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A Crisis of Confidence Revisited: Iran-West Tensions and Mutual Demonization

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A Crisis of Confidence Revisited: Iran-West Tensions and Mutual Demonization

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This article is a largely constructivist revisit to the crisis of confidence between Iran and the West. It strives to investigate the chief historical, cultural, ideological, and identity-related, as well as geostrategic factors, involved in postrevolutionary Iran-West relations, and how they have caused an almost solidified sense of fear, suspicion, and mistrust between the two. The contemporary major areas of conflict the study delineates are (a) the human rights issue, (b) Iran's nuclear program, (c) Iranian-Israeli hostility, and (d) the U.S.-led wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. The article concludes that the restoration of mutual confidence requires a structural overhaul of both sides' ideological attitudes and political practices toward each other.

Key words: constructivism, crisis, identity, Iran, West

> Look at America and England; wherever there is dictatorship, terror and assassination, their hand is in it.[1]
>
> > Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Iranian president

> Iran aggressively pursues these weapons [of mass destruction] and exports terror while an unelected few repress the Iranian people's hope for freedom. . . . States like these, and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world.[2]
>
> > George W. Bush, former U.S. president

Introduction

"Who is tired?" the head teacher shouts while the sleepy young students stand in parallel queues during the daily morning ceremony before classes commence. "The enemy!" they shout back, indicating that they are alert and wide awake. The teacher shouts again and again, "Who is tired?" and they answer back, "The enemy!"

This was a famous revolutionary slogan some Iranian schoolteachers and children used to chant often in the 1990s. A primary school boy might wonder who that enemy is, where he lives, how he looks, and what evils he is capable of perpetrating. What might haunt a child is the fact that this unseen enemy is *constantly* tired. "Doesn't he rest?" "Doesn't he eat well to be strong?" and "Does he toil from morning to night?" are the questions that might jump to his mind. The immediate answer prevalent in the country's official as well as popular political culture is that the enemy is inherently weak and thus always tired. Reflecting more deeply, however, one might arrive at the conclusion that "the enemy is tired" because he is perceived to be perpetually conspiring against the Islamic system. All in vain, though.

Iranian postrevolutionary political discourse has never been devoid of the presence of a beleaguered enemy who has invariably conspired to undermine Islam and, to this end, has seen the subversion of the Islamic Republic a fundamental prerequisite. The revolutionary leaders from Ayatollah Khomeini to Ayatollah Khamenei, the current Supreme Leader, have often highlighted the role of the country's enemies in disrupting its progressive trend and blocking the nation's ascendance to prosperity and happiness. More often than not, the adversary has proved to be the non-Islamic West, with the United States and United Kingdom at its epicenter, labeled respectively as the "Great" and "Little" Satans. Since the Islamic Revolution of 1979, the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) has taken a distrustful stance toward Western governments. Claiming to see the "hidden hand of global arrogance," "foreigners," and "Zionists" behind the internal and external problems of the country, it has condemned their alleged attempts to destabilize and subvert the system—a practice some observers account for, not least in the case of President Ahmadinejad's anti-Israel rhetoric, in terms of "diversionary theory of conflict," that is, trying to surmount domestic failures by recourse to "foreign distractions" (Tures, 2008, p. 50). Similarly, there is also the well-grounded argument that by employing the enemy discourse and creating the image of the ubiquitous enemy, the ruling elites marginalize critics and strengthen their own position of power through mobilization of the masses behind their ideological cause.

The establishment of a revolutionary Shiite government in Iran generated a new wave of Islamist movements throughout the Middle East, causing it to be regarded by both regional states and global powers as a grave threat to the status quo balance of power in the region in general and their national security and transnational interests in particular. One of the constant characteristics featuring Iran-West relations in the postrevolutionary era has been a strong sense of distrust and suspicion of each other and an enemy discourse that they have employed mostly as an ideological-moral framework in which to interpret and represent each other's actions and policies. In other words, Iran-West relations after the 1979 revolution have been dominated by a highly charged atmosphere of phobia having its roots in the competing discursive and ideological "universalist modernities" of Islam and Liberalism they adhere to (Shakibi, 2010, pp. 11–13), as well as in cultural differences. This might remind us of the Cold War–era tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union, and their mutual demonization of each other. However, Iran's conflictual relationship with the West in general and the United States in particular differs, as Beeman (2005) points out in his cultural-

anthropological study, from the Soviet-U.S. conflict "in a number of significant respects" (p. 4). The most remarkable differences consist in the fact that the attributed threats are of "little or no substance," as neither side holds any "immediate" danger for the other and that the reciprocal satanization occurs not at the popular level but at "an abstract governmental level." What is common in these oppositional situations, however, is that both sides "construct the 'other' to fit an idealized picture of an enemy" (Beeman, 2005, p. 4).

Given this introduction, the present article will strive, by employing a largely constructivist approach and discourse analyzing some of the key statements by Iranian and Western figures, to investigate the chief historical, ideological, and identity-related factors involved in postrevolutionary Iran-West relations. The sub-issue of this analysis is how these factors have shaped both sides' foreign policies toward each other and culminated in a crisis of confidence between them.

At the beginning, a theoretical discussion to highlight the central tenets of constructivism will be advanced. Then I will examine the principal problem areas in Iran's relations with the West, which have helped to perpetuate the hostilities and dash the hopes of rapprochement and cooperation. Eventually, I will argue that the elimination of deep-seated feelings of distrust and fear can hardly be realized at the agency level and needs in the last analysis a structural overhaul of the conflicting sides' policies and practices, and, by extension, their ideological underpinnings.

