presidency, with most rhetoric focusing on other issues, but this is not to suggest that its relevance to Iranian political identity has lessened. In Iran's manner of dealing with the Palestinian question 'Iranian national interest is not a primary concern' but rather a foil for

international strategic interests.[123] We should assume that the issue will re-emerge sporadically, as required to link Iranian foreign policy to imagined norms of accepted behaviour.

On an anecdotal level, many Iranians appear opposed to the degree of support that Iran provides to the Palestinian cause. There is frustration that money and arms are going abroad at a time of economic instability domestically.[124] This appears to be in contrast to poll findings wherein two-thirds of the Iranian population said they support Hamas and Hezbollah, though this poll did not specifically ask about government funding for these organisations, but simply whether people supported the aims of the groups.[125] Clearly, this information must be considered in the context of the difficulty in accurately interpreting poll results in Iran.

Iran itself has no territorial dispute with Israel, no refugee problem, not even a shared Arab heritage with the Palestinians whose cause it advocates.[126] 'There are no bilateral issues fuelling the tension between Tehran and Tel Aviv.'[127] Supreme Leader Khamenei has even declared that the 'Palestine issue is not Iran's jihad'.[128] Instead 'Iran's leadership of the anti-Israeli camp' is linked to developing its 'credentials as a major Islamic power' and a desire to be a standard-bearer for revolutionary Islam.[129] Iran's stance against Israel, in a similar fashion to its anti-American rhetoric or uncompromising posture on the nuclear programme, is targeted to endear Iran to the Muslim world.[130] 'Iran is very sensitive to public opinion in the Arab world particularly when it comes to the Israeli-Palestinian issue.'[131] Iran's foreign policy position is closely aligned to the perspectives of this key audience.

Iran's anti-Israeli rhetoric was conceived in the revolutionary ideology of Khomeini, predominantly as a rejection of the Shah's close political and economic ties to the Jewish state. Following the creation of the Islamic Republic, it became clear to Khomeini that Iran's anti-Israeli stance could produce political capital both at home and across the Muslim world, and could provide a source of legitimacy for the new regime.[132] Anti-Israeli rhetoric aided the construction of national, political and theological identity.[133] The tantalising prospect of being a regional leader and a key Islamic power became a pivotal part of Iran's political identity.[134] The desire to be the 'vanguard' in removing Muslims from oppression found the ideal home in the Palestinian cause.[135] Khomeini even memorialised the issue with 'Quds Day', an international day of protest in support of the Palestinian cause marked

on the final Friday of the month of Ramadan, which continues to be observed today.

Iran's policy to lead the world's response against Israel became increasingly plausible as Iran struggled to export its revolutionary ideology. If Iran could not effectively impart its system of government to its neighbours, it could at least attribute the successes of the anti-Israeli movements of Hezbollah and Hamas to the spread of its influence.[136] This policy position has not subsided in the post-Khomeini era. If anything, the gradual concession by most Arab states of Israel's right to exist in some form has led to an increase in Iran's vocal sentiments on the issue.

> At a time when Arab regimes have gradually conceded the legitimacy of Israel, and regional debates revolve around the dimensions of the Jewish state as opposed to its actual existence, there appeared a real opportunity for Iran to step into a vacuum, embracing an inflammatory approach to Israel that also enjoys support on the Arab street.[137]

Iran has successfully maintained this position, presenting itself as the sole regional leader behind the Palestinian cause, ensuring continued hostility if not outright conflict with Israel.

From a practical perspective, the menace represented by Iran's stance on Israel manifests itself in scenarios less dramatic than that of an 'existential threat' such as a strike from Iran's as yet undeveloped nuclear weapons. Instead, the realistic concern for Israel is related to Iran's connection with Hezbollah and Palestinian groups such as Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad.[138] Direct military and financial support for anti-Israeli organisations made international headlines in January 2002 when Israel intercepted a ship, the *Karine A*, loaded with weaponry apparently bound for Palestine. This shipment, if indeed it was intended for Palestine and not Hezbollah, was clearly marked as originating in Iran and a violation of treaties signed by the Palestinian Authority and Israel.[139]

> As far as Washington was concerned, this was unmistakable evidence that whatever Iran's desire to explore improved relations,

it had not given up its support for terrorism or its determination to derail a Middle East peace through violence.[140]

Conservative elements in the US, already concerned by US–Iranian collusion on the issue of Afghanistan and reinforced by an Israeli delegation dispatched to Washington, seized upon the *Karine A* example to remind the government of the dangers of the Islamic Republic.[141] Ali Ansari suggests that the 'highly convenient' and out of character decision on the part of Iran to send munitions to Palestine indicates the shipment was probably the work of hardline elements seeking to undermine Khatami.[142] In any case, the apparent support for Hamas and Hezbollah may well have provided a catalyst for the 'axis of evil' comments made by President Bush later that same month.

Support for Hezbollah, initially by means of funding social organisations and later through military training and supply, represents one of the Islamic Republic's first forays in foreign policy and has come to form a crucial aspect of political identity.[143] This has engaged Iran in the world of state-sponsored terrorism, at least from the perspective of Israel and its allies.[144] In their view, subsidising and supplying anti-Israeli groups will continue to ensure Iran's designation as an international pariah. Iran, which has never recognised Israel, justifies its support for anti-Israeli groups in terms of the illegitimacy of the Jewish state's right to exist.[145] Conversely, the US blames Iranian support for groups such as Hezbollah and Hamas as the main reason for the 'scuttling' of various Arab–Israeli peace attempts.[146] This is perhaps somewhat unjust: although Iran undoubtedly provides support on many levels for Hezbollah, this organisation has its own agenda and objectives independent of those of Iran. However, a trend had already emerged that 'where ambiguity existed, the balance of consensus concluded that Iran must be in some way responsible.'[147] In any case, both Iran and the US feel entirely justified in their opposing stances on support for Hezbollah and Hamas.

For the US, with Israel as its strongest ally in the region, it is unlikely that steps towards discussion or negotiation with Iran will be undertaken if there is any real cost to Israel.[148] Any long-term *détente* between the US and Iran would almost certainly reduce Israel's strength and manoeuvrability in the region.[149] Israel does not wish its alliance to be abandoned in favour of a new, regionally significant actor. As a result,

the Israeli lobby in the US, a powerful political voice, would have little desire for talks leading to a *détente* between the US and Iran. A senior Iranian academic feels the power of the Jewish political faction results in the US government being 'handicapped' because it has been 'purchased' by the Israeli lobby.[150] The role played by Israel in setting the agenda for US foreign policy needs to be separated from other interests for discussions to proceed with any effect.[151] This handicap is a constraint on policy change and has gradually been constructed as part of American political identity.

Any change in Iran's perspective on Israel in the current political climate appears unlikely. Not only do the reasons outlined above continue to remain valid, but Iran is also constitutionally obliged to support oppressed Muslims around the world. Article 3 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic states as a goal:

> The formulation of the foreign policy of the country on the basis of Islamic criteria, brotherly commitment to all Muslims, and the unstinting support for all oppressed and deprived people throughout the world.[152]

This is often cited as justification for Iran's anti-Israeli stance. Religious solidarity and support for those resisting oppression are important fundamentals within Iran's revolutionary Shiʿi ideology.[153] This responsibility extends to the oppressed peoples of the world, but with particular reference to the interests of Muslim peoples or nations that have been deprived of their freedom. Interestingly, however:

> [Iran] has stood by as the Russians have slaughtered Chechens and the Chinese have suppressed Muslim Uighurs. Ideological purity, it seems, has been less important than seeking diplomatic cover from Russia and commercial activity with China. Despite their Islamist compulsions, the mullahs like power too much to be martyrs.[154]

It seems clear that practical political realities are as significant to Iran as a state actor as is responsibility to Muslims and oppressed peoples in general. A source in Iran suggested that while 'there are other repressed people, the most important for the Islamic world is the Palestinians.'[155]

This perspective is an understandable one in the light of Iran's strategic interests and the significance of the Arab–Israeli dispute to Muslim peoples in the Middle East and further afield. There is also some weight to the suggestion that forming a strong stance on this issue has been damaging to Iran's national interests and has gained little appreciation from Arab governments, though the same might not be claimed of the Arab population generally.[156] While an answer to this question cannot be sought in the scope of this book, it does give rise to a discussion of Iran's practical interests and the means by which the pragmatic supersedes the ideological in questions of international relations.

Practical Interests

For the US, balancing ideological and material interests is a generally manageable task: both interests serve to reproduce its political identity. However, the same cannot always be claimed for Iran. Reference has been made to several key areas where the practical or economic interests of the Iranian government outweigh ideological considerations. Brenda Shaffer refers to an 'inherent tension between Iran's material state interests and its self-declared cultural interests'.[157] The reconstruction of Iranian political identity in the wake of the Islamic Revolution is a key facet of this tension.

This is not unique to Iran, and indeed Iran and the US share one key economic interest in which ideological considerations are often set aside: oil. Economically, Iran's interests in this area do not compete with those of the US.[158] As noted by Richard Haass and Martin Indyk, the reliance of the US economy, and that of many of its allies, on oil is a central reason for America's presence as the major foreign power in the Middle East in general and the Persian Gulf region in particular.[159] Stability in this area is an important factor in the price of oil; historically Iran has taken a more pragmatic approach to foreign affairs in times of low prices:

> It is no coincidence that when the price of oil was $10 a barrel, in the 1990s, Iran's leaders were far more circumspect in their activities abroad than they have been in this decade of high prices. Now that oil prices have dropped again, President Mahmoud

Ahmadinejad will no longer be able to fund foreign adventures while avoiding the domestic political consequences of his mismanagement of the Iranian economy.[160]

Iran appeared more lenient on the question of opening relations with the US in 2003, at a point where oil was $25 per barrel, in comparison to – for example – its July 2008 peak of $145.[161] It may be simplistic to claim that Iran's international intransigence fluctuates with the oil price, however. As discussed earlier, the 1990s were a period of influence for the pragmatist faction in Iranian politics, driving economic factors to the forefront of foreign policy decisions. In addition, the 2003 Khatami government was more inclined towards an improvement of relations with the West than the 2008 Ahmadinejad administration. If considered in the perspective of the financial consequences of oil price fluctuations on an economy heavily dependent on these resources, Haass and Indyk's point above is not an invalid one. The same driver may well have had an impact on 2015 negotiations with the West. The effect of sanctions on Iran's oil industry is certainly evidence of the potential impact that this sector can wield on Iran's foreign policy. In either case, demand for oil has a significant strategic impact on Iran's economic and security interests in the region.

Stability in oil supply is a common interest of both the US and Iran, as customer and supplier of the pivotal commodity in an energy-dependent global society.[162] The Persian Gulf region is particularly significant in this regard. From an economic perspective for Tehran, all Iranian oil is exported through the Persian Gulf, as is 75 per cent of its non-oil exports.[163] On a regional level, 87 per cent of Gulf extractive is exported to global markets through the Strait of Hormuz.[164] As mentioned earlier, the power that Iran holds, in a strategic sense, to shut down this avenue of commerce, is a considerable bargaining chip in Iran's favour. The likelihood of Iran acting on such a threat is debatable; the Gulf is critical to Iran in terms of trade, communication and foreign-currency earnings.[165] The decision to act on threats of a closure of the Strait would be a reactionary one, potentially as a result of a military strike on Iran. A temporary, symbolic closure would be the most likely avenue; long-term freezing of Gulf exports seems highly irrational. The pragmatic economic interests of the Iranian elite would not permit an international incident of this magnitude in favour of a perceived lesser concern.

Theoretically, as non-competing parties in the energy industry, opportunities for investment potential between the US and Iran abound. Prospects for the development and transit of Iran's natural gas reserves, in particular, should be tantalising for the US, and indeed American extractive companies have expressed disappointment with US government sanction policies for this reason.[166] Full realisation of these potential advantages are unlikely in the present climate, but it is important to note that the US and Iran share economic interests in this regard. The US, during the Clinton administration, made a major attempt in the form of the 1996 D'Amato Act (Iran–Libya Sanctions Act) to ensure that no other nation should take advantage of these prospects in America's absence.

A number of examples can be found to quell the perspective, common in Western countries, that Iran is an irrational state actor. Undertaking a pragmatic rather than ideological foreign policy stance over energy supply is one of these examples. Another can be seen in Iran's approach to the Gulf crisis of 1990–1. The 1980s were a period of turmoil for Iranian politics, besieged by war, terrorism, scandal and international condemnation, but after the death of Ayatollah Khomeini and the restructure of the political system, Iran appeared ready for pragmatism in politics.[167] Iran did not take sides in the Kuwait crisis, preferring to secure reconciliation with neighbouring countries and offer its services as a mediator.[168] This could have been in part a response to what Mohsen Milani describes as 'Tehran's belated recognition that it cannot radically alter the region's political landscape' and should adjust its policy accordingly,[169] though in view of subsequent developments in Iran's immediate vicinity this may have been a premature statement. Saddam Hussein had offered every conceivable enticement to the Iranians in exchange for their support, but the wounds of the Iran–Iraq War remained too raw to allow this tactic, even against the Great Satan.[170] Iran instead appealed to the international community to be utilised as a mediator and to participate in the establishment of a new security structure in the Persian Gulf. Shireen Hunter describes the difficulty for the West in accepting this prospect:

> At one and the same time, Iran wants to be neutral and disengaged from great power competition, and to be an influential regional and international actor.[171]

Despite the success of pragmatist President Rafsanjani in changing the foreign policy perspectives of the Iranian elite, Iran was denied any role in mediating the conflict, and was excluded from the 1991 Madrid conference.[172] To the Iranians, this appeared to be the first betrayal of George H. W. Bush's declaration that 'goodwill begets goodwill'.

Another example of Iran exchanging practical interests for ideological considerations can be seen in its relations with Saudi Arabia. In the early years of the Islamic Republic, Khomeini 'castigated [...] the House of Saud as purveyors of "American Islam"' and strove to spread Iran's revolutionary message on the Arabian peninsula.[173] The Saudis responded by violently attacking Iranian pilgrims during the 1987 *hajj* season, killing more than 400 people.[174] Aware that Iran was severely lacking in regional allies by the conclusion of the Iran–Iraq War, President Rafsanjani recognised an opportunity to repair the relationship. His negotiations were central to restoring communication and secured the reopening of diplomatic relations with Saudi Arabia in 1991. This *détente* has survived into the current administration, albeit with moments of tension.

Intersections of Interest and Identity

US foreign policy in the Middle East has collided with Iranian interests in almost every relevant sphere, despite the fact that in many instances the goals of each nation are not dissimilar. This relates to the concept, expressed by Alexander Wendt, that if more than one state actor develops a sense of collective identity, this becomes the basis for 'common purposes or interests'.[175] In the case of the US and Iran, in the situations identified in this chapter, the sense of collective identity has not been achieved. While it might appear that the two nations have common purposes, the absence of trust and a shared sense of identity will ensure that self-interest will become the primary motivation factor, or 'energy', for foreign policy formulation.[176] The history and experience that has constructed Iranian and American political identity does not admit sufficient space for identifying collectively with the other. Each nation's designation of the other as the 'enemy' is too extensively institutionalised within accepted norms of political behaviour for either state actor to rationalise a change in its understanding of the other.

In many respects, it has been the US that has failed to take advantage of intersections of interest. Iran has made more significant steps to allow room for collective identity to be understood within its political identity.

> If today the Islamic leadership – and for that matter Iran – is in a position of greater regional influence than ever before, it has a great deal to do with American policy failures rather than anything substantial that Iran has done in the region. The United States' disastrous handling of the Iraqi, Afghan, Palestinian and Lebanese situations as well as the so-called war on terror has created massive strategic vulnerabilities for the United States but favourable strategic opportunities for the Iranian regime and Shi'ite Islam to become more assertive than ever before.[177]

The US's experience of dealing with Iran since the Islamic Revolution, in addition to the inherent belief in the benevolence of its own foreign policy that is intrinsic to American political identity, has limited the US's ability to recognise the possibilities and opportunities that have been presented in the twenty-first century and has 'forfeited the best opportunity in history to generate real momentum' in relationship change.[178] Although interests have intersected on numerous issues, the power of common purposes to create collective identity has not been realised. Consequently, opportunities to aid the restoration of relations have been lost.

CHAPTER 7

COMMUNICATION AND PROSPECTS FOR CHANGE

This chapter focuses on an analysis of the manner in which communication occurs between the US and Iran. Of particular interest are the stereotyping and misconceptions that arise as a result of the limited direct dialogue between the two countries. Due to the severing of diplomatic relations in 1980, most discussion since that time has taken place through secondary conduits or the media, enhancing myth creation and possibilities of miscommunication: 'distance breeds stereotypes.'[1] The extent to which direct talks since 2013 have lessened the degree of miscommunication is also assessed, as a facet of the prospects for changes in the relationship. Elements of political identity already identified can be used as a foundation for insight into the future.