Theoretical and Historical Considerations

Nicholas Greenwood Onuf (1989) was the first theorist who introduced the term *constructivism* in international relations (IR) theory, contending that states, much the same as individuals, are living in a "world of our making," as the title of his book bears, where many entities such as "social facts" are made by human action, as opposed to "brute facts" that do not depend for their existence on human action but rather are phenomena of the human condition (Searle, 1995; also cited in Brown & Ainley, 2005, p. 49). It was in the middle of the 1990s that the alternative works of some IR theorists helped to develop and present constructivism as a substantive theory of international behavior. Central to constructivist arguments are such core concepts as "discourses," "norms," "identity," and "socialization," which are frequently used in contemporary discussions over various issues of international concern, including "globalization, international human rights, security policy, and more" (Checkel, 2008, p. 72).

On epistemological as well as methodological levels of analysis, Adler (2005) contends that constructivism as an alternative theory of IR holds "the middle ground" between "rationalist" theories—realism, neorealism, and neoliberal institutionalism—and "interpretive epistemologies"—postmodernism, Frankfurt School-oriented critical theories, and feminism (pp. 87–89).

In his words,

> [T]he true middle ground between rationalist and relativist interpretive approaches is occupied . . . by *constructivism*. Constructivism is the view that *the manner in which the material world shapes and is shaped by human action and interaction depends on dynamic normative and epistemic interpretations of the material world.* (p. 90)

Established as recently as the late 1980s and early 1990s by such thinkers as Nicholas Onuf, Alexander Wendt, Emanuel Adler, Friedrich Kratochwil, John Gerard Ruggie, and Peter Katzenstein, constructivism is a "social theory of international politics" that emphasizes the social construction of world affairs as opposed to the claim of neorealists that international politics is shaped by the rational choice behavior/decisions of egoist actors who pursue their interests by making utilitarian calculations to maximize their benefits and minimize their losses, hence the materiality of international structures.

In contrast to realism, for which international relations are driven by the states' security and material interests defined in terms of power, and to liberal internationalism that concentrates upon the interdependency of international actors and their operation within institutional constraints, constructivism considers international politics as a sphere of interaction that is shaped by the actors' identities and practices and influenced by constantly changing normative institutional structures. It maintains that states' goals, either material/objective such as ontological security and economic development, or immaterial/subjective such as international recognition and standing, are generated by their social identities or how they view themselves in relation to other actors in the international community (Griffiths, O'Callaghan, & Roach, 2008, p. 52).

Arguing that international relations "structures shape actors' identities and interests rather than just their behavior" (Wendt, 1998, p. 417), the constructivist theory challenges the materialist and rationalist underpinnings of the old mainstream IR theory. It contests materialism by hypothesizing the structures of human association as "primarily cultural rather than material phenomena," and disputes rationalism by arguing for their function as not only behavior regulating but also identity and interest constructing, though "material forces," it admits, "still matter," and "people," it acknowledges, "are still intentional actors." What it strives to illuminate, however, is that the meanings of these forces and intentionalities of these actors "depend largely on the shared ideas in which they are embedded, and as such culture is a condition of possibility for power and interest explanations" (Wendt, 1999, p. 193).

The difference between neorealist and constructivist arguments is primarily one derived from their views of the nature of structure: whereas neorealists regard systemic structures as made "only of distribution of material capabilities," constructivists hold that they are "also made of social relationships" that are themselves constructed by three elements of "shared knowledge, material resources, and practices" (Wendt, 1998, p. 418). This is why constructivist theorists advocate, as Wendt (1998) stresses, a "sociological rather than a microeconomic structuralism" (p. 418). What they mean by social "construction" of world politics is its creation through "a process of interaction between agents (individuals, states, non-state actors) and the structures of their broader environment," that is, by a process of "mutual constitution" between "agents and structures" (Checkel, 2008, p. 72).

While for neorealists "anarchy" is a determining condition of international system that by itself makes competition and conflict endless strong possibilities, and thus the international system a more conflictual than peaceful environment, for constructivists anarchy alone does not make much sense as it cannot by itself bring about a predetermined state of affairs among state actors. Rather, as Wendt

(1992) puts it, "[*a*]*narchy is what states make of it*," (p. 395), that is, the "nature" of international anarchy appears to be conflictual if states show a conflictual behavior toward each other and cooperative if they behave cooperatively toward one another. With such an argument in mind, then, to understand conflict and cooperation in international politics, we must focus upon what states do, which in turn depends on their identities and interests, not on the given "nature" of systemic international "anarchy" (Weber, 2010, p. 62).

It should also be noted that there are various strands of constructivism ranging from those that "reject scientific-style theorizing and stress the interpretive nature of social science and other sciences" to those that allow for the use of natural science-like and empirical theoretical insights in explaining international relations dynamics (Chernoff, 2007, p. 69). In his groundbreaking *Social Theory of International Politics* (1999), Wendt draws upon the philosophical views of Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Immanuel Kant and theorizes three cultures of anarchy characterized respectively by enmity, rivalry, and friendship. He calls his "moderate" version of constructivist theory "thin constructivism," as it "concedes important points to materialist and individualist perspectives [of neorealism] and endorses a scientific approach to social inquiry" (Wendt, 1999, p. 1). This form of constructivism where identity, culture, ideology, shared history, perception, and also security and survival matter significantly is what this article draws largely upon to investigate the political *problematique* of Iranian Westophobia and Western Iranophobia.

Now that an account of the article's theoretical framework has been provided, let us turn to the core issues it is supposed to address. Neorealism, with its emphasis, as mentioned, on materiality of international structures, rationality of human agencies, and criticality of "balance of power" to relations between states, underlies what Beeman (2005) dubs the "U.S. Foreign Policy Myth," which is "an extremely powerful and pervasive American belief system about the nature of foreign policy" and centers upon the following five "principles": the centrality of "nation-states" in global affairs, the existence of a Manichean or "dichotomous power struggle" in world politics, the importance of economic power and military might in international relations, the assumption of governance by "small groups of elite individuals" within nation states, and "normalcy" that consists in the "congruence" of the preceding tenets (pp. 13–17). Interestingly, it is presumed by most of the U.S. leaders that following such a model will solve all the country's foreign relations problems and defuse the related tensions, and therefore if problems persist and tensions still run high in bilateral relations with a given country, it is presumably because of the evilness of its belief system or irrationality of its leaders, hence the application of such epithets as " 'irrational,' 'crazy,' 'criminal,' 'unpredictable,' and 'deviant' " to describe them (Beeman, 2005, p. 17). This in turn prepares the ground for the use of force against them.

Such a foreign policy model falls dramatically short of applying to most of the Middle Eastern countries and is particularly confounded by the Islamic Republic. It is not a Western model nation state where the institutionalized rational-choice and democratic mechanisms of governance coupled with check-and-balance arrangements of power distribution create a largely stable, balanced, and deeply interdependent relationship between the state and the nation. There are even considerable divides within the Iranian nation, with

some supporting the regime and others opposing it, and also within the Islamic Republic's ruling elite, who contradict one another over many foreign policy issues, producing " 'mixed signals' . . . or, worse yet, indecision" at the foreign policy level (Kamrava, 2007, p. 84).

To offer a simple example, during a meeting of U.K. defense secretaries held at the Royal Institute of International Affairs (U.K.) in late March 2010, Liam Fox, the then Shadow Tory Defence Secretary of Britain, pointed out that though adequate intelligence about Iran's military activities is available, "we don't really know who to talk to" (Chatham House, 2010). So the assumption of a *unitary* and *homogeneous* group of elites running the Islamic Republic and steering its foreign policy helm is flawed. Finally, it is also wrong to assume that the Islamic Republic formulates and conducts its foreign relations largely on the basis of its address- ees' economic and military power; at most times, domestic power politics, ide- ology, culture, and identity of the foreign states play a more decisive role in its choice of interacting parties and how the interaction should proceed.

The most significant dimensions of Iranian-Western relations in the past three centuries are worth touching upon here. A long history of largely hidden British interference in Iran, from the time of the Qajar dynasty in the 18th and 19th centuries to the Pahlavi period in the mid-20th century and after, and Iranians' collective sense of their historical victimization by the global powers, have left a deeply bitter feeling in the Iranian psyche. In this respect, one may refer to the U.S. and U.K. conspiracies against nationalist and independence-seeking Iranian movements, the most famous of which was the popular national government of Mohammad Mosaddegh in 1952–1953. The Western-backed coup that toppled Mosaddegh is still raised by many figures within the Iranian establishment as proof that the Western and particularly U.S.-U.K. sympathies with the Iranian people's struggle for reform, human rights promotion, and freedom in general are far from genuine and intended originally to secure their own material inter- ests in the rich Middle East region—what Dabashi (2010) aptly calls the syn- drome of "28-Mordadism," which as "a political paradigm in modern Iranian political culture," he argues, "has now finally exhausted itself" (p. 92).[3] The West is also blamed by Iranian authorities for its backing of Mohammad Reza Shah's regime (which the then revolutionaries strived to dismantle) and of Saddam Hussein during the Iran-Iraq war (1980–1988).

Additionally, Western support in the first half of the 20th century for the creation of the state of Israel, epitomized by the Balfour Declaration of 1917 that promised the establishment of a "national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine, still resonates bitterly with many Muslims who feel a seminal part of their motherland has been expropriated by non-Muslims. This is the perspective from which the Shiite Iran's revolutionary leaders have always viewed the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, denouncing the former as the oppressor, defending the latter as the oppressed, and finally holding Western powers, particularly the United Kingdom and United States, accountable. Moreover, the Islamic Republic of Iran's "Shiite identity" and the consequent formation of a "resistance identity" after the Islamic Revolution of 1979 has been one of the principal sources of conflict between Iran and its Arab Sunni neighbors on the one hand, and between Iran and the West, not least the United States and United Kingdom, on the other. Such an identity, in the words of Manuel Castells (2010), who paraphrases Craig Calhoun (1994), is

> generated by those actors that are in positions/conditions devalued and/or stigmatized by the logic of domination, thus building trenches of resistance and survival on the basis of principles different from, or opposed to, those permeating the institutions of society. (p. 8)

The Islamic discourse that was intellectually introduced into the Iranian polity before the revolution and was subsumed into it in its wake, according to Rajaee (2007), had three significant dimensions; "articulation of the other" in the form of demonizing the non-Islamic West, "romanticization of the past" by ideologizing Islam as a religion and heroicizing the Islamic figures, and discursive theorization of a counter-West "imagined community" through distinguishing between modernization and Westernization (p. 110). The Islamic Republic of Iran's identification of the "non-Islamic" West as its chief enemy and the Western cultural institutions and political practices as "anti-Islamic" set the ground for the formation of an anti-establishment identity based upon Ayatollah Khomeini's oppressed/oppressor (*mostaz'afin/mostakberin*) dichotomy and his crusade to empower the former—disposed or "have-nots" of the world—against the latter—its "haves" or exploiters (Abrahamian, 1993, pp. 47–54; Saikal, 2009, p. 93).

While transforming Iran's domestic politics, the Islamic Revolution of 1979 pioneered a critical approach to foreign policy formulation and an alternative attitude toward the prevailing international order. This "against-the-grain" approach was principally encapsulated in the revolutionary slogans "Independence, Freedom, the Islamic Republic" and "Neither East, nor West, but the Islamic Republic" that are rooted in Iranian culture and history and were later reflected in the IRI constitution. Ramazani (2008) traces these roots back to the Achaemenid age when Cyrus founded the Iranian state and was ruling it (558–530 BC), later developed into the Persian Empire, through "his prudent and tolerant statecraft rather than his religious ethics" (p. 2). The independence-freedom quest was once again revitalized after ages in the national-democratic phase of Iranian history in the early 20th century mostly as a reaction to foreign intervention and diminution of national territorial borders, "semi-colonization of state and society," and emergence of modernist and democratic ideas.