Because of the 'arms-length communication' that has been a consequence of severed diplomatic relations, the media has been a critical, if not particularly effective, forum for the exchange of information between the US and Iran.[2]

> A dance of indirect messages is continually passing back and forth between the United States and Iran, as both sides check out the online newspapers, satellite news broadcasts, blogs and email messages that pass continually between the two nations.[3]

Each nation figures prominently in the daily news of the other. For example, in the 30 years between 1980 and 2010, the *New York Times*

alone published an astonishing 23,069 articles with Iran as the headline subject.[4] This represents an average of more than two articles in America's preeminent newspaper every day for 30 years. Iran undoubtedly holds a crucial place in the international awareness of the American public, though generally on very specific subjects. Gary Sick describes as 'remarkable' the limited nature and topics covered in media reporting, given the 'sheer volume' of coverage, which 'oversimplifies a complex political situation'.[5] Perhaps this is not a surprising feature of media reporting, but considering the significance of media communication in a relationship with limited alternate forums for discussion, it is unfortunate.

Of course, a similar scenario prevails in Iran where state media continue a refrain of anti-American rhetoric on a daily basis.[6] Younes Shokrkhah, Professor of Media Studies at Tehran University, enumerates the conditions for media attention: fame, impact, conflict, proximity (physical or emotional), immediacy, magnitude and uniqueness.[7] He explains that 'many of these conditions are met by the relationship between the US and Iran on a regular basis,' which encourages extensive publication and reporting. 'Bad' news is generally more desirable as subject matter, which provides additional fuel to the exchange of belligerent political rhetoric.[8]

However, Kavous Seyed-Emami warns against placing too great a significance on Iranian state media. It is by no means as effective a communication tool as the American media: certainly it is more biased, but acute awareness of that bias on the part of Iranian people nullifies the impact of the information.[9] For many Iranians, key information sources originate in the West, such as the BBC Persian service and Voice of America. As an increasing portion of Iranian society gains access to satellite television, such tools become more important. It is also pertinent to note that surveys conducted on this issue from within Iran cannot be relied upon for their veracity, as people often express a stronger faith in the news services than is probably the reality.[10]

Poor communication between two states whose foreign policies are so intertwined is a disastrous and potentially volatile reality. Under such circumstances, there can be little prospect of satisfactorily transmitting policy decisions without inherent mistrust and misunderstanding. A policy declaration in Washington DC indicating, for example, that the US seeks behaviour change, not regime change, is relayed to Tehran via

the media and viewed against a backdrop of a Persian Gulf filled with aircraft carriers bearing American flags.[11] A degree of wariness in trusting policy pronouncements in this context is understandable. An open and direct dialogue, involving negotiation, compromise and concession on both sides, is the only means to thawing decades of mistrust. While communication has occurred amid negotiations over Iran's nuclear programme, talks have yet to be broad based and free from conditions.

The political identity of each nation is a substantial barrier to changes in the relationship between the US and Iran. The elements that have constructed those identities, as outlined in this book, hinder the key developments required.

> For Iranian leaders, this means they cannot appear to compromise, once a public moral position has been taken. They are unable to appear to accommodate individuals or nations that are seen as corrupting influences. American leaders are likewise unable to appear to back down in the face of recalcitrance and defiance of correct moral principles defined in American terms.[12]

In theory, if identities can be constructed, they can also be deconstructed: the challenge to the normative theorist. But when the history and experience of centuries or even millennia, in the case of Iran, have combined to produce a paradigm through which a state actor views itself and both its and others' role in the international community, an almost unassailable political identity may be assumed. For a change in the relationship between the US and Iran to be possible, each nation may be obliged to reconstruct aspects of its own political identity to accommodate compromise.

The perception of Iran in the American psyche is a product of its history and experience. James Dobbins, US envoy to negotiations on the future of Afghanistan at Bonn in 2001, explains:

> Americans are fond of characterising the Iranian regime as a fundamentalist theocracy. The truth is more complex; Iran isn't Switzerland, but it is rather more democratic than Egypt and less fundamentalist than Saudi Arabia, two of America's most important allies in the region.[13]

The term 'theocracy' is inappropriately applied to the government of the Islamic Republic;[14] while aspects of the term are applicable, it is often relied upon as an emotive term to describe and oversimplify what is a complex political system. Similarly, the perception that Ayatollah Khamenei is 'the ultimate decision maker',[15] or effectively a dictator, is not an accurate assessment. While Khamenei is undoubtedly a significant figure in the regime, 'he is only one actor in a very complex religious oligarchy' with 'many checks and balances'.[16] US Under-secretary of State William Burns instructed the Congressional Committee on Foreign Affairs in 2008 along these lines:

> A certain amount of humility is always important when the Americans look at the Iranian political system. There's no shortage of examples where we've got it wrong before. It's a very complicated and sometimes opaque system.[17]

This type of language is positive, encompassing an awareness of errors of the past that could be considered a positive change in rhetoric. Interestingly, however, in the same Committee hearing, Eliot Engel, a Democratic congressman from New York, responded that 'What disturbs me is how some people, in their zest for not wanting war, become apologists for what essentially is a fascist regime in Iran [...] because that's what they really are.'[18] This perspective merely confirms Burns' statement and does not augur well for the prospect of fostering greater understanding of Iran and its political system within the policy making elites in Washington DC.

Given the deeply ingrained aspects of political identity that have given risen to foreign policy challenges between the US and Iran, it is difficult to justify a belief in amelioration of their relationship. The constraints on *rapprochement* are political, not strategic.[19] Consequently, an alteration to the *status quo* of political will is necessary for any change in the relationship. The 2008 election of Barack Obama to the American presidency brought high hopes for a new era in the countries' relationship, as did the possibility in 2009 of a return to reformist government in Iran, which of course did not eventuate. The strong sense from that period of a new era commencing has not been realised. Even the apparently progressive language from Tehran following Rouhani's election has yet to normalise relations.

High-level talks in Baghdad in 2007, regarding the future of Iraq, represented the first significant step forward in communication. A crucial factor in the US reaching out to Iran for help, however, was the resultant perception of a shift in the balance of power in the latter's favour. A. Iskander writes:

> Iran interprets the US's invitation to dialogue as an American need, because Washington has been facing difficulties [. . .] Tehran considers itself to be in the position of strength in such a dialogue.[20]

This highlights a particular problem faced in any prospective or actual negotiations between the two countries: that of diminished potency.

In this regard, it is interesting to note that the first high-level talks took place under Ahmadinejad. He was 'surprisingly willing' to open communications to score political capital in the 'strange paradox of Iranian politics'.[21] It is intriguing to consider why a conservative politician has been able to break the taboo of talks with the West, when Khatami and Rafsanjani not only failed, but were actively berated by the Iranian conservatives for their efforts. Sadeq Ziba-Kalam explains that this phenomenon can be attributed to the perception that Ahmadinejad entered discussions from a position of power. During the period of discussions over Iraq, Ahmadinejad still enjoyed 'the support of a powerful political backing'.[22] The same could be said for Rouhani in the 2013−15 period.

Conversely, President Khatami, though a reformist with liberal ideas regarding communication with the West, was relatively unsuccessful in opening a dialogue during his presidency (1997−2005). Examples of this have already been discussed, but Ali Ansari offers a more general perception of the reasons for his failure:

> The vast majority of [Khatami's] interlocuters regarded him as little more than a well meaning "philosopher-president", whose intellectual meanderings were to be tolerated rather than understood.[23]

Perhaps this can in part be attributed to Khatami's surprise election victory in 1997, which thrust him onto the world stage with relatively

limited international political experience. In comparison, Ahmadine-jad never shied from the international stage, appearing instead to crave and to relish the attention that typically accompanied his antagonistic rhetoric. Initially, he also enjoyed the support of Khamenei and the Revolutionary Guard, a power base that Khatami lacked to a considerable extent.

Ahmadinejad's apparent immunity from the criticism of the hardliners and the applause he would receive from this faction for 'pushing the worst possible buttons with regard to US foreign policy interests' gradually eroded.[24] It is almost impossible to state with any certainty why the President lost Khamenei's support, but during his second term Ahmadinejad gradually found himself alienated within the regime and used as a scapegoat to explain the country's dire economic situation. The principle of *posht-e pardeh* as previously described provides a mask of secrecy around the real decision-making circles and lends the presidency far less power than the West will sometimes give it credit for. Aware of the need for a more palatable – if not actually more reformist – public face for the regime, Rouhani's election was carefully managed through the candidate selection process. With a clear mandate from a comfortable win, the new president could present an apparently conciliatory front for foreign relations, though in reality a long-term shift in policy should not be assumed.

While policy directions with regard to Iran have generally not been a partisan issue in US politics,[25] it is interesting to consider Iran's experience with respective Republican and Democrat administrations since relations expanded following World War II. Abdolali Qavam opines that Iran has more favourable options when dealing with a Republican rather than a Democrat president on political issues, given the fact that Democrat administrations have a 'more values-oriented policy' that focuses on such issues as human rights.[26] While this may be true in theory, it has demonstrably been superseded by national interest and domestic political concerns to varying degrees during the Carter, Clinton and Obama administrations.

It was the Republican presidency of Dwight D. Eisenhower that enacted the 1953 coup that ousted Mossadeq from power, an event that continues to dominate perception of the US to the present day. Similarly Carter's Democrat presidency is entrenched in the Iranian psyche, owing to his support of the Shah prior to and during the revolutionary

movement of 1978–9. The Democrat administration of President Clinton established the 1996 Iran–Libya Sanctions Act, the first of almost two decades of economic restrictions placed on Iran, and pursued a policy of containment regarding Iran's influence in the region. In addition, Clinton fought to oppose development loans to Iran from the World Bank and International Monetary Fund.[27]

Clinton was responsible for shifting US policy 'the furthest from the possibility of *rapprochement*' since 1980.[28] This was not merely a result of the sanctions: Clinton also tied US policy to Israel, particularly when compared with his predecessor George H.W. Bush. This link further distanced the US from Iran. It is possible that having US forces securely installed in the region in the post-Gulf War era lessened Clinton's concern over the balance of power; apparent improved stability allowed him to drift further from any possible avenue of *rapprochement*.[29] A change in policy was forthcoming late in his second presidential term, however, as Clinton made a tentative step towards an apology in a state dinner speech in Washington DC. He admitted that Iran had 'a right to be angry at something my country [. . .] did to you 50 or 60 or 100 or 150 years ago'.[30] He also acknowledged Iran's preoccupation with 'its independence and its integrity', potentially a more insightful comment than any president had succeeded in making since 1979.[31] It could be surmised that he sought to leave a more positive legacy as he drew closer to leaving office; this very diplomatic speech was echoed and reiterated the following year by Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, representing an alteration in the Clinton administration's stance on Iran.

The Republican presidency of George W. Bush witnessed a marked increase in belligerent rhetoric and conservative policy making from Washington. What little progress had been made in the 1990s was 'shattered after September 11' as the Bush administration directed its foreign policy towards new aims in the Middle East.[32] Ironically, the later years of Bush's presidency saw the most marked steps towards renewing some level of diplomatic discourse since the severing of ties in 1979. It is possible that President Bush was subject to the same conservative political trends that provided President Ahmadinejad with a more positive position for negotiation.

Barack Obama was ushered onto the global political scene with great anticipation. Based on his campaign platform, Obama appeared likely to seek a new policy direction with respect to Iran. Chapter 2

highlighted the potential that changes in policy under Obama might lessen the weight of the corrupting image of the 'Great Satan' from an Iranian perspective. Hope for an easing of tensions with the Muslim world in general – and Iran in particular – was a feature of the early period of Obama's first term in office. However, while his speech at Cairo University in Egypt in June 2009 – described as the speech no other president could have made – calling for a 'new beginning' was lauded in some quarters, it was broadly dismissed in the Middle East as 'soft diplomacy' or an image makeover for the US.[33] In the speech he acknowledged that years of mistrust would be difficult to overcome but focused almost entirely on America's intent to curb nuclear capabilities in the Middle East rather than offering any particular olive branch.

Several significant comments emerged from Iran following Barack Obama's victory in the 2008 election. Iran's reformist daily newspaper *E'temad* published the following from an interview with Iranian academic M. Sariolqalam:

> Americans would definitely make extensive soft political exploitations from the emergence of a black person in the presidential office in favour of America, and a new image of America would definitely be portrayed in the world and the military image that was created during the Bush tenure would transform to a soft diplomatic image in America which is based on human rights, cooperation and multi-lateralism.[34]

This is evidence of a trend of belief that Obama's heritage would be of benefit to the developing world, and would have a distinct effect on the manner in which the international community viewed the US. In the same article, *E'temad* editorialised:

> Barack Obama's election should be deemed as a turning point in the history of the United States. The answer to the question as to why public support was shifted towards Barack Obama should be sought in the eight year conduct of the Bush administration.[35]

Substantial hope existed in Iran at the time of Obama's election that this would signal a change in US policy in the Middle East.

President Ahmadinejad responded to Obama's election by writing an early letter to the president-elect. Jafar Golabi of the *E'temad* newspaper was quick to stress that 'the actual dispatch of this congratulatory message is more important than its text and preaching content.'[36] Obama has reciprocated this style of communication with annual *Now Ruz* (Persian New Year) greetings directed at the Iranian people. Additionally, it is certainly true that the most successful high-level talks between Iran and the P5 + 1 have taken place under Obama's watch, as have the harshest rounds of sanctions (2010 and 2013). Obama has also distanced himself from Israel, punctuated by a very public dislike for Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, though this position is highly likely to be undermined in 2016 regardless of who enters the White House. Also under Obama, the US is engaged in yet another conflict in the Middle East – or remains engaged in the remnants of the Iraq War, depending on your point of view – one that shares some common interests with Iran yet excludes cooperation.

It is difficult, thus, to isolate a cohesive trend identifying either the Republican or Democrat parties with policy direction regarding Iran. The most successful era was probably the latter stages of George H.W. Bush's presidency, though the favourable circumstances of moderating politics in Iran were not capitalised upon, limiting the prospect for change.[37] Similarly, despite Obama's 'strong global mandate' and campaign intentions of opening communication with Iran, only a portion of the necessary progress has been made.[38] The US government's policy intention with regard to Iran remains 'behaviour change, not regime change'.[39] The primary issues concerning the US are for Iran to end its nuclear ambitions, accede to UN resolutions, cease its support for anti-Israeli elements and ameliorate its political system and human rights.[40] One of these priorities may have taken the first step towards realisation, but all these issues are essentially non-negotiable, in the sense that each must be resolved before the US will lay options for a broader diplomatic relationship on the table. Consequently, the Iranians feel that by removing these issues from negotiation, there is in fact nothing to negotiate.

Democratic Congressman from Massachusetts John Tierney recognises the flaw in this conditional approach to diplomacy:

I don't know how constructive it is to say that we can talk about all of these things, provided you first give us everything we want

before we start talking. I don't know how productive it's going to
be to say, we can start negotiating with you as soon as you give us
all the end points for what we'd want out of the negotiations.[41]

Indeed this approach seems to justify the Iranian perspective that the US
has little to offer Iran in terms of negotiation. Iran cannot claim to be the
innocent party in terms of conditional negotiations, however. In June
2010, Ahmadinejad announced his own conditions:

1. The 5 + 1's declaring of their stand regarding Israel's atomic bombs
    is a condition.
2. They must clearly announce whether they abide by the NPT
    regulations or not.
3. [The 5 + 1] must make clear whether their objective in holding
    talks is promoting friendship with us, or observing enmity against
    us.
4. The talks must not be limited to the members of the 5 + 1 either.
5. Talks with the opponents of the Zionists' atomic bombs would differ
    from the talks with the proponents of their bombs.[42]

Given that none of these was effectively met, these conditions have been
relaxed in the terms for meetings between Rouhani's administration and
the P5 + 1. However, the talks have remained strictly conditional, and
the long-term benefit to be realised from such discussions must be
limited. Many states, particularly the US, restrict contact with Iran to
short-term negotiations over specific issues.[43] Instead of adopting a
comprehensive approach that would present all issues for discussion,
negotiations are limited to specific issues – typically the nuclear issue –
and linked to preconditions, paralysing discussion before it
commences.[44] Negotiation on narrow issues is also used as a tactical
cooperation by the US government as 'a test of Iranian willingness and
eagerness'.[45] This style of cooperation was utilised following 9/11, with
limited benefit to the Iranians in the longer term despite evidence of the
'willingness' apparently sought by the Americans.

It is possible that concrete steps towards nuclear compliance could
establish a framework for broader-based dialogue.[46] However, success in
nuclear mediation is far more likely if the issue is negotiated in the
context of broader discussions rather than an isolated and conditional

framework. Furthermore, if political will does not exist on either side, then it remains unlikely that either government will have significant motivation to accept the role of the other in the international community.[47] There is little political impetus in the US to progress the issue, as the long-standing image of angry mobs led by hostile, terrorism-sponsoring clerics still persists in many American minds regardless of the reality.[48] And as long as political capital can still be gained from anti-American sentiment in Iran, a similar stance will likely be forthcoming from Tehran.

History, and its influence on political identity, remains a potent force as a hindrance to change. Arguments abound as to the value of either, on the one hand, acknowledging historical events and resolving them, or, on the other hand, effectively severing ties with remembered incidents. Seyed-Emami suggests that 'constant references to the aspects of history do not help in knocking down barriers to talks' and that recalling the evils, real or imagined, of the US limits possibilities for change.[49] This echoes Gholamali Khoshroo's earlier cited comments that these issues should be 'left as history'.[50] On the other hand, Karl Meyer expresses an opinion that nothing can be resolved without what is essentially an admission of guilt from both parties:

> A necessary precondition for a thaw in Washington's relations with Iran is a mutual acknowledgement of wrongs perpetrated by both countries, by the United States in lawlessly promoting the 1953 coup and by Iran in its no less lawless detention of American hostages in 1979–1981. A precondition to the precondition is a greater American awareness of Iran's recent past.[51]

Claims from the US are that in March 2000 Madeleine Albright 'really did try' to make amends for 1953 with her speech that could be regarded as an apology.[52] In it, she admits that 'the United States played a significant role in orchestrating the overthrow of Iran's popular Prime Minister, Mohammed Mossadeq' and that this was a 'setback for Iranian political development'.[53] Regardless of whether her comments can be classed as an apology, they were dispatched at a time when 'America had switched to campaign mode' and the sentiment was lost in the myriad of foreign policy statements being issued.[54] Without diplomatic relations, the apology could not be made in person or directly, subjecting it to the

vagaries of secondary conduits and the media. It was also bitterly
rejected by the hardliners in Tehran, who launched a campaign to
discredit Khatami, believing his government 'placed too much emphasis
on good relations with Washington without the latter offering much in
return'.[55] In any case, her attempt does not appear to have rectified the
wrongs of the past, and given the contribution of historical experience to
the collective memory of a nation, the prospect of forgetting or ignoring
history is somewhat unrealistic.

Even in the event of changes to the *status quo*, serious barriers will
slow any prospect of amelioration of relations between the US and Iran.
A State Department official pointed out that the legacy of decades of
bitterness is not just institutionalised within political identity, but is in
fact legally binding.

> The sanctions imposed on Iran are laws, passed by Congress, and
> have specific conditions legislated in order to lift them. These were
> done with the case of Libya, so of course it can be done, but there is
> a huge base of legislation against opening up relations.[56]

As indicated, the reversal of legislation was undertaken in the context
of opening diplomatic relations with Libya, but the circumstances in the
case of Iran are by no means equivalent.

> The depth of Tehran's security concerns is precisely the reason that
> [...] Libya cannot be a model for how to deal with Iran now.
> Libyan President Muammar al-Qaddafi finally relinquished the
> pursuit of nuclear weapons in 2003 in exchange for both an end to
> trade sanctions and positive economic incentives. But Tripoli was
> always a very different foe from Tehran. For one thing, the Libyans
> turned out to be the gang that could not proliferate straight [*sic*].
> For years, Qaddafi reportedly tried but failed to purchase complete
> nuclear weapons directly from China, India and Pakistan.[57]

Libya's general failure to achieve any of its nuclear objectives greatly
increased its willingness to accede to the demands of the international
community. Iran's successes in this area make it less likely to take the
Libyan route, while making Iran a far more significant security threat, as
Scott Sagan indicates above.

Analysis has been undertaken to demonstrate numerous policy areas where Iran does not fit the profile of the irrational state actor it is generally portrayed to be in the West. However, a key paradox of Iranian politics lies in the fact that, in some circumstances, Iran fosters the Western perception of irrationality. This is a deliberate device, allowing it to be perceived as unpredictable and thus 'less calculable' in the international arena.[58] The president of the US-based Iranian–American Council, Trita Parsi, suggests a means to understanding the policy direction of the Iranian government.

> It would be much better for us to take a look at Iranian actions rather than to try to constantly decipher what they are trying to signal [. . .] This is important, particularly in view of the fact that the Iranians actually have a policy that they call "simulated irrationality", in which they are seeking to confuse the outside world about their true intentions by giving contradictory signals. The best way of getting around that is to not ignore the rhetoric [. . .] but to assess the rhetoric by taking a look at the actions.[59]

Iran utilises unpredictability as a means to strategic advantage, in order to destabilise the policy structures of other state actors. This has been used to great effect in the nuclear crisis: Iran's reluctance in releasing its secrets to the world serves to help it maintain a position of power in international relations. It is likely to be this underlying motivation that ensures Iran commits sufficiently to its recently negotiated requirements to pursue further talks and lessen sanctions but stops short of completing or adhering to a comprehensive deal. To be constantly teetering on the brink of being a 'rogue state' ensures Iran remains in the eye of the international community and ensures regional influence.

Adam Tarock claims it is still a general Western perception that the US holds the position of power in its dealings with Iran:

> In political terms, there is a clash here between a superpower intolerant of a perceived dissident and "rogue" state, and an assertive and old but glorious civilisation that has had the "temerity" to challenge that superpower in a region where Washington demands submission.[60]

Tarock also purports that gestures of outreach ought to come from the US as the 'stronger party' that also has less to lose, politically and economically, if reconciliation were not successful. It should be clear, however, that this 'old but glorious civilisation' is most certainly pursuing its own agenda and is not over-awed by the spectre of the US in the international community.

Despite the fact that regime change is no longer a policy priority for the US government, there seems little doubt that the US and most Western powers continue to desire some change to the system of Islamic government currently in place in Iran. The US must be wary of providing support for democracy promotion in Iran as it 'simply gives the Iranian regime a further pretext to clamp down on these democratic agitators' in the interests of national security.[61] In the words of civil society activist Akbar Ganji:

> Iranians are viewed as discredited when they receive money from foreign governments. The Bush administration may be striving to help Iranian democrats, but any Iranian who seeks American dollars will not be recognised as a democrat by his fellow citizens.[62]

This is a strong representation of the self-sufficient political identity of Iranians, that political development by the hand of a foreign government is unacceptable not just to the regime but also to the populace. Conversely, it requires a disavowal of America's political identity to desist from supporting a democratic movement, a policy that has formed a critical part of that identity since the early twentieth century. A policy of US funding of democratic movements enjoyed some success in Eastern Europe in the late twentieth century, but the Iranian government is less fragile and the perceptions of the population in general are a very different prospect to populations' perceptions in Cold War Eastern bloc countries.[63] This is a challenging scenario for the US, as it must surmount its instinctive sense of mission to operate as a purveyor of democratic values and institutions.

In this regard the Obama administration showed commendable restraint during the post-election crisis in Iran in June 2009. While realistically Iran was not in a pre-revolutionary state and the protests

were symptomatic of complex domestic political issues, it would have gravely inflamed the situation for the US to vocalise support for anti-government protests. Acute awareness of American involvement in Iran's past means the worst thing America can do is to intervene either directly or indirectly in Iran's future.[64] The US must recognise the impact that past actions have had on the Iranian psyche.

If major political change is to occur, it must originate internally, and this is unlikely to eventuate in the current climate. The young population that was predominantly involved in the election protests is well educated and 'exceptionally well informed [...] about international affairs', and now the under-30 age bracket forms the majority of the voting population.[65] But this group is not yet a revolutionary force.

> [Iran's youth] don't remember the Shah, they don't remember the revolution or the Iran–Iraq war. The seed of reactionary politics doesn't exist in most of the younger generation. There are few agents for drastic change.[66]

Karim Sadjadpour outlined a similar position, that essentially no liberal movement is in a position to seize power in Iran:

> The only people who are armed and organised are the Revolutionary Guards and the *basij* militia [...] If something abrupt were to take place it wouldn't be the liberals who took power. Transition is a long term prospect for Iran.[67]

This *status quo* is perhaps all the more fixed in the wake of the suppression of the 'Green Movement' following the 2009 elections. For now, there are few positive alternatives for government and, as a result, sudden regime change in Iran could have serious consequences:

> The conservative faction which rules the Revolutionary Guard is already extraordinarily powerful thanks to the efforts of President Ahmadinejad on behalf of his former military colleagues, and could be in a position to execute a *coup d'état* in the advent of political strife. This group, in accompaniment with the *basij* militia, could take Iran in a far more hardline direction than is

currently experienced in the Islamic Republic. In what would effectively be a religious military dictatorship, the relative evils of the current system would pale into insignificance.[68]

If regime change policy in Iraq propelled that nation into sectarian violence and civil strife, a similar policy in Iran could result in a more hardened opponent for the US than ever. Talk of overthrowing the government of Iran is unrealistic:

> Iran is not a dictatorship like Iraq, and it is unclear whom the United States would "overthrow" if it wanted to foment revolution in Iran. Removing the *faqih* would do nothing at all. One would have to destroy several interlocking governmental bodies to have any effect.[69]

Whichever direction the internal political process takes in Iran in the coming years, it is critical that the US remains a distant observer. Imad Mansour offers some sage advice for the US government:

> Aggressive American rhetoric towards Iran is only helping radical forces 'rally around the flag', and downplay domestic dissent. Washington needs to engage Tehran in subtle yet strategic ways so that moderation in its foreign policy is increasingly internally driven.[70]

The major challenge for the US will be determining those 'subtle and strategic ways'. This might involve the US consciously compromising aspects of its political identity in order to 'strike a more sustainable balance between US interests and US values'.[71]

For the Iranians also, to countenance changes to the relationship with the US will involve compromising aspects of Iran's political identity. If the clerical elite in Iran remains convinced that the ultimate intention of US policy is regime change, not behaviour change, all US policy decisions will appear merely to be a pretext for such an eventuality. Any Iranian submission to US pressure would merely encourage further American efforts.[72] Nothing in Iran's history and experience would prompt trust in a foreign power – particularly the US – that might overcome this belief.

The US may take as its guide other nations that have succeeded in developing comprehensive diplomatic and trade relationships with the Islamic Republic, such as the European Union, China, Russia and India.[73] However, these state and regional actors do not hold many of the same key foreign policy concerns as the US: 'China is motivated by oil [...] India sees Iran as a regional player, it doesn't want to come into conflict with Iran. Europe does a lot of trade with Iran.'[74] This disparity is defined as a difference in 'threat perception' that precludes the US from adopting a similar policy direction. Kenneth Katzman elaborates: 'China, India, Europe have far less, I think, sober assessment of Iranian policy [...] They do not have the psychological history that the US has with Iran.'[75] This is an extremely interesting statement, to consider that the other nations have a less sober assessment because they do not have the same 'psychological history'. It could also be argued that the opposite is true, that psychological history clouds US perception in a manner by which the EU and other nations are not constrained.

Despite the fact that both nations share certain common strategic, economic and security interests in the Middle East, US foreign policy decisions have collided with Iranian interests in almost every relevant sphere. The US's experience of dealing with Iran since the Islamic Revolution, in addition to the inherent belief in the benevolence of its own foreign policy, which is intrinsic to American political identity, has limited the ability of the US to recognise the possibilities and opportunities that have been presented in the twenty-first century. As a result, the power of common interests to aid in restoring relations has been greatly diminished.

William Beeman claims that interaction between Iran and the US centres 'not on substantive differences or real conflict, but rather on symbolic discourse: both nations construct the "other"' as a representation of an enemy.[76] This may be accurate, but the origins of that symbolic discourse are substantive. They are a product of the construction of political identity in each nation, reinforced as a mechanism of collective memory. It is by these means that state actors legitimise their existence and rationalise their policy within imagined norms. Even if reproduced as political myth, the symbolic aspects of political identity have 'real' beginnings. The complications of political myth have been compounded by fear and mutual distrust, often constructed upon a foundation of misunderstanding – even total lack of

knowledge – of the socio-cultural, political and historical norms on which each state has established its political identity.

If an overwhelmingly negative picture has been painted of prospects for future *détente*, hope certainly cannot be discounted. While the challenges that emerge largely as a result of the respective political identities of the Islamic Republic and the US might appear insurmountable, some progress has already been made, and if pragmatic minds were to continue to prevail in both nations there should be potential for further compromise. This may involve redefining the anti-American and anti-Iranian postures that have informed political culture for each state actor since 1979 and even prior to this key date. If history and experience cannot be ignored, the complications of the past must be discussed and resolved. For this to take place, a coincidence of political will must occur on both sides, allowing room for conciliation, acknowledgement and respect for difference, and discarding demands for pre-conditional concessions.

NOTES

Introduction

1. Beeman, William, (2005) *The 'Great Satan' vs the 'Mad Mullahs': How the United States and Iran Demonize Each Other*, Praeger: Westport & London, p. 1.
2. Takeyh, Ray, (2006) *Hidden Iran: Paradox and Power in the Islamic Republic*, Times Books, New York, pp. 6–7.
3. Ansari, Ali, (2006) *Confronting Iran: The Failure of American Foreign Policy and the Next Great Crisis in the Middle East,* Perseus Basic Books: New York, p. 94.
4. Sick, Gary, 'The clouded mirror', pp. 191–210 in Esposito, John L. & Ramazani, R. K., (2001) *Iran at the Crossroads*, Palgrave: New York, p. 204.
5. Beeman, *The 'Great Satan'*, p. 189.
6. Pollack, Kenneth, (2004) *The Persian Puzzle: The Conflict Between Iran and America*, Random House: New York, p. xx.
7. Bottici, Chiara, (2007) *A Philosophy of Political Myth*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, p. 225; Beeman, *The 'Great Satan'*, p. 13.
8. Reus-Smit, Christian, 'Constructivism', in Burchill, S. *et.al.* (eds), *Theories of International Relations*, 3rd ed., Houndmills: Basingstoke, p. 198; Crockatt, Richard, (2007) *After 9/11: Cultural Dimensions of American Global Power*, Routledge: London & New York, p. 174.
9. Sick, Gary, Academic and Former Iran expert on the US National Security Council, *pers. comm.*, New York, 8 September 2008.
10. Key literature includes: Saikal, Amin, (1980) *The Rise and Fall of the Shah: Iran from Autocracy to Religious Rule,* Princeton University Press: Princeton; Arjomand, Saïd Amir, (1988) *The Turban for the Crown: The Islamic Revolution in Iran*, Oxford University Press: Oxford & New York. Additional works will be cited in context.
11. Of particular value were the works of Nikki Keddie (Keddie, Nikki R., (2003) *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*, Yale University Press: New Haven & London; Keddie, Nikki R., (1966) *Religion and Rebellion in Iran*,

Frank Cass & Co.: London), Ali Ansari (Ansari, Ali, *Confronting Iran*; Ansari, Ali, (2006) 'Iran and the US in the shadow of 9/11: Persia and the Persian question revisited', *Iranian Studies*, 39:2, (June 2006); Ansari, Ali, (2006) *Iran, Islam and Democracy: The Politics of Managing Change*, 2nd ed., Royal Institute of International Affairs: London; Ansari, Ali, (2007) *Modern Iran: The Pahlavis and After*, 2nd ed., Pearson Longman: Harlow; Ansari, Ali, 'Continuous regime change from within', pp. 265–82 in Lennon, A. & Eiss, C. (eds), (2004) *Reshaping Rogue States: Preemption, Regime Change and U.S. Policy Toward Iran, Iraq and North Korea*, MIT Press: Cambridge, Mass; Ansari, Ali, 'Civilisational identity and foreign policy: The case of Iran', pp. 241–62 in Shaffer, Brenda (ed.), (2006) *The Limits of Culture: Islam and Foreign Policy*, Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs: Cambridge Mass, and Amir Saïd Arjomand (Arjomand, Saïd Amir, (2009) *After Khomeini: Iran Under His Successors*, Oxford University Press: Oxford; Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown*).

12. Such as Takeyh, *Hidden Iran*; Pollack, *The Persian Puzzle*.

13. Works addressing the relationship between the US and Iran include: Rubin, Barry, (1980) *Paved With Good Intentions: The American Experience and Iran*, Oxford University Press: Oxford; Bill, James A., (1988) *The Eagle and the Lion: The Tragedy of American-Iranian Relations*, Yale University Press: New Haven & London; Sick, Gary, (1985) *All Fall Down: America's Fateful Encounter with Iran*, I.B.Tauris: London; Ansari, *Confronting Iran*; Takeyh, *Hidden Iran*; Beeman, *The 'Great Satan'*; Pollack, *The Persian Puzzle*.