This foreign policy–defining principle has been echoed, either explicitly or implicitly, in the Islamic Republic's constitution. According to its Principle 2, "denial (*nafy*) of any form of oppressing and being oppressed and dominating and being dominated will secure fairness (*qist*), justice, and [the country's] political, economic, social, and cultural independence as well as [its] national solidarity" (Hosseini-Nik, 2006). Though pertaining much to the revolution's emancipatory ideals, the "Neither East, nor West" slogan had more to do with the construction of a new and different identity for Iran. Rejecting communism (Eastern empire) and capitalism (Western empire) alike, it deliberately sought to strike a "third way" that according to Ayatollah Khomeini was the "straight path" of Islamicity (*Islamiyyat*) and humanity (*Insaniyyat*) (Izadi, 2001, pp. 96–99; Khomeini, 2006).[4]

Central to internationalization of this ideological identity was the Islamic concept of invitation (*Da'wah*), which called for all humanity to convert to Islam and accept its righteousness and derived from the principle of "enjoining the good and admonishing against the evil" (*amr-e be ma'ruf va nahy-e az munkar*). Iran's chief foreign policy instrument for waging this universal crusade was what

widely became known as the "export of revolution" (*sodur-e enqelab*). The concept originates, inter alia, in the Islamist doctrine of "*umm ul-qura*"—mother of [Islamic] lands—and "*dar ul-Islam*"—the home of Islam. Ever since its establishment, the IRI has largely refused, in one form or another, to recognize the international system as shaped and determined politically and socially by Western powers and their historical experiences. Instead, it has continued to theorize world politics on ideological grounds, dividing it broadly in two spheres of Islamic and non-Islamic territories, the sphere of the oppressed (*mostaz'afin*) and that of the oppressors (*mostakberin*), the "home of Islam" (*dar ul-Islam*) and the "land of unbelief" (*dar ul-kufr*). The former is believed to be represented by "*umm ul-qura*," that is, the Islamic Republic, and the latter dominated by "global arrogance," presumed to be represented by the United States of America. Thus, the "export of revolution" may be regarded as a politico-ideological and discursive practice to project a new identity of Iran, expand the "home of Islam" in cultural terms, unite the whole Muslim community, and finally, change the historically established structures of the international system (Larijani, 1990; Rajaee, 1990; Ramazani, 1990).

The practice could take on a wide range of meanings from military to cultural. While Iran's revolutionary leaders viewed it as a worldwide campaign to draw international attention to the spiritual side of life, introduce allegedly authentic Islam to the world, awaken nations to their inalienable right to independence and freedom, and disseminate Islamic norms and values, Western powers deemed it an orchestrated attempt by a maverick regime to export fundamentalism and terrorism and destabilize the entrenched regional and international order. The campaign has been condemned along with Iran's more recent initiatives, especially its controversial nuclear program, by both regional Arab states and Western powers as an expansionist attempt to seek regional hegemony. Interestingly, what is regarded a religious duty by Iranian leaders, namely, propagation of Shiite values and provision of political and financial support for other co-religionists, has often been perceived to be the export of fundamentalism and sponsorship of terrorism. Iran's relations with Hizbullah and Hamas as well as its sympathies with the Shiite minority groups in Iraq and recently Yemen and Bahrain have been interpreted mostly in such terms.

The aforementioned cultural and ideological factors, coupled with the traumatic historical experience of Iranians in general of their relationship with the West, as indicated above, have helped develop a negative perception of the Western "Other" among a considerable number of them, particularly in the eye of IRI leaders—a "threat perception" defined in important part in terms of an essentialist Westophobic discourse of "enmity" and responsible for the abundance of mostly ill-grounded conspiracy theories produced by the Iranian political establishment. How the West on the whole is perceived by the Islamic Republic has been briefly touched upon throughout the writing,[5] but Iranian perception of the British appears to be most complex, hence significant, and therefore merits special attention as it can shed a good deal of light on the perceptual side of Iran-West tensions.

"Wherever there is a trace of 'politics,' there is a trace of the British" is a statement that continues to hold a strong popular conviction in Iran, with the term *politics* here carrying powerful connotations of political sleaze and scam in

the popular mentality. The Iranian popular and political culture is rife with terms and expressions that associate an essentialist xenophobic belief in the purportedly inherent subtlety, duplicity, and opportunism of the British. The transliterated word *Inglis*, which refers to England, resonates in the Iranian popular culture with all sorts of political trickery, unreliability, unpredictability, and deception. Similarly, in Iran's postrevolutionary official political culture, it should be noted, *Inglis* has often been used and is still frequently employed instead of *Britania*, the Persian transliterated equivalent for *Britain*, both to imply its allegedly greedy and deceitful nature and to keep alive the sense of the potential threat it poses in the public unconscious as well as in the securitized consciousness of those in power. Notably, what makes it all the more problematic is the accompaniment of this cognitive and discursive process by a high degree of subjective homogenization that causes Britain to be perceived as a uniform evil totality in the popular and elite eye, rendering the solidified identity-image further difficult to fracture.

A great majority of the Islamic Republic officials view the United Kingdom and its policies, however favorable or friendly they might prove to be at times, from a "threat-based" perspective. As Azimi (2008) contends, "The long nourishment of Pahlavi authoritarianism by foreign imperial interests deeply affected the Iranian culture of politics," reinvigorating public reservations about "foreign interventions and intentions, real or perceived meddling, and sententious pronouncements about the virtues of democracy" (p. 13). A by-product of this sedimentary perception is the development of conspiracy theories about British ubiquity in Iranian affairs, exemplified by the prerevolutionary book and television serial *My Uncle Napoleon*[6] and its overriding motif that the British have a hidden hand in anything ominous and undesirable that happens to its protagonist and, by extension, to Iran. Strikingly, there are a good number of Iranians among the general public who believe that even the Islamic Revolution itself was primarily masterminded by *Inglis*. Others take a further cynical stride and, in spite of the strained relations and almost constant tension between the Islamic Republic and Great Britain since then, maintain that the ayatollahs themselves are originally a British product and that bilateral cooperation on how best to take advantage of Iran's national wealth goes on behind the scenes.