14. Beeman, *The 'Great Satan'*.

15. This chapter relies on the scholarly work of Alexander Wendt (Wendt, Alexander, 'Identity and structural change in international politics', in Lapid, Y. & Kratochwil, F. (eds), (1996) *The Return of Culture and Identity in IR Theory*, Lynne Rienner Publishers: Boulder & London; Wendt, Alexander, (1992) 'Anarchy is what states make of it: The social construction of power politics', *International Organization*, 46:2, (Spring 1992), pp. 391–425, Christian Reus-Smit (Reus-Smit, Christian, (1999) *The Moral Purpose of the State: Culture, Social Identity, and Institutional Rationality in International Relations*, Princeton University Press: Princeton; Reus-Smit, 'Constructivism'), Maja Zehfuss (Zehfuss, Maja, (2002) *Constructivism in International Relations: The Politics of Reality*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge), Fred Halliday (Halliday, Fred, (1994) *Rethinking International Relations*, Macmillan: Basingstoke; Halliday, Fred, (2005) *The Middle East in International Relations: Power, Politics & Ideology*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge), David Campbell (Campbell, David, (1998) *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*, 2nd ed., University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis), Bill McSweeney (McSweeney, Bill, (1999) *Security, Identity and Interests: A Sociology of International Relations*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge) and others in interpreting the value of constructivism and its relationship to the central themes of the book. In justifying the analysis of political myth, Chiara Bottici's

A Philosophy of Political Myth and Henry Tudor's *Political Myth* ((1972), Pall Mall: London) are the principal relevant works utilised.

16. Ansari, 'Iran and the US in the shadow of 9/11', p. 156.

17. Klotz, Audie & Lynch, Cecelia, (2007) *Strategies for Research in Constructivist International Relations*, M. E. Sharpe: Armonk & London, p. 30.

18. Kibaroglu, Mustafa, (2006) 'Good for the shah, banned for the mullahs: The West and Iran's quest for nuclear power', *Middle East Journal*, 30:2, (Spring 2006) pp. 206–32.

19. For language reasons, most archival research was conducted in English. Some Persian language references include brief media reports in which headlines or key points have been translated by the author. In addition, Persian language newspapers and other periodicals have been utilised with the assistance of Mid East Wire translations, as well as BBC Monitoring. Secondary sources are almost universally English language, obtained through archival research in Australia and the US. Documentation of non-classified US political activities is readily available through transcripts of Senate and House of Representatives committee hearings both online and at the Library of Congress in Washington DC, in which the topic of Iranian politics is well represented. Expert testimony at such hearings is also a valuable resource and has been extensively cited in the course of this book.

20. Peabody, Robert L., *et. al.*, 'Interviewing political elites' *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 23:3, (Sep 1990) pp. 451–5, p. 452.

21. Interviews were conducted without tape recordings, primarily in the interests of avoiding content limitations and confidentiality concerns of the participant. Shorthand notes were taken, and time allotted immediately following each interview for comprehensive transcription. Where possible, or where requested by the participant, interview transcripts were forwarded to the interviewee for verification. In such instances, the entire text body could be considered directly citable. In all interview scenarios, protocol of the ethical clearance obtained by the interviewer was followed. (Ethical clearance was issued by the Australian National University. Prior to conducting fieldwork interviews, the researcher compiled culturally appropriate methods of ensuring adherence to ethical standards.)

22. Dexter, Lewis A., 'Introduction', in Dexter, Lewis A. (ed.), (1970) *Elite and Specialized Interviewing*, Northwestern University Press: Evanston, p. 11, Dexter's emphasis.

23. Peabody, *et. al.*, 'Interviewing political elites', p. 455.

24. Dean, John P. & Whyte, William F., 'How do you know if the informant is telling the truth?', pp .119–38 in Dexter (ed.), *Elite and Specialized Interviewing*, p. 123.

25. *Ibid*.

26. Attribution options available to the participants were as follows:
    1. Attribution to the interviewee **by name**
    2. Attribution to the interviewee **by official title, but not name**

3. **Anonymous** attribution to the interviewee.

Each interviewee was asked to select the option with which they felt most comfortable. In addition, they were permitted to stipulate that specific sections of the interview could, or should, be attributed in a different manner. For example, the answer to one specific question could require anonymous attribution, whereas the remainder of the interview could be acknowledged by name. This process was vital, not merely in ensuring that ethical research standards were maintained, but also in garnering the maximum possible quantity of pertinent information from each interview. A lack of alternative options for attribution may have greatly limited the value of elite interviewing as a methodological approach.

In general, interviews conducted with researchers and academics in the US were conducted at level one – attribution by name. Interviews with government officials were conducted at a combination of levels two and three. Government officials were concerned that the dialogue in the interview might be attributed to the government agency with which they were associated, and thereby be reflected as expressions of policy. This is the main reason that official interviews could not be attributed to person or department, but merely to 'US official' or 'anonymous'. The information gained in these interviews was sufficiently valuable to the research to outweigh the negative aspects of anonymous attribution.

In Iran, a variety of requested levels of attribution were experienced. Some academics interviewed did not wish to be attributed by name, or to have their comments associated with a particular university or other institution. As a result, a number of quotations or comments from interviews in the Islamic Republic are referenced as 'Senior Iranian Academic'. The subject matter is such that, on occasion, certain aspects of an interview were conducted anonymously. This was particularly the case if an interviewee wished to express an opinion that might be construed as against government policy. All possible effort has been taken to ensure that the requested levels of anonymity of interviewees have been respected, given the potential consequences of anti-government comments.

The problem with this system of choice of attribution is that it becomes difficult for the reader to distinguish between the thoughts and comments of the various interviewees who wished to remain anonymous. Context is a useful tool to demonstrate the differences between the interviewees without compromising their anonymity, and this has been the approach taken in the majority of cases. Where possible, endeavour has been made to provide alternative material with which to substantiate comments from anonymous sources, in the interests of increasing the value of interviews conducted in this manner.

27. Dean & Whyte, in Dexter (ed.), *Elite and Specialised Interviewing*, p. 120.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 122.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 123.
30. *Ibid.*

Chapter 1   Identity and Myth

1. Dean, Kathryn, 'Introduction: Politics and the ends of identity', pp. 1–46 in Dean, Kathryn (ed.), (1997) *Politics and the Ends of Identity*, Ashgate: Aldershot, p.1.

2. Wendt, Alexander, 'Identity and structural change in international politics', in Lapid, Y. & Kratochwil, F. (eds), (1996) *The Return of Culture and Identity in IR Theory*, Lynne Rienner Publishers: Boulder & London, p. 48.

3. Baylis, John & Smith, Steve, (2005) *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations*, 3rd ed., Oxford University Press: Oxford, p. 267.

4. Burchill, Scott, (2005) *The National Interest in International Relations Theory*, Palgrave Macmillan: New York, p. 197.

5. Messari, N. 'Identity and foreign policy', in Kubalkova, Vendulka (ed.), (2001) *Foreign Policy in a Constructed World*, M.E. Sharpe: London & New York, p. 230.

6. Reus-Smit, Christian, 'Constructivism', in Burchill, S. *et.al.* (eds), *Theories of International Relations*, 3rd ed., Houndmills: Basingstoke, p. 198.

7. Hopf explains that 'constructivism conceives of the politics of identity as a continual contest for control over the power necessary to produce meaning in a social group.' Hopf, Ted, (1998) 'The promise of constructivism in international relations theory', *International Security*, 23:1, pp. 178–80.

8. Klotz, Audie & Lynch, Cecelia, (2007) *Strategies for Research in Constructivist International Relations*, M. E. Sharpe: Armonk & London, pp. 96–7.

9. Interestingly, the US abstains from participation in many of these forms of international institutions, an aspect of its political identity that has deep roots in the American political consciousness and will be discussed further in Chapter 3.

10. Reus-Smit, Christian, (1999) *The Moral Purpose of the State: Culture, Social Identity, and Institutional Rationality in International Relations*, Princeton University Press: Princeton, p. 28.

11. Mercer, Jonathon, (1995) 'Anarchy and identity', *International Organization*, 49:2, LegalTrac Gale: Australian National University, p. 2.

12. Hopf, *The Promise of Constructivism*, p. 172

13. Morgenthau, Hans J., (1955) *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 2nd ed., Knopf: New York, pp. 3–15.

14. Wendt, Alexander, (1992) 'Anarchy is what states make of it: The social construction of power politics', *International Organization*, 46:2, (Spring 1992), pp. 396–7.

15. Bill, James A., (1988) *The Eagle and the Lion: The Tragedy of American-Iranian Relations*, Yale University Press: New Haven & London, p. 426.

16. Campbell, David, (1998) *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*, 2nd ed., University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, p. 68.

17. Jepperson, Ronald L., Wendt, Alexander, & Katzenstein, Peter J., 'Norms, identity and culture in national security', pp. 33–78, in Katzenstein, Peter J.

(ed.), (1996) *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*, Columbia University Press: New York, p. 60.

18. Messari, in Kubalkova (ed.), *Foreign Policy*, p. 228.
19. Professor Mohammad Reza Saeidabadi, Faculty of World Studies, Tehran University, *pers. comm.*, Tehran, 12 October 2008.
20. Burchill, *The National Interest*, p. 195.
21. Wendt, in Lapid & Kratochwil (eds), *The Return of Culture and Identity*, p. 52.
22. Halliday, Fred, (2005) *The Middle East in International Relations: Power, Politics & Ideology*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, p. 195.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 196.
24. Messari, in Kulbakova (ed.), *Foreign Policy*, p. 227.
25. Mercer, 'Anarchy and identity', pp. 7–8.
26. In this sense, 'interest' is being taken to mean what Klotz & Lynch define as 'what states (or their leaders, on behalf of the collective) need' and which in turn, like identities, are 'neither self-evident nor static'. *Strategies for Research*, p. 86.
27. Nelson Foote, quoted in Wendt, 'Anarchy is what states make of it', p. 398.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 404.
29. Zehfuss, Maja, (2002) *Constructivism in International Relations: The Politics of Reality*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, pp. 43, 49.
30. Mercer, 'Anarchy and identity', p. 11.
31. Hopf, *The Promise of Constructivism*, p. 175.
32. Mercer, 'Anarchy and identity', p. 11.
33. Burchill, *The National Interest*, pp. 185, 196; Linklater, Andrew, 'The achievements of critical theory', pp. 279–98 in Smith, S., Booth, K. & Zalewski, M. (eds), (1996) *International Relations Theory: Positivism and Beyond*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, p. 279.
34. Lott, Anthony D., (2004) *Creating Insecurity: Realism, Constructivism and US Security Policy*, Ashgate: Aldershot, p. 27.
35. This concept will be applied to the development of political identity of each country in Chapters 2 and 3.
36. Klotz & Lynch, *Strategies for Research*, p. 17.
37. Campbell, *Writing Security*, p. 31.
38. McSweeney, Bill, (1999) *Security, Identity and Interests: A Sociology of International Relations*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, p. 74.
39. Jepperson, Wendt & Katzenstein, in Katzenstein (ed.), *The Culture of National Security*, p. 33.
40. McSweeney, *Security, Identity and Interests*, p. 119.
41. Edelman, Murray, (1964) *The Symbolic Uses of Politics*, University of Illinois Press: Urbana, pp. 30–31.
42. Ross, Andrew A. G., (2006) 'Coming in from the cold: Constructivism and emotions', *European Journal of International Relations*, 12:2, (June 2006) p. 1.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
44. *Ibid.*

45. Kinch, Penelope, (2006) 'The Iranian crisis and the dynamics of advice and intelligence in the Carter administration', *Journal of Intelligence History*, 6:2, p. 87.

46. Ross, 'Coming in From the cold', p. 8.

47. Halliday, *The Middle East in International Relations*, p. 32.

48. Hopf, *The Promise of Constructivism*, p. 184. Hopf describes this critical theory angle to constructivism as 'exploding the myths associated with identity formation'.

49. Pettman, Ralph, (2000) *Commonsense Constructivism: Or the Making of World Affairs*, M.E. Sharpe: London & New York, p. 111.

50. Wendt, in Lapid & Kratochwil (eds), *The Return of Culture and Identity*, p. 62.

51. Reus-Smit, in Burchill, *et.al.* (eds), *Theories of International Relations*, pp. 201–2.

52. Gvosdev, Nikolas K., (2005) 'The value(s) of realism', *SAIS Review*, 25:1, (Winter 2005) pp. 17–26. Realist sentiments were used in the 1990s to limit US intervention in conflicts such as Rwanda, citing the reason that no vital US interests were at risk. This raises the question of what constitutes the national interest – the liberation of the Iraqi people perhaps? – and why the US intervened in Kosovo, where ethnic cleansing took place under the eyes of NATO forces. 'It became clear that the Western Alliance was not prepared to enforce its moral values impartially.'

53. Halliday, *The Middle East in International Relations*, pp. 24–5.

54. Arjomand, Saïd Amir, (2009) *After Khomeini: Iran Under His Successors*, Oxford University Press: Oxford, p. 203.

55. Klotz & Lynch, *Strategies for Research*, p. 20.

56. Atabaki, Atabaki, Touraj, 'Historiography of twentieth century Iran: Memory, amnesia and invention', pp. 1–5, in Atabaki, Touraj (ed.), (2009) *Iran in the Twentieth Century: Historiography and Political Culture*, I.B.Tauris: London & New York, p. 1.

57. Fukuyama, Francis, (1992) *The End of History and the Last Man*, Hamish Hamilton: London, p. 246.

58. Klotz & Lynch, *Strategies for Research*, p. 29.

59. See section 'Political Myth' in this chapter for further illumination of the issue of historical narrative.

60. Reus-Smit, in Burchill, S. *et.al.* (eds), *Theories of International Relations*, 3rd ed., New York: Palgrave, 2005, pp. 195, 203.

61. Brunner, Ronald D., (1994) 'Myth and American politics', *Policy Sciences*, 27:1, (1994) pp. 1–18; p. 4.

62. Egerton, George W., (1983) 'Collective security as political myth: Liberal internationalism and the League of Nations in politics and history', *The International History Review*, 5: 4, (Nov 1983) pp. 496–524; p. 498.

63. Lasswell, Harold D., & Kaplan, Abraham, (1950) *Power and Society: A Framework for Political Inquiry*, Yale University Press: New Haven & London, p. 116.

64. Beeman, William, (2005) *The 'Great Satan' vs the 'Mad Mullahs': How the United States and Iran Demonize Each Other*, Praeger: Westport & London, p. 13.

65. Bottici, Chiara, (2007) *A Philosophy of Political Myth*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, p. 225.
66. *Ibid.*, pp. 202, 243–4; Egerton, indicates that political myth functions as a cultural dynamic, see 'Collective security and political myth', p. 501.
67. Bottici, *A Philosophy of Political Myth*, p. 244.
68. Roelofs, H. Mark, (1976) *Ideology and Myth in American Politics: A Critique of a National Political Mind*, Little, Brown & Company: Boston & Toronto, p. 40.
69. Tudor, Henry, (1972) *Political Myth*, Pall Mall: London, p. 39.
70. Kane, John, (2008), *Between Virtue and Power: The Persistent Moral Dilemma of U. S. Foreign Policy*, Yale University Press: New Haven & London, p. 5.
71. Tudor, *Political Myth*, p. 16.
72. Halbwach, M., from *La Memoire Collective*, quoted in Schwartz, Barry, (2000) *Abraham Lincoln and the Forge of National Memory*, University of Chicago Press: Chicago & London, p. 5. (Schwartz trans.).
73. Friedman, Jonathan, (1992) 'Myth, history, and political identity', *Cultural Anthropology*, 7:2, (May 1992) pp. 194–210; p. 207.
74. Tudor, *Political Myth*, p. 15.
75. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
76. Brunner, 'Myth and American politics', p. 3.
77. Crockatt, Richard, (2007) *After 9/11: Cultural Dimensions of American Global Power*, Routledge: London & New York, p. 174.
78. Tudor, *Political Myth*, p. 126.
79. Egerton, 'Collective security as political myth', p. 498.
80. Kane, *Between Virtue and Power*, p. 19.
81. Keller, Frances R., (2002) *Fictions of US History*, Indiana University Press: Bloomington & Indianapolis, pp. 18–9.
82. Friedman, 'Myth, history, and political identity', p. 207.
83. Keller, *Fictions of US History*, pp. 18–9.
84. Bottici, *A Philosophy of Political Myth*, p. 209.
85. *Ibid.*, pp. 213, 216.
86. Tudor, *Political Myth*, p. 125.
87. *Ibid.*, p. 138.
88. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
89. Cohn, quoted in *ibid.*, pp. 133–4.
90. *Ibid.*, p. 121.
91. Bottici, *A Philosophy of Political Myth*, p. 6.
92. Egerton, 'Collective security as political myth', p. 497.

Chapter 2   Iranian Political Identity

1. It is important to note that this chapter does not aim to provide a historical narrative of Iran's past, but will use historical examples to illuminate those aspects of Iran's experience that have played a role in defining its political identity.

2. Takeyh, Ray, (2006) *Hidden Iran: Paradox and Power in the Islamic Republic*, Times Books, New York, p. 2; Senior Iranian Academic, *pers. comm.*, Tehran, 2008; Karim Sadjadpour, Analyst, Carnegie Endowment, *pers. comm.*, Washington, 15 September 2008.

3. Farsoun, Samih K. & Mashayekhi, M., 'Iran's political culture', pp. 1–23 in Farsoun & Mashayekhi (eds), (1992) *Iran: Political Culture in the Islamic Republic*, Routledge: London & New York, p. 6.