Postrevolutionary Anglophobia was significant in a few respects. First, it was altogether a component of an overarching revolutionary discourse of xenophobia, or more pertinently, Westophobia that was rooted in the suppressed revolutionaries' collective memory, as indicated, of historical victimization and, according to Adibzadeh (2008), had "de-terrorizing" and "security-providing" functions (p. 154). Opposition to the West, with the United Kingdom and United States at its epicenter, also had roots in the Iranian national culture of upholding an eternal struggle between "good" and "evil," which allowed the revolutionaries to represent themselves as "good" and the Western "Other" as "evil" (Naghibzadeh, 2002, p. 222) and thus naturalize and therefore eternalize their fight against Western enemies.

This leads us to the second primary function of the postrevolutionary Westophobic/anti-Western discourse, namely, its centrality to the revolutionary nation state "identity construction." In fact, by confronting the West represented as satanic, unreliable, crafty, suppressive, and terrorizing, the revolutionaries

became able to (re)define their own identity as divine, reliable, honest, emancipatory, and reassuring. As the "Little Satan" that is often said to be following the path of the "Great Satan," or, as an Iranian foreign ministry analyst has fallaciously contended, is indirectly and psychologically "manipulating" the "Great Satan" (Karimi, 2007), *Inglis* has an indispensable place in this Manichean discursive construction.

This analysis shows that intersubjective constructions of historical, cultural, and ideological nature as well as identity-images play a prominent role in shaping the direction of politico-strategic relations between the two sides. As Wendt (1992) argues, "Actors acquire identities—relatively stable, role-specific understandings and expectations about self" through their engagement in the collective "meaning structures" (p. 397). This does not mean, however, that the national interests and material objectives have been totally overlooked in the engagement process. Rather, "identities are the basis of interests. Actors do not have a 'portfolio' of interests that they carry around independent of social context; instead they define their interests in the process of defining situations" (Wendt, 1992, p. 398). Otherwise, rational-choice realist calculations require that the Islamic Republic align itself with global powers, which in turn is likely to bring higher strategic and political standing as well as economic prosperity for the country. Given this, it appears that constructivism is a helpful theory to draw upon to analyze the Iranian-Western relationship, where history matters a great deal and identity-images and well as intersubjective perceptions of potential objectives play as decisive a role as material interests, capabilities, and resources.

Major Areas of Conflict

The phobic discourses dominating the political context of IRI-West relations, which have derived in important part from their competing ideologies and "universalist modernities," have been more or less fixated in the post-1979 era as a consequence of fundamental conflict that the relationship has seen in some significant areas. Put otherwise, the formerly constructed identities and perceptions each side had of the other have prepared the ground for the eruption of serious clashes between them, and these conflicts in turn have served to reinforce and solidify those images and mentalities. The major problem areas consist primarily in (a) the human rights issue, (b) Iran's nuclear program, (c) Iranian-Israeli hostility, and (d) the U.S.-led wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, both Iran's immediate neighbors, all of which will be analyzed separately in terms of their impact upon the creation of a climate of mistrust between Iran and Western powers, particularly the United States and United Kingdom. Needless to say, the mentioned areas are interconnected and thus overlapping is inevitable.

Human Rights Issue

The Islamic Republic of Iran has a troubled human rights record. Many international organizations such as the U.K.-based Amnesty International and U.S.-based Human Rights Watch as well as Western liberal-democratic governments have frequently condemned it for numerous types of human rights violations. Application of the death penalty, mass executions of oppositionists, imprison-

ment of political writers and activists as well as human rights defenders, infliction of torture on and ruthless treatment of prisoners, repression of ethnic and religious minorities and denial of their rights, discrimination against women, and finally, stoning convicts on certain criminal grounds are the major human rights abuses that have entailed condemnation of the Iranian government by the international community (Abrahamian, 1999; Afshari, 2001; Amnesty International, 1990, 2001, 2009). Most of these allegations have been made, however, on the basis of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which is ideologically underpinned by liberal-secular values. Since its establishment, the Islamic Republic has inveighed against the declaration, denouncing it as conflicting with Islamic teachings and therefore not universally applicable. Serious objections were raised by Iranian representatives at the United Nations General Assembly sessions in the early 1980s that "the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which represent[s] a secular understanding of the Judeo-Christian traditions, could not be implemented by Muslims and [does] not accord with the system of values recognized by the Islamic Republic of Iran" (cited in UN Commission on Human Rights, 2003, section 9). Even Kamal Kharrazi, the Iranian foreign minister under Khatami's reformist government, in an speech to the UN Commission of Human Rights on March 17, 1998, went so far as to officially call for the "revision of the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights" to adequately incorporate non-Western and particularly Islamic cultural values and moral norms (cited in Brown, 2006).