4. Professor Abdolali Qavam, Shahid Beheshti University, *pers. comm.*, Tehran, 3 December 2008.

5. Garthwaite, R., (2005) *The Persians*, Blackwell: Oxford, p. 9.

6. Axworthy, Michael, (2007) *Empire of the Mind: A History of Iran*, Hurst: London, p. 12.

7. Shahbazi, Shapur, 'The history of the idea of Iran', in Curtis, V. and Stewart, S. (eds), (2005) *Birth of the Persian Empire*, I.B.Tauris: London & New York, pp. 100–11.

8. Vaziri, Mostafa, (1993) *Iran as Imagined Nation: The Construction of National Identity,* Paragon: New York, p. 167.

9. Almost without exception, on undertaking interviews in Iran, when asked the question 'What would you consider to be the defining elements of Iranian identity?' the first response refers to the 2500 years of civilisation of which Iran can boast.

10. Axworthy, *Empire of the Mind*, p. 47. Cyrus the Great accepted the title of King of Persia by 546 BC.

11. Gary Sick, *pers. comm.*

12. Garthwaite, *The Persians*, p. 10.

13. Keddie, Nikki R., (2003) *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*, Yale University Press: New Haven & London, p. 23.

14. Garthwaite, *The Persians*, p. 11.

15. Dr Jahangir Karami, Assistant Professor of International Relations, Faculty of World Studies, Tehran Unviersity, *pers. comm.*, Tehran, 12 October 2008.

16. Senior Iranian Academic, *pers. comm.*, Tehran, 2008.

17. Anonymous, *pers. comm.*, 2008.

18. Axworthy, *Empire of the Mind* pp. 71–2.

19. Iranian academic, *pers. comm.*, Tabriz, 2008; Axworthy, *Empire of the Mind*, p. 115.

20. Babayan, Kathryn, (2002) *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs: Cultural Landscapes of Early Modern Iran*, Harvard University Press: Cambridge, Mass., p. 29.

21. *Ibid.*

22. Garthwaite, *The Persians*, p. 126.

23. Sa'di, in Rehatsek, Edward (trans.), (1964) *The Gulistan or Rose Garden of Sa'di*, George Allen & Unwin: London; Story 10, Chapter 1, p. 85; See also Axworthy, *Empire of the Mind*, p. 106, pp. 111–12.

24. *Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran*, (1980) Algar, Hamid (trans.), Mizan Press: Berkeley, Article 154.

25. Riesebrodt, Martin, (1993) *Pious Passion: The Emergence of Modern Fundamentalism in the United States and Iran*, University of California Press: Berkeley, p. 128.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 113.

27. Beeman, William, (2005) *The 'Great Satan' vs the 'Mad Mullahs': How the United States and Iran Demonize Each Other*, Praeger: Westport & London, p. 108; Saikal, Amin, (1980) *The Rise and Fall of the Shah: Iran from Autocracy to Religious Rule,* Princeton University Press: Princeton, p. 21.

28. Senior Iranian Academic, *pers. comm.*, Tehran, 2008.

29. Garthwaite, *The Persians*, p. 229.

30. Senior Iranian Academic, *pers. comm.*, Tehran, 2008.

31. Britain and Russia had signed an accord in 1907 (the St Petersburg Treaty) that effectively divided Iran into spheres of influence. See Saikal, (1980) *The Rise and Fall of the Shah*, p. 14.

32. Alexander, Yonah & Nanes, Allan (eds), (1980) *The United States and Iran: A Documentary History*, Aletheia Books: Frederick, Maryland, pp. 1–5.

33. Letter from Ambassador Mehdi Khan to Secretary of State, 17 Dec 1917: requested guarantee of Persian sovereignty, evacuation of troops, recuperation of losses and the revision of treaties forcibly imposed on Persia. In *Ibid*, pp. 15–16.

34. *Ibid*, p. 23.

35. Keddie, *Modern Iran*, p. 107. Arthur Millspaugh, American adviser to Iran in the 1920s and again during World War II, failed to achieve the economic goals he envisaged for Iran. As a result, he wrote a book entitled *Americans in Persia*, which gave a particularly scathing account of dealing with Iranian bureaucracy and attributed the failure of his reforms to flaws in the Iranian character. He was not the only foreigner to find Iran a challenging environment at the time: Many found Iranians to be 'xenophobic', undoubtedly unaware of Iran's long struggle for preservation of their cultural identity. See also Goode, James F., (1997) *The United States and Iran: In the Shadow of Musaddiq*, St Martin's Press: New York, pp. 4–5.

36. Keddie, *Modern Iran*, p. 107.

37. Halliday, Fred, (2005) *The Middle East in International Relations: Power, Politics & Ideology*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, p. 101.

38. Lytle, Mark Hamilton, (1987) *The Origins of the Iranian-American Alliance: 1941–1953*, Hilmes & Meier: New York & London, p. xiii.

39. Goode, James F., (1989) *The United States and Iran, 1946–51: The Diplomacy of Neglect*, St Martins Press: New York.

40. This view was held despite the fact that Franklin D. Roosevelt, at the Tehran Big 3 conference in Nov 1943, had offered Joseph Stalin control of the Iranian state railroad and a free port on the Persian Gulf following the war. This qualifies as rather casual disregard for Iranian sovereignty. Lytle, *Origins of the Iranian-American Alliance*, pp. 21, 26, 57.

41. Morgan Shuster was appointed by the Iranian *majlis* in 1911 to oversee financial reforms. He was expelled by the British vice-regent to Persia in December 1911, against the will of the *majlis*.

42. Meyer, Karl E., (2003) *The Dust of Empire: The Race for Mastery in The Asian Heartland*, Public Affairs: New York, p. 71.
43. Garthwaite, *The Persians*, p. 66.
44. Axworthy, *Empire of the Mind*, p. 120.
45. Mashayekhi, M., 'The politics of nationalism and political culture', pp. 82–115 in Farsoun, Samih K. & Mashayekhi, M. (eds), (1992) *Iran: Political Culture in the Islamic Republic*, Routledge: London & New York, p. 85. As nationalism in itself is not an ideology, it can surface in all manner of ideological contexts, and can be maintained in different political climates.
46. Tehranian, Majid, 'Power and purity: Iranian political culture, communication and identity', pp.185–206 in Jahanbegloo, Ramin (ed.), (2004) *Iran: Between Tradition and Modernity*, Lanham: Lexington, p. 186.
47. Hunter, Shireen T., (1990) *Iran and the World: Continuity in a Revolutionary Decade*, Indiana University Press: Bloomington & Indianapolis, p. 7.
48. Yu, Dal Seung, (2002) *The Role of Political Culture in Iranian Political Development*, Ashgate: Aldershot, p. 113.
49. Tehranian, in Jahanbegloo (ed.), *Iran: Between Tradition and Modernity*, p. 187.
50. Peimani, Hooman, (1999) *Iran and the United States: The Rise of the West Asian Regional Grouping*, Praeger: Westport, p. 63.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 64.
52. The effects of this policy and its challenges on international relations will be assessed in later chapters.
53. *Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran*, Article 152, p. 82.
54. *Ibid.*, Article 153, p. 82.
55. Lafraie, Najibullah, (2009) *Revolutionary Ideology and Islamic Militancy*, I.B. Tauris: London, p. 64.
56. Axworthy, *Empire of the Mind*, p. 11.
57. Huart, Clément, (1927) *Ancient Persia and Iranian Civilisation*, Routledge & Kegan Paul: London, p. 80.
58. *Ibid.*, p. 177; Garthwaite, *The Persians*, p. 121.
59. Axworthy, *Empire of the Mind*, p. 11.
60. Huart, *Ancient Persia*, p. 81.
61. Axworthy, *Empire of the Mind*, p. 45.
62. *Ibid.*, p. 54.
63. Riesebrodt, *Pious Passion*, p 139; Huart, *Ancient Persia*, p. 181.
64. Tarock, Adam, (2006) 'Iran's nuclear programme and the West', *Third World Quarterly*, 27:4, pp. 645–64; p. 647.
65. Garthwaite, *The Persians*, pp. 9–10.
66. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
67. Rouleau, Eric, (1980) 'Khomeini's Iran', *Council on Foreign Relations*, 59:1, (Fall 1980) pp. 1–20, p. 5; In this sense a mullah in Iran is much like a rabbi in a Jewish community: often required to arbitrate on issues ranging from the philosophical to the judicial.

68. Abrahamian, Ervand, (1989) *Radical Islam: The Iranian Mojahedin*, I.B.Tauris: London, p. 12.
69. Garthwaite, *The Persians*, p. 122.
70. Yu, *The Role of Political Culture*, p. 47.
71. Garthwaite, *The Persians*, p. 161.
72. Axworthy, *Empire of the Mind*, p. 139; Ramazani disagrees with this concept, stating that while the conflict was cast in terms of Sunni vs Shi'a, in reality it was simply imperialist. Ramazani, R. K., 'Reflections on Iran's foreign policy: defining the national interests', pp. 211–37 in Esposito, John L. & Ramazani, R. K. (eds), (2001) *Iran at the Crossroads*, Palgrave: New York, p. 213.
73. Yu, *The Role of Political Culture*, p. 45.
74. Garthwaite, *The Persians*, p. 186.
75. *Ibid*.
76. *Ibid*.; Babayan, *Mystics*, p. 406.
77. Ansari, Ali, 'Civilisational identity and foreign policy: The case of Iran', pp. 241–62 in Shaffer, Brenda (ed.), (2006) *The Limits of Culture: Islam and Foreign Policy*, Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs: Cambridge Mass., p. 246.
78. Nasr, Vali, (2006) *The Shia Revival: How Conflicts within Islam will Shape the Future*, W.W. Norton & Company: New York & London, p. 29. In reality, the notion that a Muslim country equates to Muslim politics and thereby to an Islamic government is unrealistic and rarely the case. Very few nations operate their political system along religious lines.
79. Eisenstadt, Michael, 'Living with a Nuclear Iran', pp. 223–56 in Rubin, Barry (ed.), (2002) *Crises in the Contemporary Persian Gulf*, Frank Cass: London & Portland, pp. 238–9.
80. Hunter, *Iran and the World*, p. 11.
81. *Ibid*.
82. Keddie, *Modern Iran*, p. 24.
83. Farhi, Farideh, (2005) 'Crafting a national identity amidst contentious politics in contemporary Iran', *Iranian Studies*, 38:1, pp. 7–22, p. 7.
84. Ansari, Ali, 'Continuous regime change from within', pp. 265–82 in Lennon, A. & Eiss, C. (eds), (2004) *Reshaping Rogue States: Preemption, Regime Change and U.S. Policy Toward Iran, Iraq and North Korea*, MIT Press: Cambridge, Mass., p. 267.
85. The dates for the Constitutional Revolution vary widely within the literature on the topic. Some designate the revolution as beginning in 1905 with the economic crises (Abrahamian, Ervand, (1982) *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, Princeton University Press: Princeton, pp. 50, 81; Browne, Edward G., (1910) *The Persian Revolution of 1905–1909*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge. Browne dates the process 1905–9). Some suggest it ended in 1911 with the dissolution of the second *majlis*, Afary, Janet, 'Social democracy and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1906–11', pp. 21–44 in Foran, John (ed.), (1994) *A Century of Revolution: Social Movements in Iran*, University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis; Arjomand, Saïd Amir, (1988) *The Turban for*

the Crown: The Islamic Revolution in Iran, Oxford University Press: Oxford & New York. – dates given as 1905–11) while others consider the 23 June 1908 *coup d'etat* as concluding the process, despite the re-establishment of the *majlis* in 1909 (e.g. Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*).

86. Ghods, M. Reza, (1989) *Iran in the Twentieth Century: A Political History*, Lynne Rienner Publishers: Boulder, p. 31; Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, p. 61; Ansari, *Modern Iran*, p. 6.

87. Political philosophers such as Sayyid Jamal al-Din 'al-Afghani' and Malkum Khan – Western-educated members of Iran's upper classes – provided impetus to the intelligentsia. For further information see Keddie, Nikki R., (1972) *Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani: A Political Biography*, UC Press: Berkeley; Rahnama, A. (1994) *Pioneers of Islamic Revival*, Zed Books: London. See also Ghods, *Iran in the Twentieth Century*, pp. 25, 30; Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, pp. 50, 63, 81.

88. Ghods, *Iran in the Twentieth Century*, p. 29.

89. Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown*, p. 38.

90. Translation of the Constitution by Browne, *The Persian Revolution*, p. 353.

91. Decreed on 7 October 1907, (translation) *Ibid*., p. 372.

92. *Ibid*., p. 321; Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown*, p. 38.

93. Afary, in Foran (ed.), *A Century of Revolution*, p. 30; Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, p. 97.

94. Browne, *The Persian Revolution*, p. 321.

95. Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, p. 94.

96. Ghods, *Iran in the Twentieth Century*, p. 37.

97. *Ibid*.

98. Keddie, *Modern Iran*, p. 185.

99. Shirazi, quoted in Arjomand, (interview by author), *After Khomeini*, p. 17.

100. Keddie, *Modern Iran*, p. 109.

101. Garthwaite, *The Persians*, p. 191–2.

102. Afary, in Foran (ed.), *A Century of Revolution*, p. 39.

103. Ansari, in Lennon & Eiss (eds), *Reshaping Rogue States*, p. 267.

104. *Ibid*., p. 266.

105. Arjomand, *After Khomeini*, p. 17.

106. Gheissari, Ali, & Nasr, Vali, (2006) *Democracy in Iran: History and the Quest for Liberty*, Oxford University Press: Oxford, p. vi.

107. Beeman, *The 'Great Satan'*, p. 109.

108. Garthwaite, *The Persians*, p. 237.

109. Ansari, in Lennon & Eiss (eds), *Reshaping Rogue States*, p. 267.

110. Mashayekhi, in Farsoun & Mashayekhi (eds), *Iran: Political Culture*, p. 86.

111. Keddie, *Modern Iran*, p. 109.

112. Meyer, *The Dust of Empire*, p. 54.

113. Keddie, *Modern Iran,* p. 124. This income served as Britain's single largest economic asset at the time, lending particular weight to its devastation on being ousted from Iran. Garthwaite, *The Persians*, p. 241.

114. Lytle, *The Origins of the Iranian-American Alliance*, p. 139.

115. Keddie, *Modern Iran,* p. 124.

116. *Ibid*.

117. Lytle, *The Origins of the Iranian-American Alliance*, p. 175.

118. Keddie, *Modern Iran*, p. 126.

119. Kinzer, Stephen, (2008) *All the Shah's Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror,* John Wiley & Sons: Hoboken, p. 141.

120. Oren, Michael B., (2007) *Power, Faith and Fantasy: America in the Middle East 1776 to the Present*, W.W. Norton & Company: New York & London, p. 511. Ironically, Mohammed Mossadeq, at least initially, was not trusted by the Tudeh Party (Iran's communist faction), as he was considered to be in the US's pocket. Halliday, *The Middle East in International Relations*, p. 102.

121. Meyer, *The Dust of Empire*, pp. 72–3; See also Kinzer, *All the Shah's Men*, for an extensive review of the circumstances of the coup.

122. Keddie, *Modern Iran*, p. 125.

123. *Ibid*., p. 131.

124. Garthwaite, *The Persians*, p. 242.

125. Sick, Gary, (1985) *All Fall Down: America's Fateful Encounter with Iran*, I.B.Tauris: London, p. 7.

126. *Ibid*.

127. Mercer, Jonathon, (1995) 'Anarchy and identity', *International Organization*, 49:2, LegalTrac Gale: Australian National University, p. 11.

128. Ansari, in Lennon & Eiss (eds), *Reshaping Rogue States*, p. 268.

129. *Ibid*.; Farsoun & Mashayekhi, in Farsoun & Mashayekhi (eds), *Iran: Political Culture*, p. 10; Rouleau, 'Khomeini's Iran', p. 5.

130. Caryl, Christian, (2009) 'The great backlash 1979', *Foreign Policy*, 173, (Jul–Aug 2009) pp. 50–8, pp. 1–3.

131. Hunter, *Iran and the World,* p. 13.

132. *Ibid*.

133. Khomeini, quoted in Ramazani, in Esposito & Ramazani (eds), *Iran at the Crossroads*, p. 215.

134. Takeyh, *Hidden Iran*, p. 10.

135. Goudarzi, Masoumeh R., Jawan, Jayum A., & Ahmad, Zaid B., (2009) 'The roots and formation of Ayatollah Khomeini's political thought', *Canadian Social Science*, 5:6, (31 Dec 2009) pp. 65–80, p. 65.

136. Arjomand, *After Khomeini,* p. 18.

137. Limbert, John W., (1987) *Iran: At War with History*, Westview Press: Boulder, p. 117.

138. Nasr, *The Shi'a Revival*, p. 105.

139. Keddie, *Modern Iran,* p. 202; Akhavi, S. 'Shariati's social thought', in Keddie, Nikki R. (ed.), (1983) *Religion and Politics in Iran: Shi'ism from Quietism to Revolution*, Yale University Press: New Haven & London; p. 125.

140. Abrahamian, *Radical Islam*, p. 111.

141. Limbert, *Iran: At War With History*, p. 118; Nasr, *The Shi'a Revival*, p. 130; Beeman, *The 'Great Satan'*, p. 75.