Apart from official authorities, some prominent Muslim and non-Muslim philosophers have also criticized the Western value system as *the* right ideological framework for the formulation of *universal* human rights. Ayatollah Javadi-Amoli (1996), a distinguished Shiite theologian, questions the validity of the UDHR, arguing that the declaration, having been founded upon liberal values, lacks divine essence. Moreover, it fails to heed the spiritual dimension of human existence and concentrates only upon their material needs. In a similar vein, some non-Muslim philosophers also contend that while admirable for its "recognition of basic human worth, and protection of fundamental human interests," the UN UDHR "is not free of defects," in that

> It retains a distinctly liberal bias and includes rights which, though admirable, cannot claim universal validity. . . . The UN Declaration also makes the mistake of confusing human rights with particular institutional structures. Since the latter cannot take root and function effectively unless they suit a society's traditions and moral and political culture, they necessarily vary from society to society. We must not, therefore, hold liberal democracy as the only acceptable political form, and condemn political systems that do not allow multiple political parties, separation of powers and so on. . . . What constitutes humiliation or cruelty, however, varies with cultures and cannot be universally legislated. (Parekh, 2000, pp. 133–135)

Furthermore, what provides the Iranian government with the political leverage to water down the West's violation claims is the double-standard treatment of the issue by Western powers. The dire human rights situation of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and West Bank—which is believed to be a direct consequence of the Western-backed Israeli regime's policies—the infliction of heavy civilian casualties in Afghanistan and Iraq as a result of the U.S.-led wars, the Western

condoning of human rights violations in the Arab autocracies that enjoy close strategic ties with the United States, United Kingdom, and France, the West's growing relations with China and Russia—both well-known violators of human rights—and finally, the unequal treatment of Muslim minorities in some liberal societies are the most notable examples critics offer. More significantly, given the examples above, it might be compelling to argue that the human rights issue per se does not stand as an impediment to the improvement of Iran-West relations and is attached much less importance than broad strategic issues like Iran's nuclear program. Accordingly, certain Iranian official and nonofficial figures have even gone so far as to stress that the human rights debate is a political public diplomacy instrument the Western governments employ to escalate international pressure on the IRI, force it to compromise on broad issues of national interest, and ultimately gain dominance over it as a geopolitical rival. However, the voiced criticisms, which are to a reasonable extent credible, cannot disguise violations of human rights in the country.

Iran's Nuclear Program

Still highly controversial, Iran's nuclear program is gradually becoming the greatest security concern of the Western powers in the Middle East. This may be inferred, inter alia, from the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA's) first Iran report under its new director-general, Yukiya Amano, issued on February 18, 2010. Having drawn on "consistent and credible" evidence gathered recently, as it claimed, the report displayed a radical shift of tone toward the country's nuclear activities and for the first time made a *positive* mention of the possibility of a weaponization program (IAEA, 2010). This caused a new barrage of admonitions from P5+1 senior officials. White House spokesperson Robert Gibbs threatened Iran with "consequences" if it failed to observe international obligations, indicating the imposition of a new round of UN Security Council sanctions. Russia, which has invariably used Iran as a counterbalance to the growing American influence in the region mostly by helping to develop its nuclear program, also added its voice to the pressure. And not before long, a fourth round of sanctions were levied against Iran by the UN Security Council under Resolution 1929 passed on June 9, 2010.

Iranian leaders on their part have largely insisted upon the Islamic Republic's Shiite ideology, which condemns the construction of weapons of mass destruction, to repudiate the possibility of a military aspect to Iran's nuclear program. In particular, the IRI Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, has often been quick to make an ideological response to the international allegations. Soon after publication of the IAEA report and during a ceremony to launch Iran's first domestically built naval destroyer, *Jamaran*, he stated,

> Every great movement of yours infuriates them. . . . This repetitive, threadbare [and] nonsensical remark about building the nuclear weapon which [they] attribute to Iran shows their ultimate weakness even in [spreading] propaganda. . . . No, we do not believe in the nuclear bomb . . . and so will not pursue it. According to our belief foundations . . . using these means of mass destruction is basically forbidden, [it] is *haram*. . . . *Qur'an* has forbidden it; we will not pursue that. (Daftar-e, 2010)

The heated dispute over Iran's nuclear activities, as partly shown above, dates back to the early 2000s. Then the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI) or, more familiarly, *Mujahideen*-e *Khalq* Organization (MeK, MKO), an exiled Iranian opposition group based mainly in France and Britain that has since the Islamic Revolution been trying to subvert the regime, revealed in a press conference in August 2002 that the Islamic Republic was surreptitiously working on the development of nuclear technology, believed to have started in 1985 in the middle of the war with Iraq and likely to have a military dimension (Delpech, 2007, pp. 9–11; Jafarzadeh, 2007, p. 126). The secrecy of the program has been emphasized by many Western strategic circles as reason enough to be suspicious about its nature. It appears, however, that there is a more significant element at work that alarms the Western governments enough to take action against Iran's nuclear moves, and that is the regime's "ideological identity," not the activity itself, which makes an oddball of it in the region and causes it to be perceived as an insidious threat to regional security and stability; after all, Israel, the chief Western ally in the Middle East, has reportedly constructed and collected a large arsenal of nuclear weapons.

Unlike Israel, which is viewed by Western powers as a key ally in the geo-strategically crucial Middle East region, Iran is perceived as a "rogue state," an apparently integral part of the "axis of evil," whose independent achievement of nuclear know-how is not tolerated as it holds the potential of developing into weapons construction technology, which once realized can have, the West fears, grave political and security repercussions. Importantly, one of the key factors contributing to the formation of such a perception is Ahmadinejad's unpredictable stances and (non)diplomatic language that have even alarmed Russia, a long-standing nuclear partner of the IRI, into reconsidering aspects of its foreign policy toward Tehran. An example of this is Russia's increased cooperation with the United States on containing Tehran's nuclear program and its recent affirmative vote for the Security Council Resolution 1929 against the Islamic Republic.

From the mainstream Western perspective, a North Korea–like nuclear Iran will push its rival Sunni neighbors into adopting similar deterrence measures and thus can change the international relations dynamic by giving rise to a large-scale arms race in the already unstable Middle East. The spread of military nuclear technology in the region means that terrorist groups like Al-Qaida are one step closer to accessing weapons of mass destruction, which constitutes an existential threat to global and particularly Western security. There is also the fear that Iran's accomplishment of nuclear weapons capability will seriously undermine the credibility and effectiveness of the "entire non-proliferation regime," which was once diluted by North Korea's withdrawal from the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1993 (Delpech, 2007, p. 3). And lastly, placing the issue in the context of Iran's long-standing enmity with Israel and considering the Iranian leaders' fiery rhetoric that "Israel must vanish" (Ayatollah Khomeini's famous statement) and that "soon this stain of disgrace will be cleaned from the garment of the world of Islam" (Ahmadinejad, cited in Ritcher & Barnea, 2009, p. 48), Western governments as well as Israel seem to fear that a nuclear Iran may directly launch a nuclear attack against the Jewish state in case of a possible military confrontation, or may have this done by equipping its proxies, Hizbullah and Hamas. It is often ignored, however, by Western powers that the same

gloomy prediction applies equally to Iran's security situation with respect to Israel. In other words, it is not *only* Israel that feels existentially threatened by Iran's nuclear program, but there is a *mutual* sense of vulnerability and fear of each other's capabilities underlying the stances of the two opponents.

Though Iran's highest-ranking leaders have publicly stressed the country's need for *civilian* nuclear energy and denounced, as referred to above, the pursuit of weapons of mass destruction on religious grounds, one may advance the constructivist argument that the Islamic Republic's revolutionary identity, of which anti-Zionism has long been a central component, disposes it to feel an ever-present Israeli threat, and as far as survival is concerned, Iran feels it is a necessity to equip itself duly in order to deter an ultimately possible nuclear attack by Israel. Here an underlying assumption is that in case of military confrontation, Israel cannot defeat Iran in conventional warfare, due largely to the latter's vast territory and geostrategic position, and may eventually resort to its nuclear capability to avoid another "Holocaust," as many Israeli officials prefer to use the term. It seems, however, that the Israeli regime's nuclear capability can deter a major offensive on its territory in spite of the radical anti-Israeli rhetoric expressed by the Iranian leaders, but what reliable guarantee is there to prevent a desperate nuclear attack on Iran by Israel in certain circumstances? According to Ayatollah Rafsanjani, a powerful pragmatist Iranian politician, who was addressing a congregation during a Friday Prayer sermon in December 2001,

> We do not want to fall victim to insecurity, and we do not want a confrontation to turn into World War III. That is the worst that could happen. If a day comes when the world of Islam is duly equipped with the arms Israel has in its possession, the strategy of colonialism would face a stalemate, because the exchange of atomic bombs would leave nothing of Israel, while only damaging the Muslim world. (cited in Naji, 2008, pp. 118–119)

The words are revealing enough to reflect Iran's security concerns about a nuclear Israel and its potential attack. It should also be taken into account that the Iranian leaders' termination-of-Israel rhetoric, though rather unwise, provocative, and Iranophobia-instigating, is employed largely for domestic reasons and regional consumption, and cannot be translated into action if survival and protection of the interests of the Islamic Republic are to be ensured. It should be admitted, nonetheless, that the IRI's full acquisition of nuclear technology and its joining the nuclear states club will consolidate the ruling elite's domestic position by reasserting the nation state identity and enhancing the sense of national pride, honor, and perhaps solidarity as we are witnessing in the case of India and particularly Pakistan. Therefore, the regime can claim greater legitimacy at home and more authority and recognition abroad without necessarily feeling obliged to heed domestic dissent or observe the prevailing *secular* international norms.

Israel, Holocaust, and the Intensification of Fear

The Islamic Republic of Iran's bitter hostility toward Israel, which it often calls the "Quds-occupying regime," "occupier regime," and "Zionist regime" interchangeably, has as long a history as that of the revolutionary state itself. Upon its establishment in 1979, it refused to politically recognize the latter and has since

been calling for its termination and the liberation of Palestine. A close look at the Iranian passport as the primary document of Iranian nation-state identity abroad will reveal in its last page the statement, both in Persian and English, that "the holder of this passport is not entitled to travel to the occupied palestine [*sic*]," enough to demonstrate the Islamic Republic's attitude toward Israel. On the basis of its Shiite anti-Zionist ideology, the Islamic Republic helped to form a resistance force against Israel in Lebanon and the Palestinian territories. Significantly, in 1982 in the thick of the Iran-Iraq war, it dispatched a group of senior Revolutionary Guard commanders to Lebanon to organize and train a guerrilla unit to defend the country's Shiite Muslims against Israeli invasions. The movement was later developed, through Iranian and Syrian support, into a powerful political-military organization called Hizbullah, which has been blacklisted along with other anti-Israeli resistance movements, Hamas and Islamic Jihad, as terrorist groups by the Western allies of the Jewish state.

Iran accuses the United States and its Western partners of not only condoning but also encouraging Israeli atrocities against Palestinian Muslims. It also stresses that the Western powers supply Israel with any type of weapons of mass destruction to use against the oppressed Palestinians while endeavoring to suppress the Iranian nation's independent move to accomplish *civilian* nuclear technology. The West, in turn, accuses Iran of equipping Islamist groups in the region, hence escalating the ongoing conflicts as well as stoking instability in the Middle East. As for the peace between the two conflicting sides, the Islamic Republic rejects the Western-backed two-state solution and, contending that such a plan ignores Palestinians' right to their motherland, demands a nation-wide referendum to be held on major territory issues in which the whole Muslim, Jewish, and Christian population of all concerned areas as well as the Palestinian refugees could participate and thus determine their government. But then, according to Ahmadinejad, "of course, those who have come from far-away lands with an eye to plunder, have no right to have a say over Palestine" (cited in Naji, 2008, p. 146). Interestingly, this shows a stark contrast to his predecessor's policy toward the problem. While committing itself to defend the Palestinians' right to determine their own fate, the reformist Khatami administration tried hard to distance, if not dissociate, itself from the militant Palestinian and Lebanese groups, whose violent measures threatened the safety of Israeli citizens, and to pursue a policy of nonintervention in the conflict. In a historic offer to initiate official talks with the United States in 2003, it went so far as to promise to cease "material support" to these groups and announced the IRI's acceptance of the two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian crisis, provided that Palestinians themselves agree (Shakibi, 2010, pp. 208–209).