142. Abrahamian, *Radical Islam*, p. 111.

143. Dabashi, Hamid, (1993) *Theology of Discontent: The Ideological Foundations of the Islamic Revolution in Iran*, New York University Press: New York & London, p. 325.

144. *Ibid.*, pp. 328–9.

145. Keddie, *Modern Iran*, p. 199.

146. Bazargan was imprisoned in 1955 and again for ten years in 1962. For further details see Dabashi, *Theology of Discontent*, pp. 332–5.

147. The Shah termed this process the White Revolution in order to magnify its resonance in the wider community – 'White' appealed to conservatives, 'Revolution' appealed to radicals. See Saikal, (1980) *The Rise and Fall of the Shah*, p. 79.

148. Farsoun & Mashayekhi, in Farsoun & Mashayekhi (eds), *Iran: Political Culture*, p. 17.

149. Abrahamian, *Radical Islam*, p. 21. The expression 15 Khordad has come to be identified with the early revolutionary movement.

150. Farsoun & Mashayekhi, in Farsoun & Mashayekhi (eds), *Iran: Political Culture*, p. 18.

151. Riesebrodt, *Pious Passion*, p. 130; Clawson, Patrick & Rubin, Michael, (2005) *Eternal Iran: Continuity and Chaos*, Palgrave Macmillan: New York, p. 73.

152. Meyer, *The Dust of Empire*, p. 82.

153. Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, speaking on IRIB Broadcasting, 21/03/2009. Translation from MidEastWire.com.

154. Khomeini, Imam, (1985) *Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declarations,* (trans. Hamid Algar), KPI: London, p. 182; Roy, Amit, 'The view to the West: Iran and the United States', pp. 91–4 in Wright, M. (ed.), (1989) *Iran: The Khomeini Revolution*, Longman: Harlow, p. 82.

155. Khomeini, quoted in Rouleau, 'Khomeini's Iran', p. 6.

156. Saikal, (1980) *The Rise and Fall of the Shah*, p. 193.

157. Sullivan, William H., (1981) *Mission to Iran*, W.W. Norton & Company: New York & London, p. 140; Harris, David, (2004) *The Crisis: The President, The Prophet and The Shah – 1979 and the Coming of Militant Islam*, Little Brown & Co.: New York & Boston, p. 32.

158. Farsoun & Mashayekhi, in Farsoun & Mashakeyhi (eds), *Iran: Political Culture*, p. 14.

159. Keddie, *Modern Iran*, p. 191.

160. Khomeini, Imam, (1983) *Islamic Government*, (no translator identified), European Islamic Cultural Centre: Rome, p. 23.

161. *Ibid.*, p. 35.

162. *Ibid.*, p. 24; see also Keddie, *Modern Iran*, pp. 192–3.

163. Arjomand, *After Khomeini*, p. 21.

164. Garthwaite, *The Persians*, p. 253.

165. Khomeini, *Islamic Government*, p. 40; Rouleau, 'Khomeini's Iran', p. 2.

166. Limbert, *Iran: At War With History*, p. 122.
167. Khomeini, *Islamic Government,* p. 40.
168. *Ibid*., p. 44.
169. Nasr, *The Shi'a Revival*, p. 125.
170. Khomeini, *Islamic Government*, pp. 47–8.
171. *Ibid*., p. 54.
172. Lindholm, Charles, (1996) *The Islamic Middle East: An Historical Anthropology*, Blackwell: Oxford, p. 179.
173. Nasr, *The Shi'a Revival*, pp. 130–1.
174. *Ibid*., p. 131.
175. Beeman, *The 'Great Satan'*, p. 73.
176. Nasr, *The Shi'a Revival*, p. 125.
177. Limbert, *Iran: At War With History*, p. 119.
178. Takeyh, *Hidden Iran,* p. 11.
179. Rouleau, 'Khomeini's Iran', p. 7.
180. Keddie, *Modern Iran*, p. 240.
181. Farsoun & Mashayekhi, in Farsoun & Mashayekhi (eds), *Iran: Political Culture*, p. 8.
182. *Ibid*., p. 9.
183. *Ibid*., p. 11.
184. Khomeini, *Islamic Government*, p. 30.
185. Arjomand, *After Khomeini*, p. 20; Yu, *The Role of Political Culture*, p. 99.
186. Takeyh, *Hidden Iran*, p. 13.
187. Khomeini, Imam, 'Search and find the East', pp. 204–8 in Albert, David H. (ed.), (1980) *Tell the American People: Perspectives on the Iranian Revolution*, Movement for a New Society: Philadelphia, p. 205; Takeyh, *Hidden Iran*, p. 15.
188. Rouleau, 'Khomeini's Iran', p. 3.
189. Farsoun & Mashayekhi, in Farsoun & Mashayekhi (eds), *Iran: Political Culture*, p. 11. *Gharbzadegi* is a term coined by 1960s political theorist Jalal Al-e Ahmad, who was a forerunner of Ali Shariati in terms of political motivation. See Keddie, *Modern Iran*, p. 189.
190. Takeyh, *Hidden Iran*, p. 16.
191. Farsoun & Mashayekhi, in Farsoun & Mashayekhi (eds), *Iran: Political Culture*, p. 23.
192. Nelson Foote, quoted in Wendt, Alexander, (1992) 'Anarchy is what states make of it: the social construction of power politics', *International Organization*, 46:2, (Spring 1992), pp. 391–425, p. 398 (see Chapter 1).
193. Rouleau, 'Khomeini's Iran', p. 7.
194. Khomeini, quoted in Menashri, David, (2007) 'Iran's regional policy: Between radicalism and pragmatism', *Journal of International Affairs*, 60:2, (Spring 2007) pp. 153–69, http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=1268001411&sid=1&Fmt=3&clientId=20870&RQT=309&VName=PQD.
195. Takeyh, *Hidden Iran*, p. 18.
196. Nasr, *The Shi'a Revival*, p. 137.

197. Gary Sick, *pers. comm.*

198. Gheissari & Nasr, *Democracy in Iran*, p. vi; At the time this was written, Iraq was only beginning its fledgling democratic transformation, and it must be assumed that Gheissari and Nasr are not including Turkey or Israel in this statement. Of the Arab nations, only the Palestinians can lay claim to a democratic ideal.

199. *Ibid.*, p. 147. This premise was seriously challenged in 2009 when the suppression of post-election riots in Iran seriously damaged pretentions to democracy.

200. Takeyh, *Hidden Iran*, p. 29.

201. Menashri, 'Iran's regional policy', pp. 153–69.

202. Sarabi, Farzin, (1994) 'The post-Khomeini era in Iran: The elections of the fourth Islamic majlis', *The Middle East Journal*, 48:1, (Winter 1994) p. 90.

203. Saikal, Amin, (2009) 'The roots of Iran's election crisis', *Survival*, 51:5, pp. 91–104, p. 93.

204. *Ibid.*, p. 94.

205. Saikal, (2009) *The Rise and Fall of the Shah*, p. xxvii.

206. Saikal, 'The roots of Iran's election crisis', p. 95.

207. Sarabi, 'The post-Khomeini era in Iran', p. 101.

208. *Ibid.*

209. *Ibid.*, pp. 91, 94.

210. Takeyh, *Hidden Iran,* p. 41.

211. Sarabi, 'The post-Khomeini era in Iran', p. 107.

212. Gheissari & Nasr, *Democracy in Iran*, pp. 129–30.

213. *Ibid.*, p. 133.

214. Karim Sadjadpour, *pers. comm.*

215. Anonymous, *pers. comm.*, Washington, 2008; Research Analyst, *pers. comm.*, Washington, 2008.

216. Senior Iranian Academic, *pers. comm.*, Tehran, 2008.

217. Gholamali Khoshroo, Former Deputy Foreign Minister of Iran, *pers. comm.*, Canberra, 4 July 2008.

218. The significance of the 'Grand Bargain' and its relevance to international relations in context will be further analysed in Chapter 6.

219. Takeyh, *Hidden Iran*, p. 33.

220. *Ibid.*

221. Lindholm, *The Islamic Middle East*, p. 180.

222. Ansari, Ali, (2006) *Confronting Iran: The Failure of American Foreign Policy and the Next Great Crisis in the Middle East,* Perseus Basic Books: New York, p. 120.

223. Sarabi, 'The post-Khomeini era in Iran', p. 90.

224. Gheissari & Nasr, *Democracy in Iran*, pp. 154, 157.

225. International Crisis Group, *Great Expectations: Iran's New President and the Nuclear Talks*, Middle East Briefing no 36, 13 August 2013, http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/middle-east-north-africa/iraq-iran-gulf/iran/b036-great-expectations-iran-s-new-president-and-the-nuclear-talks.aspx.

226. *Ibid*; Opposition activist, *pers. comm.*, 30 August 2014.

227. *Ibid*.

228. Democracy advocate and analyst, *pers. comm.*, 30 August 2014.

229. This factor will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

230. *Ibid*.

231. Editorial, *Jomhuri-ye Eslami,* 1992, in Sarabi, 'The post-Khomeini era in Iran', p. 106.

232. Menashri, 'Iran's regional policy', pp. 153–69.

233. Gholamali Khoshroo, *pers. comm.*

234. The ramifications of these events will be discussed further in Chapter 4.

235. Al Roken, Mohammed, 'Dimensions of the UAE-Iran dispute over three islands', pp. 179–201, in Al Abed, I. & Hellyer, P. (eds), (2001) *United Arab Emirates: A New Perspective*, Trident Press: London, p. 183.

236. Committee on Foreign Affairs, (1986) House of Representatives, 99th Congress, November 24 and December 8,9, 1986, US GPO: Washington DC. The congressional inquiry revealed that although a goal of the secret arms deal was the resumption of a stable relationship with Iran and an 'honourable end' to the Iran–Iraq War, official policy at the time designated that the only path to ending the war was 'strenuous and sustained efforts to inhibit weapons shipments to Iran'. This policy, named Operation Staunch, had been relatively successful until word of the covert shipments became public. 'We will now have to redouble our efforts to restore the credibility of this policy.' Congressman Bereuter stated: 'The sale of arms to Iran is neither wise nor moral.', pp. 10, 39. These issues will be further analysed in Chapter 4.

237. Hunter, *Iran and the World*, p. 9.

238. Ansari, *Confronting Iran*, p. 116.

239. *Ibid*., p. 117.

240. Peimani, *Iran and the United States*, p. 50.

241. *Ibid*.

242. Eisenstadt, in Rubin (ed.), *Crises in the Contemporary Persian Gulf*, p. 249.

243. Saikal, 'The roots of Iran's election crisis', p. 94.

244. This has been a feature of Iran's response to international pressures over its nuclear programme. Iran's handling of this affair will be analysed in detail in Chapter 5.

245. Farsoun & Mashayekhi, in Farsoun & Mashayekhi (eds), *Iran: Political Culture*, p. 1.

246. Tehranian, in Jahanbegloo (ed.), *Iran: Between Tradition and Modernity* p. 191.

247. *Ibid*.

248. Sick, *All Fall Down,* p. 33. Gary Sick adds to this point: 'Long after Khomeini returned to Iran and US–Iranian relations lay in ruins, it was common to meet sophisticated, well-educated Iranians whose inevitable question would be "Why did the United States want to bring Khomeini to power?"' (p. 34). It is clear that any American belief in their political innocence in Iranian affairs was sadly misguided, at least from the Iranian perspective.

249. Halliday, *The Middle East In International Relations*, p. 201.

250. Garthwaite, *The Persians*, p. 239.

251. Goode, *The United States and Iran, 1946–5*, p. 11.

252. Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, (1979) *Iran: Evaluation of US Intelligence Performance Prior to November 1978,* US House of Representatives, US Government Printing Office: Washington DC, p. 3. An exception to this may be the Kennedy administration, which imposed a reform agenda on the Shah in the form of Prime Minister Ali Amimi.

253. Pipes, Daniel, (1998) *The Hidden Hand: Middle East Fears of Conspiracy*, St Martin's Griffen: New York, p. 244.

254. Kinch, Penelope, (2006) 'The Iranian crisis and the dynamics of advice and intelligence in the Carter administration', *Journal of Intelligence History*, 6:2, p. 76; Sullivan, *Mission to Iran*, p. 157.

255. Keddie, *Modern Iran*, p. 236.

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258. Ahmad, E., 'Iran and the West', p. 33.

259. Saikal, 'The roots of Iran's election crisis', p. 100.

260. Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, speech on IRIB television, 9 July 2009. Translation from MidEastWire.com.

261. *Kayhan International*, 26 June 2009. MidEastWire.com.

262. Anonymous, *pers. comm.*, Tehran, 2008.

263. Ferdowsi, in Atkinson, James, (trans.), (1892) *Firdausi: The Shahnameh*, George Routledge & Sons: London, p. 107:

> Rustam, at last,
> Gathering fresh power vouchsafed by favouring Heaven
> And bringing all his mighty strength to bear
> Raised up the gasping Demon in his arms
> And with such fury dashed him to the ground
> That life no longer moved his monstrous frame.

264. Yu, *The Role of Political Culture*, p. 39; Beeman, *The 'Great Satan'*, p. 49.

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277. Opposition activist, *pers. comm*.

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283. Senior Iranian Academic, *pers. comm.*, Tehran, 2008.

284. Lytle, *The Origins of the Iranian-American Alliance*, pp. 56–7.

285. Hunter, *Iran and the World*, p. 37.

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287. Mashayekhi, in Farsoun & Mashayekhi (eds), *Iran: Political Culture*, p. 105, author trans.

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289. Beeman, *The 'Great Satan'*, p. 24.

290. Nasr, *The Shi'a Revival*, p. 42.

291. Beeman, *The 'Great Satan'*, p. 72.

292. Ansari, *Confronting Iran*, p. 104.

293. Senior Iranian Academic, *pers. comm.*, 2008, Tehran. After 1986 a stronger sense of nationalism was introduced to the wartime rhetoric, when inspiring Islamic identity proved insufficient.

294. Nasr, *The Shi'a Revival*, p. 132.

295. Ansari, in Shaffer (ed.), *The Limits of Culture*, p. 247.

296. Ansari, *Confronting Iran*, p. 103.

297. *Ibid.*, p. 104.

298. *Ibid.*, p. 116.

299. Nasr, *The Shia Revival*, p. 57.

300. *Ibid.*, p. 241.

301. *Ibid.*, p. 138.

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303. Axworthy, *Empire of the Mind*, p. 140.

304. Saikal, (2009) *The Rise and Fall of the Shah*, p. xiv.

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Chapter 3   American Political Identity

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23. Kane, *Between Virtue and Power*, p. 8.

24. Hart, *Restoration of the Republic*, p. 89.

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55. Schwartz, *Abraham Lincoln*, p. 146.

56. *Ibid.*, p. 290.

57. Kane, *Between Virtue and Power*, p. 22.

58. Woodrow Wilson, quoted in Schwartz, *Abraham Lincoln*, p. 165.

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108. Ikenberry, 'Strategic reactions to American preeminence', p. 10: (emphasis added).

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116. Norton *et.al.*, *A People and a Nation*, p. 622.

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119. Theodore Roosevelt, quoted in *ibid*.

120. *Ibid.*, p. 51.

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view on America's role in the international community. It could perhaps give rise to further debate with respect to the 2000–08 Bush administration.

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125. Norton *et.al.*, *A People and a Nation*, p. 657.

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133. *Ibid*.

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135. Donovan, J. C., (1974) *The Cold Warriors: A Policy-Making Elite*, D.C. Heath & Co.: Lexington, p. 66.

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137. *Ibid*.

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139. Kolko, *Confronting the Third World*, p. 272.

140. Jimmy Carter, quoted in Crabb, *The Doctrines*, p. 328.

141. *Ibid*., p. 329.

142. *Ibid*.

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144. Dallek, *The American Style of Foreign Policy*, p. xvii.

145. Levering, *The Cold War*, p. 174.

146. Ikenberry, 'Strategic reactions to American preeminence', p. 1.

147. *Ibid*., p. 3.

148. *Ibid*., p. 14; Crockatt, *After 9/11*, p. 37.

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152. *Ibid.*, p. 156.

153. *Ibid.*, p. 158. It is important to note that this view originates from a pre-9/11 source and does not apply to the administration of G.W. Bush.

154. *Ibid.*

155. *Ibid.*, p. 150.

156. Hirsh, Michael, (2003) *At War with Ourselves: Why America is Squandering its Chance to Build a Better World*, Oxford University Press: Oxford, p. 32.

157. *Ibid.*, p. 33.

158. Crockatt, *After 9/11*, p. 180.

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161. Kane, 'American values or human rights?', p. 1.

162. George W. Bush, quoted in Domke, David, (2007) *God Willing? Political Fundamentalism in the White House, the War on Terror and the Echoing Press*, Pluto Press: London, p. 62.

163. Kane, *Between Virtue and Power*, p. 313.

164. Domke, *God Willing?*, pp. 64–5. Domke outlines the thread of fundamentalist religious rhetoric in Bush's choice of words during this period: 'Freedom and liberty are deeply ensconced in a religious fundamentalist worldview, crucially intertwined with goals regarding the protection and spread of the faith. Consistent claims by the president that these values had global appeal and benefits reflected a fundamentalist certainty that they offered universal norms crossing cultural and historical contexts.' See p 115. Although Bush denies believing he is 'God's instrument', much of his rhetoric suggests otherwise. It is interesting to note that although in general the US has been careful not to frame the War on Terror as a war on Islam, many aspects of Bush's rhetoric closely tied the US military response to Christian fundamentals. Support for the war has traditionally been much higher in evangelical communities than in the general American population. See also Crockatt, *After 9/11*, pp. 36, 180.

165. George W. Bush, quoted in Anderson, Major R., (2003) 'Redefining just war criteria in the post 9/11 world and the moral consequences of preemptive strikes', United States Military Academy, http://atlas.USfa.af.mil/jscope/JSCOPE03/Anderson03.html, p. 1.

166. Bush, George W., (2002) 'Remarks by the President at 2002 Graduation Exercise of the United States Military Academy', West Point, New York, 01/06/2002, http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/06/print/20020601-3.html, p. 2.

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provided the impetus for invasion but it was not strictly speaking the Taliban that was responsible for the attacks on New York and Washington DC; rather the Taliban was accused of harbouring those responsible.

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169. Hurd, Ian, (2007), 'Breaking and making norms: American revisionism and crises of legitimacy', *International Politics*, 44:2/3, (Mar-May 2007) pp. 194–214.
170. Anderson, 'Redefining just war criteria', p. 3.
171. Kennedy, Senator Edward, (2002) 'The Bush Doctrine of Preemption', http://ics.leeds.ac.uk/papers/vp01.cfm?outfit=pmt&requesttimeout=500&folder=339&paper=389, p. 2.
172. Bill Clinton, quoted in Woodward, B., (2004) *Plan of Attack*, Simon & Schuster: New York, p. 10. Although the 1991 Gulf War was not a pre-emptive war but rather undertaken in the interests of liberating Kuwait, Bush senior was militarily engaged with Iraq and undertook to encourage uprisings against Saddam Hussein's regime by the oppressed Shi'a majority.
173. Bush, George W., (2002) 'Iraq is a threat to the UN', Speech to the United Nations in New York, 15 September 2002, http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2002/09/12/national/main521781.shtml.
174. Record, J., (2003) 'The Bush Doctrine and war with Iraq', *Parameters*, pp. 4–21, p. 12.
175. Mansfield, *The Faith of George W. Bush,* p. 125.
176. LaFeber, Walter, (2007) 'Some perspectives in U.S. foreign relations', *Diplomatic History*, 31:3, p. 426.
177. Crockatt, *After 9/11*, p. 23.
178. *Ibid*., p. 25.
179. *Ibid*., p. 13.
180. Hirsh, *At War With Ourselves*, p. 39.
181. Crockatt, *After 9/11*, p. 26.
182. *Ibid*., p. 51.
183. Thomas Paine, quoted in Hirsh, *At War With Ourselves*, p. 72.
184. Bush, George W., (2001) First Inaugural Address, http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/gwbfirstinaugural.htm.
185. LaFeber, 'Some perspectives in U.S. foreign relations', p. 423.
186. Kane, *Between Virtue and Power*, p. 277.
187. *Ibid*., p. 261.
188. Gary Sick, *pers. comm.*
189. An analysis of the impact of this affair on Iran and foreign policy will be undertaken in Chapter 4.
190. Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, 99th Congress, 24 November & 8, 9 December 1986, p. 10.
191. *Ibid*.
192. Lawrence Haas, former aide to Vice President Al Gore, in testimony to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Subcommittee on National

Security and Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, 110th Congress, 1st Session, 7 November 2007, LexisNexis Congressional: Washington DC, accessed Library of Congress 16 September 2008.

193. Hirsh, *At War With Ourselves*, p. 29.
194. George H. W. Bush, quoted in *ibid*., p. 50.
195. *Ibid*., p. 31.
196. Kane, *Between Virtue and Power*, p. 306. Small detachments were sent to Haiti, Bosnia and Kosovo, but these were short-term deployments and Clinton was reluctant to become enmeshed in an African conflict again.
197. Hirsh, *At War With Ourselves*, p. 222.
198. *Ibid*., p. 53.
199. Ikenberry, G. John, (2003) 'America and the ambivalence of power', *Current History*, 102:667, (Nov 2003) p. 377.
200. *Ibid*.
201. Hart, *Restoration of the Republic*, p. 231.
202. Kaufmann, G., (2002) 'Orchestrating foreign policy', *Harvard International Review*, 24:2, p. 1.
203. George Kennan, quoted in Donovan, *The Cold Warriors*, p. 64.
204. Ikenberry, 'Strategic reactions to American preeminence', p. 16.
205. *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, (2002) US Government Printing Office, http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/policy/national/nss-020920.pdf.
206. Hart, *Restoration of the Republic*, p. 71.
207. Crockatt, *After 9/11*, p. 173.

Chapter 4   Myths and Foreign Policy Challenges

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2. Senior Iranian Academic, *pers. comm.*, Tehran, 2008.
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Chapter 5   Foreign Policy Challenge: Iran's Nuclear Programme

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43. *Ibid*.

44. *Ibid*.

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62. Sagan, 'How to keep the bomb from Iran', p. 46.

63. Thomas Mattair, speaking at Middle East Policy conference: see Pickering, Thomas R., Parsi, T., Katzman, K. & Mattair, Thomas R., (2009) 'The United States and Iran: What are the prospects for engagement?', *Middle East Policy*, (Summer 2009) 16:2, pp. 1–26, p. 8.

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70. Kenneth Katzman, speaking at Middle East Policy conference: see Pickering, *et.al.*, 'The United States and Iran', p. 5.

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87. Lindsay & Takeyh, 'After Iran gets the bomb', pp. 33–50.

88. Dueck & Takeyh, 'Iran's nuclear challenge', pp. 189–206.

89. Ambassador Shaker, remarks made at 55th Pugwash Conference in Hiroshima, Japan, 25 July 2005; quoted in Kibaroglu, 'Good for the shah, banned for the mullahs', p. 222.

90. B. Farahmand, 'A Quds analysis of the political behaviour of the West', *Al-Quds*, 24 October 2009. Translation from MidEastWire.com.

91. Eisenstadt, in Rubin (ed.), *Crises in the Contemporary Persian Gulf*, p. 245.

92. Lindsay & Takeyh, 'After Iran gets the bomb', pp. 33–50.

93. *Ibid*.

94. Raghida Dergham, in *Al-Hayat* (Saudi Arabia), 9 April 2014. MidEastWire.com.

95. Hillary Mann Leverett, in testimony to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, 110th Congress, 7 November 2007, p. 43.

96. Haass & Indyk, 'Beyond Iraq', pp. 41–59.

97. President Ahmadinejad, in speech 19 October 2010, http://www.president.ir/en/?ArtID=22587&term=nuclear.

98. Haass & Indyk, 'Beyond Iraq', pp. 41–59.

99. Sanadjian, Manuchehr, (2008) 'Nuclear fetishism, the fear of the "Islamic" bomb and national identity in Iran', *Social Identities*, 14:1, pp. 77–100, p. 87.

100. Jepperson, Ronald L., Wendt, Alexander, & Katzenstein, Peter J., 'Norms, identity and culture in national security', pp. 33–78, in Katzenstein, Peter J. (ed.), (1996) *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*, Columbia University Press: New York, p. 33.

Chapter 6   Intersection of Interest and Identity in Regional Issues

1. Gary Sick, *pers. comm.*

2. Tarock, Adam, (2006) 'Iran's nuclear programme and the West', *Third World Quarterly*, 27:4, pp. 645–64, p. 647.

3. Kenneth Katzman, speaking at Middle East Policy conference: see Pickering, Thomas R., Parsi, T., Katzman, K. & Mattair, Thomas R., (2009) 'The United States and Iran: What are the prospects for engagement?', *Middle East Policy*, (Summer 2009) 16:2.

4. Flynt Leverett, former Senior Director of Middle East Affairs at the National Security Council, in testimony to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, 110th Congress, 7 November 2007, p. 8.

5. Saikal, Amin, (2004) *Modern Afghanistan: A History of Struggle and Survival*, I.B.Tauris: London & New York, p. 211; Nasr, Vali, 'The Iranian revolution and changes in Islamism', in Keddie, Nikki R. & Matthee, Rudi (eds), (2002) *Iran and the Surrounding World: Interactions in Culture and Cultural Politics*, University of Washington Press: Seattle & London, p. 347.

6. Mansour, Imad, (2008), 'Iran and instability in the Middle East', *International Journal*, 63:4, (Autumn 2008), pp. 941–65, http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=1658702311&sid=1Fmt=3&cllientId=20870&RQT=309&VName=PQD.

7. Bahgat, Gawdat, (2007) 'Iran, Israel and the United States: The nuclear paradox', *The Journal of Social, Political, and Economic Studies*, 32:1, (Spring 2007) pp. 3–22, http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did-1603284811=sid=1Fmt=3=clientId=20870=RQT=309=VName=PQD; The United Front for the Islamic Salvation of Afghanistan, led by Ahmad Shah Massoud, was initially termed 'The Northern Alliance' by Pakistan to indicate sectional division, and this name was largely adopted by the international community.

8. Saikal, *Modern Afghanistan*, p. 223.

9. Peimani, Hooman, (1999) *Iran and the United States: The Rise of the West Asian Regional Grouping*, Praeger: Westport, p. 69.

10. *Ibid.*, p 68; see also Tarock, Adam, (1999) 'The politics of the pipeline: The Iran and Afghanistan conflict', *Third World Quarterly*, 20:4, (August 1999) pp. 801–19.

11. Ayatollah Khamenei, speech 14 March 2006: http://www.leader.ir/langs/en/?p=contentShow&id=3510.
12. Khamenei, quoted in Tarock, 'Politics of the pipeline', p. 812.
13. Abdollah Ahad Khaleqian, government official, in *Tehran Times*, 1 October 2000, http://www.tehrantimes.com/Index_view.asp?code=4376.
14. Gholamali Khoshroo, *pers. comm.*
15. Saikal, *Modern Afghanistan*, pp. 223, 226. The issue of the US training the Taliban is often confused in Western analysis with the aid, both direct and indirect, provided to those who fought the Soviets under the umbrella of American support for the Mujahideen. That the Taliban provided sanctuary for the Al-Qaeda network in the border regions with Pakistan does not link the US to training the Taliban.
16. Milani, Mohsen M., (2006) 'Iran's policy towards Afghanistan', *Middle East Journal*, 60:2, (Spring 2006) pp. 235–56, p. 239.
17. Saikal, *Modern Afghanistan*, p. 226.
18. Milani, 'Iran's policy towards Afghanistan', p. 238.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 239.
20. Saikal, *Modern Afghanistan*, p. 209, 225; Sinha, Mukesh Kumar, (2005) *The Persian World: Understanding People, Polity and Life in Iran, Afghanistan and Tajikistan*, Hope India: New Delhi, p. 63.
21. Peimani, *Iran and the United States*, p. 68; Bahgat, 'Iran, Israel and the United States', pp. 3–22. Bahgat suggests this particular confrontation brought Iran and Afghanistan to the brink of war. Estimates from a range of sources suggest that anywhere between 2000 and 8000 men, women and children were killed at Mazar-e Sharif, with the survivors being forced to adopt Sunni rituals or immigrate to Iran to avoid being executed. See also Tarock, 'The politics of the pipeline', pp. 801, 812, http://www.hazara.net/taliban/genocide/mazar/mazar.html.
22. Nasr, in Keddie & Matthee (eds), *Iran and the Surrounding World*, p. 347.
23. Peimani, *Iran and the United States*, p. 69.
24. Milani, 'Iran's policy towards Afghanistan', p. 246.
25. Siebert, Michael, (2002) 'European perspectives on the Gulf: Similarities and differences with the U.S.', *Middle East Policy*, 9:3, (Sep 2002) pp. 94–8.
26. Hillary Mann Leverett, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, 110th Congress, 7 November 2007, p. 6. The Bonn Conference was the forum for establishing a new government for Afghanistan in the immediate post-Taliban period, with the objective of democratic elections to be held when practicable.
27. Former Iranian government official, *pers. comm.,* Tehran, November 2008.
28. Mansour, 'Iran and instability in the Middle East', pp. 941–65. Iran had also been hosting some 2 million refugees since the days of the Soviet occupation in the 1980s. This was a significant factor in Iran's desire for a stable Afghanistan. See Saikal, *Modern Afghanistan*.
29. Statement by Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hamid Reza Assefi, in *Tehran Times*, 29 January 2002, http://www.tehrantimes.com/Indez_view.asp?code= 73892.

30. *Ibid.*; *Iran Daily*, 18 July 2010, http://www.iran-daily.com/1389/4/27/Mainpaper/3729/Page/5/.

31. *Iran Daily*, 24 December 2009, http://www.iran-daily.com/1388/10/3/Mainpaper/3778/Page/5/.

32. Kutty, Sumitha Narayana, 1 June 2014, http://twq.elliott.gwu.edu/iran%E2%80%99s-continuing-interests-afghanistan.

33. Kutty, Sumitha Narayana, 19 July 2014, http://www.lobelog.com/iran-plays-a-waiting-game-in-afghanistan/.

34. James Dobbins, in testimony to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, 110th Congress, 7 November 2007, p. 3.

35. *Ibid*.

36. *Ibid*.

37. Bush, George W., State of the Union address, 29 January 2002, http://transcripts.cnn.com/2002/ALLPOLITICS/01/29/bush.speech.txt/.

38. *Ibid*.

39. Gholamali Khoshroo, *pers. comm.*

40. Ansari, Ali, (2006) 'Iran and the US in the shadow of 9/11: Persia and the Persian question revisited', *Iranian Studies*, 39:2, (June 2006), p. 165.

41. *Ibid*.

42. James Dobbins, in testimony to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, 110th Congress, 7 November 2007, p. 3.

43. Hillary Mann Leverett, in testimony to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, 110th Congress, 7 November 2007, p. 6.

44. *Ibid*.

45. Gholamali Khoshroo, *pers. comm.*

46. *Tehran Times*, 27 February 2002, http://www.tehrantimes.com/Index_view.asp?code=75773.

47. Hillary Mann Leverett, in testimony to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, 110th Congress, 7 November 2007, p. 15.

48. Editorial, Palestinian daily newspaper *Al-Quds Al-Arabi*, 1 April 2009, suggested that American discussions with Iran over Afghanistan and in particular the drug trade were something of a test case to gauge Iranian intentions. If this were the case it would seem surprising that the US was not satisfied by Iran's actions in this area. Translation from MidEastWire.com.

49. *Iran Daily*, 24 December 2009, http://www.iran-daily.com/1388/10/3/Mainpaper/3778/Page/5/.

50. Recent figures are unclear, but between 1982 and 1998 some 3350 Iranian law enforcement agents were killed by drug traffickers. Peimani, *Iran and the United States*, p. 70.

51. Hillary Mann Leverett, in testimony to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, 110th Congress, 7 November 2007, p. 15.

52. Peimani, *Iran and the United States*, p. 70.

53. Gholamali Khoshroo, *pers. comm.*; Hillary Mann Leverett has stated that Iran 'receives no international recognition' for its efforts: in testimony to the

Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, 110th Congress, 7 November 2007, p. 15.

54. Thomas Mattair, speaking at Middle East Policy conference: see Pickering et. al., 'United States and Iran'.

55. *Ibid.*

56. Gary Sick, *pers. comm.*

57. Hillary Mann Leverett, in testimony to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, 110th Congress, 7 November 2007, p. 6.

58. Takeyh, Ray, (2006) *Hidden Iran: Paradox and Power in the Islamic Republic*, Times Books: New York, p. 223.

59. Menashri, David, (2007) 'Iran's regional policy: Between radicalism and pragmatism', *Journal of International Affairs*, 60:2, (Spring 2007) pp. 153–69, http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=1268001411&sid=1&Fmt=3&clientId=20870&RQT=309&VName=PQD.

60. Barzegar, Kayhan, (2008) 'Iran's foreign policy in post-Iinvasion Iraq', *Middle East Policy*, 15:4, (Winter 2008) pp. 47–59.

61. The offer is designated as a 'trial balloon' by Karim Sadjadpour, in testimony to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, 110th Congress, 30 October 2007, p. 12.

62. James Dobbins, in testimony to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, 110th Congress, 7 November 2007, p. 3.

63. Ken Ballen, president of NGO Terror Free Tomorrow, in testimony to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, 110th Congress, 30 October 2007, p. 12.

64. Kavous Seyed-Emami, *pers. comm.*

65. Hillary Mann Leverett, in testimony to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, 110th Congress, 7 November 2007, p. 6.

66. Gholamali Khoshroo, *pers. comm.*

67. Senior US Government Official, *pers. comm.*; Anonymous, *pers. comm.*, US, 2008; Karim Sadjadpour, *pers. comm.*, and in testimony to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, 110th Congress, 30 October 2007.

68. Anonymous, *pers. comm.*, US, 2008.

69. Beeman, William, (2005) *The 'Great Satan' vs the 'Mad Mullahs': How the United States and Iran Demonize Each Other*, Praeger: Westport & London, p. 162.

70. *Ibid.*

71. Barzegar, 'Iran's foreign policy in post-invasion Iraq'.

72. Menashri, 'Iran's regional policy', pp. 153–69.

73. Ammar Ali Hassan, UAE daily newspaper *Al-Itiihad*, 29 May 2009, Translation from MidEastWire.com.

74. Haass, Richard N. & Indyk, Martin, (2009) 'Beyond Iraq: A new U.S. strategy for the Middle East', *Foreign Affairs*, 88:1, (Jan-Feb 2009) pp. 41–69, http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=1614371891&sid=1Fmt=3&clientId=20870&RQT=309&VName=PQD.

75. US official, *pers. comm.*, 2008.
76. Barzegar, 'Iran's foreign policy in post-invasion Iraq'.
77. *Ibid*. In undertaking research interviews in Iran in 2008, the author made little progress in lines of questioning that encompassed Iranian involvement in militia activities or funding and supply for such groups.
78. Pollack, Kenneth, (2004) *The Persian Puzzle: The Conflict Between Iran and America*, Random House: New York, p. 357.
79. *Ibid*.
80. Mohammad Reza Saeidabadi, *pers. comm.*; Gholamali Khoshroo, *pers. comm.*; Abdolali Qavam, *pers. comm.*
81. Nasr, Vali, (2006) *The Shia Revival: How Conflicts within Islam will Shape the Future*, W.W. Norton & Company: New York & London, pp. 211–12.
82. Harold Saunders, in testimony to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, 96th Congress, 17 January 1979, p. 3. The then Congressman for Ohio, Donald J. Pease, commented following Saunders' statement that 'anyone familiar with events in the early 1950s might question whether in the past we have respected the rights of Iranians to decide their own future.' (p. 47). This statement was not responded to by Saunders and neither was any further mention made of 1950s events in this or any other committee hearing on Iran.
83. Ansari, 'Iran and the US in the shadow of 9/11', p. 155.
84. Ammar Ali Hassan, UAE daily newspaper *Al-Ittihad*, 29 May 2009, Translation from MidEastWire.com.
85. Saikal, (2009) *The Rise and Fall of the Shah*, p. xxxiii.
86. The practical applications of dialogue and negotiations, and prospects for the future are addressed in Chapter 7.
87. Thomas Mattair, speaking at *Middle East Policy* conference: see Pickering *et.al.*, 'United States and Iran'.
88. Democracy advocate and analyst, *pers. comm.*
89. Nasr, *The Shi'a Revival*, p. 34.
90. Shaery-Eisenlohr, Roschanack, (2007) 'Imagining Shi'ite Iran: transnationalism and religious authenticity in the Muslim world', *Iranian Studies*, 40:1, pp. 17–35, p. 20.
91. *Ibid*., p. 18.
92. Bush, George W. (2007), Speech, Washington DC 13 September 2007, http://www.johnstonsarchive.net/policy/bushiraqforward.html.
93. Barzegar, 'Iran's foreign policy in post-invasion Iraq'.
94. Senator R. Lugar, in testimony to the Committee on Foreign Relations, *Iran: An Update*, 29 March 2007, p. 3.
95. Taheri, 'The United States and the reshaping of the Greater Middle East', p. 299.
96. Norton, Augustus R., (2007), 'The Shiite "threat" revisited', *Current History*, 106:704, (Dec 2007) pp. 434–40, http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=1435701111&sid=1&Fmt=3&clientId=20870&RQT=309&VName=PQD. Norton draws attention particularly to works such as Nasr's *The Shia Revival*, believing that Nasr overstates enduring Sunni-Shiite tensions in history.

97. Thomas Mattair, speaking at Middle East Policy conference: see Pickering *et. al.*, 'United States and Iran'.

98. Barzegar, 'Iran's foreign policy in post-invasion Iraq'.

99. *Ibid.*

100. Mansour, 'Iran and instability in the Middle East', pp. 941–65.

101. *Ibid.*

102. Nasr, *The Shia Revival*, p. 171.

103. *Ibid.*, p. 18.

104. Barzegar cites a figure of 3000 as the number of Iranian visas issued to Iraqi nationals every day in 2006 for pilgrimages to visit Mashhad, Qom and other holy sites within Iran. Similarly large numbers of pilgrims awaited the opening of borders with Iraq in order to visit Iraqi sites such as Karbala and Najaf. Barzegar, 'Iran's foreign policy in post-invasion Iraq'. See also Nasr, *The Shia Revival*, p. 18.

105. *Ibid.*, pp. 81–2.

106. King Abdullah of Jordan, quoted in article by Ian Black, *Guardian*, 26 January 2007, http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2007/jan/26/worlddispatch.ianblack.

107. Saikal, (2009) *The Rise and Fall of the Shah*, p. xxxiii.

108. Menashri, 'Iran's regional policy', pp. 153–69.

109. Saikal, (2009) *The Rise and Fall of the Shah*, p. xxxiii.

110. Norton, 'The Shi'ite "threat" revisited', pp. 434–50.

111. In fact, Ahmadinejad did not say this; he quoted Khomeini as saying 'this regime occupying Jerusalem must vanish from the page of time.' English translation by Arash Norouzi, http://www.antiwar.com/orig/norouzi.php?articleid=11025. Farsi version of Ahmadinejad's speech is available in archive on his website: http://www.president.ir/fa/.

112. US government official, speaking about Condoleezza Rice's statement and Ayatollah Khamenei's reply, *pers. comm.*, Washington, 2008.

113. Bill, James A., (2001) 'The politics of hegemony: The United States and Iran', *Middle East Policy*, 8:3, (September 2001) pp. 89–101; Anonymous, *pers. comm.*, 2008.

114. Takeyh, *Hidden Iran*, p. 191.

115. An exception to this statement might be found in the arms dealings between Iran and Israel in the early years of the Iran–Iraq War, which would eventually culminate in the Iran–Contra affair as a result of the funnelling of funds by the Reagan administration. Israel's 1982 attack on Iraq's nuclear facilities was also enormously advantageous to Iran in the context of the Iran–Iraq War. For more information see Arjomand, Saïd Amir, (2009) *After Khomeini: Iran Under His Successors*, Oxford University Press: Oxford, p. 135; Ansari, Ali, (2006) *Confronting Iran: The Failure of American Foreign Policy and the Next Great Crisis in the Middle East,* Perseus Basic Books: New York, p. 101.

116. Bahgat, 'Iran, Israel and the United States', pp. 3–22.

117. Ahmadinejad, speech 14 December 2009, http://www.president.ir/en/?ArtID=19257&term=arrogance.

118. Ahmadinejad, quoted in Menashri, 'Iran's regional policy', pp. 153–69.
119. Haass & Indyk, 'Beyond Iraq', pp. 41–59.
120. Freilich, Chuck, (2008) 'The United States, Israel and Iran: Defusing an "existential" threat', *Arms Control Today*, 38:9, (November 2008) pp. 6–12, http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did-1603284811&sid=1Fmt=3&clientId=20870&RQT=309&VName=PQD.
121. Bahgat, 'Iran, Israel and the United States', pp. 3–22.
122. Democracy advocate and Iran analyst, *pers. comm.*, 30 August 2014.
123. Karim Sadjadpour, *pers. comm.*
124. *Ibid*. This perspective coincides with anecdotal evidence encountered by the author in Iran in 2008.
125. Karim Sadjadpour, in testimony to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, 110th Congress, 30 October 2007, p. 18.
126. *Ibid*.
127. Bahgat, 'Iran, Israel and the United States', pp. 3–22.
128. Khamenei in *ibid*.
129. Menashri, 'Iran's regional policy', pp. 153–69; Eisenstadt, Michael, 'Living with a nuclear Iran', pp. 223–56 in Rubin, Barry (ed.), (2002) *Crises in the Contemporary Persian Gulf*, Frank Cass: London & Portland, p. 225.
130. Saikal, (2009) *The Rise and Fall of the Shah*, p. xxxii.
131. Trita Parsi, speaking at *Middle East Policy* conference: see Pickering *et.al.*, 'United States and Iran'.
132. Tariq Alhomayed, in Saudi-owned English language newspaper *Asharq al-Awsat*, 20 May 2009. MidEastWire.com.
133. Freilich, 'The United States, Israel, and Iran', pp. 6–12.
134. Jahangir Karami, *pers. comm.*
135. Karim Sadjadpour, *pers. comm.*
136. Menashri, 'Iran's regional policy', pp. 153–69.
137. Takeyh, *Hidden Iran*, p. 199.
138. Freilich, 'The United States, Israel, and Iran', pp. 6–12.
139. Pollack, *The Persian Puzzle*, p. 350.
140. *Ibid*.
141. Ansari, 'Iran and the US in the shadow of 9/11', p. 164.
142. *Ibid*.
143. Mansour, 'Iran and instability in the Middle East', pp. 941–65.
144. Takeyh, *Hidden Iran*, p. 190.
145. Bahgat, 'Iran, Israel and the United States', pp. 3–22.
146. Anonymous, *pers. comm.*, Washington, 2008.
147. Ansari, *Confronting Iran*, pp. 101–3.
148. Tariq Alhomayed, in Saudi-owned English language newspaper *Asharq al-Awsat*, 20 May 2009. MidEastWire.com.
149. Trita Parsi, speaking at *Middle East Policy* conference: see Pickering *et al.*, 'United States and Iran'.
150. Senior Iranian Academic, *pers. comm.*, Tehran, 2008.

151. Gholamali Khoshroo, *pers. comm.*

152. *Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran*, (1980) Algar, Hamid (trans.), Mizan Press: Berkeley Article 3, p. 29.

153. Mansour, 'Iran and instability in the Middle East', pp. 941–65.

154. Lindsay, James M., & Takeyh, Ray, (2010) 'After Iran gets the bomb', *Foreign Affairs,* 89:2, (March–April 2010) pp. 33–50, http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=1976066171&sid=1&Fmt=3&clientId=20870&RQT=309&VName=PQD.

155. Senior Iranian Academic, *pers. comm.* Tehran, 2008.

156. Barzegar, 'Iran's foreign policy in post-invasion Iraq'.

157. Shaffer, Brenda, 'The Islamic Republic of Iran: Is it really?', in Shaffer, Brenda (ed.), (2006) *The Limits of Culture: Islam and Foreign Policy*, Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs: Cambridge Mass., p. 239.

158. Peimani, *Iran and the United States*, p. 97.

159. Haass & Indyk, 'Beyond Iraq', 41–59.

160. *Ibid*.

161. Karim Sadjadpour, in testimony to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, 110th Congress, 30 October 2007, p. 12. Oil price figures from http://www.oil-price.net/.

162. Peimani, *Iran and the United States*, p. 79.

163. Barzegar, 'Iran's foreign policy in post-invasion Iraq'.

164. Saikal, (2009) *The Rise and Fall of the Shah*, p. xxxiv.

165. Barzegar, 'Iran's foreign policy in post-invasion Iraq'.

166. Peimani, *Iran and the United States*, pp. 97, 106.

167. Arjomand, *After Khomeini*, p. 137.

168. Peimani, *Iran and the United States*, p. 67.

169. Milani, Mohsen M., (1994) 'Iran's post-Cold War policy in the Persian Gulf', *International Journal*, 49:2, (Spring 1994) pp. 328–54, p. 328.

170. Arjomand, *After Khomeini*, p. 139.

171. Hunter, *Iran and the World*, p. 10.

172. Arjomand, *After Khomeini*, p. 144. Realistically, given the lack of involvement that Iran succeeded in obtaining in the negotiation of the Gulf War, they cannot have expected a role at the Madrid Conference.

173. Takeyh, *Hidden Iran*, p. 214.

174. Arjomand, *After Khomeini*, p. 142.

175. Wendt, Alexander, 'Identity and structural change in international politics', in Lapid, Y. & Kratochwil, F. (eds), (1996) *The Return of Culture and Identity in IR Theory*, Lynne Rienner Publishers: Boulder & London, p. 52.

176. *Ibid*., p. 53.

177. Saikal, (2009) *The Rise and Fall of the Shah*, p. xxxiii.

178. Suzanne Maloney, in testimony to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, 110th Congress, 7 November 2007, p. 12.

Chapter 7   Communication and Prospects for Change

1. Sick, Gary, 'The clouded mirror', pp. 191–210, in Esposito, John L. & Ramazani, R. K. (eds), (2001) *Iran at the Crossroads*, Palgrave: New York, p. 191.
2. *Ibid*.
3. Beeman, William, (2005) *The 'Great Satan' vs the 'Mad Mullahs': How the United States and Iran Demonize Each Other*, Praeger: Westport & London, p. 165.
4. This figure was ascertained using ProQuest International as a search engine, with 'Iran' as the subject and the *New York Times* as the publications title.
5. Gary Sick, *pers. comm.*
6. The author witnessed this on Iranian state television on a daily basis from September to December 2008.
7. Younes Shokrkhah, *pers. comm.*
8. *Ibid*.
9. Kavous Seyed-Emami, *pers. comm.*
10. Senior Iranian Academic, *pers. comm.*, Tehran, 2008.
11. Karim Sadjadpour, in testimony to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, 110th Congress, 30 October 2007, p. 23.
12. Beeman, *The 'Great Satan'*, p. 207.
13. James Dobbins, in testimony to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, 110th Congress, 7 November 2007, p. 4.
14. Beeman, *The 'Great Satan'*, p. 195.
15. William Burns, in testimony to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, 110th Congress, 9 July 2008, p. 26.
16. Beeman, *The 'Great Satan'*, p. 195.
17. William Burns, in testimony to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, 110th Congress, 9 July 2008, p. 26.
18. Congressman E. Engel, in testimony to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, 110th Congress, 9 July 2008, p. 27.
19. Alterman, in Rubin (ed.), *Crises in the Contemporary Persian Gulf*, p. 175.
20. Abdullah Iskander, editorialising for the English language edition of *Al-Hayat*, 23 March 2009, MidEastWire.com.
21. Kavous Seyed-Emami, *pers. comm.*
22. Sadeq Ziba-Kalam, in *E'temad-e Melli* daily newspaper, 19 July 2008. Translation from MidEastWire.com.
23. Ansari, Ali, (2006) 'Iran and the US in the shadow of 9/11: Persia and the Persian question revisited', *Iranian Studies*, 39:2, (June 2006), p. 161.
24. Karim Sadjadpour, *pers. comm.*
25. *Ibid*., p. 159.
26. Abdolali Qavam, *pers. comm.*
27. Sick, in Esposito & Ramazani (eds), *Iran at the Crossroads*, p. 199.
28. Ansari, 'Iran and the US in the shadow of 9/11', p. 162.
29. Sick, in Esposito & Ramazani (eds), *Iran at the Crossroads*, p. 198.
30. Bill Clinton, quoted in Pollack, Kenneth, (2004) *The Persian Puzzle: The Conflict Between Iran and America*, Random House: New York, p. 323.

31. *Ibid.*

32. Mansour, Imad, (2008), 'Iran and instability in the Middle East', *International Journal*, 63:4, (Autumn 2008) pp. 941–65, http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=1658702311&sid=1Fmt=3&cllientId=20870&RQT=309&VName=PQD.

33. Holzman, Todd, 'Obama seeks "new beginning" with Muslim world', *NPR*, 4 June 2009; http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=104891406; Freedland, Jonathan, 'Barack Obama in Cairo', *Guardian*, 4 June 2009; http://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/jun/04/barack-obama-speech-islam-west.

34. Mahmoud Sariolqalam, Professor, Shahid Beheshti Unversity, interviewed by *E'temad* on 20 January 2009, just prior to Obama's inauguration. Translation from MidEastWire.com.

35. Editorial, *E'temad*, 20 January 2009. Translation from MidEastWire.com.

36. Jafar Golabi, *E'temad*, 11 November 2009. Translation from MidEastWire.com.

37. *Ibid.*

38. Abdolali Qavam, *pers. comm.*

39. Senior US Government Official, *pers. comm.*, Washington, 2008.

40. *Ibid.*

41. Congressman J. Tierney, in testimony to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, 110th Congress, 30 October 2007, p. 20.

42. President Ahmadinejad, in speech 28 June 2010, http://www.president.ir/en/?ArtID=22693&term=nuclear.

43. Peimani, Hooman, (1999) *Iran and the United States: The Rise of the West Asian Regional Grouping*, Praeger: Westport, p. 65.

44. Takeyh, Ray, (2006) *Hidden Iran: Paradox and Power in the Islamic Republic*, Times Books, New York, p. 220.

45. Hillary Mann Leverett, in testimony to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, 110th Congress, 7 November 2007, p. 16.

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