Upon accession to power in 2005, Ahmadinejad distinguished his strand of anti-Israelism from the mainstream IRI anti-Zionist attitude by including in it a disputed element almost completely absent from the Iranian political discourse since the Islamic Revolution of 1979. This was denial of the Holocaust in the form of calling it a "myth" or rather expressing doubts about the authenticity of the whole incident (Tures, 2008, p. 51). Though partly right in criticizing the extent to which the Holocaust is taken advantage of as a powerful political-discursive leverage to press the Israeli case against the Palestinian groups in international decision-making circles, the radical discourse served to further

alienate the West from Iran. This, coupled with the intensification of annihila-
tion rhetoric adhered to by Ahmadinejad, it seems, have inclined both Israel
and its Western allies—some of which are greatly influenced in their foreign
policy decisions by the campaigns of influential pro-Israeli lobbies—to jump to
the worst-case conclusions about Iran's possible future intentions. All points
taken into account, it may be rightly contended that absent such a radical anti-
Israeli rhetoric as elucidated above, perhaps Iranian-Western relations would
have been in a much better and more comfortable state and Iran's most ambi-
tious attempt, namely its nuclear program, would have proceeded much more
smoothly.

The U.S.-Led Wars in Afghanistan and Iraq

Almost a year before Iran's nuclear case hit the headlines in August 2002, the
9/11 attacks took place, driving the United States and its allies into a global "war
on terror." In August 1998, one year after Iran's reformist president, Mohammad
Khatami, took office, the Taliban extremists, fighting to grab control of Afghani-
stan, had slaughtered 10 Iranian diplomats in Mezar Sharif. Believed to give
sanctuary to Al-Qaida terrorists, therefore, the Taliban was perceived both by
Iran and the West as a common enemy bound to spread terrorism and insecurity
around the globe. The Khatami administration saw this as a good opportunity to
set in motion its foreign policy of détente, improve Iran's strained relations with
the West, particularly the United States and United Kingdom, and create a posi-
tive image of Iran as a country determined to advance its famous "dialogue
among civilizations" project. Thus, by virtue of the invaluable intelligence pro-
vided by the Iranian government as well as the ground support of its Afghan ally,
the Northern Alliance, the U.S.-led coalition managed to topple the Taliban and
replace it with the Afghan national government under Hamid Karzai, whom Iran
helped to establish his power.

Nonetheless, not only did the United States retain Iran on its blacklist of
terror-sponsoring states, but also on January 29, 2002, much to the anguish of
Iran's reformist leaders, came President Bush's "axis of evil" speech, a radical
verbal attack that according to President Khatami threw the bilateral relations
into an unprecedented low. "The problem of designating Iran an axis of evil," in
his words, "took our relations to a situation which was perhaps worse than that
which existed at the beginning of the Revolution and the peak of hostilities
between Iran and America" (Khatami, interviewed in Mitchell, 2009). In the face
of severe reprimands by his political opponents inside the country for his lenient
attitude toward the West, Khatami continued to press ahead with his détente
policy and seek an opportunity for reconciliation with the United States, only to
be met with the White House's dogmatic refusal as well as its mounting pressure
to completely halt the country's newly revealed nuclear activities. A few months
later in March 2003, the United States and United Kingdom waged an avoidable
war against Iraq on the pretext of dismantling its weapons of mass destruction,
which was construed in Iran's decision-making circles as an ominous sign of the
Western determination to further dominate the region and control its energy
resources. Bush's radical rhetoric against Iran followed by the invasion of its
western neighbor dashed Khatami's hopes for improvement in IRI-U.S. relations.

The perception gained ground when the U.S.-U.K. invasion of Iraq was followed by calls in the American neoconservative corridors of power for "regime change" in the Islamic Republic.

Surrounded by unsympathetic rivals on the country's eastern and western borders (an indication of the failure of the reformists' foreign diplomacy) on the one hand, and by staunch political opponents inside the country (who blocked the adequate progress of the reform movement) on the other, Khatami's reformist government ran aground. As a moderate reform-minded intellectual, he endeavored for eight years to construct an identity of Iran as "a force whereby [the world] could solve [its] problems, rather than see it as a problem itself" (Khatami, interviewed in Mitchell, 2009), but was impeded by a distrustful United States unaware that its tough policies toward Tehran are a blessing in disguise for the country's hardline conservatives, preparing the ground for the emergence of a figure on Iran's political scene who would pose the most formidable challenge to the West since the establishment of the Islamic Republic.

Each side's negative perceptions of the other's intentions, which Iran's reformist leadership had strived to transform, were gradually resurfacing. The West, one might be right to note, had dramatically failed to appreciate Khatami's true worth. To put it in characteristically constructivist terms, under the reformist government and in virtue of its more or less liberal ideology of Islamic reformism that helped to recast the IRI *type* identity abroad almost positively, Iran's foreign relations in general and its relationship with the West in particular experienced a substantial thaw as well as a sense of engagement in the Lockean culture of anarchy—where the Hobbesian discourse of "enmity" is suspended and the threat to "survival" almost eliminated, while "rivalry" gains predominance in interstate relations. Taking one stride further, Khatami's foreign policy discourse was also meant to represent a Kantian discourse of interstate "friendship" through introducing the global initiative of "dialogue among civilizations," a discourse in which "détente" instead of "dispute" and "cooperation" rather than "conflict" are the defining criteria whereby states formulate their behavior toward their "friends."[7]

Conclusion

After Ahmadinejad's accession to power in 2005, Iran-West relations saw a considerable exacerbation originating in his government's radical ideology and its perception of the United States and United Kingdom as a "threat" to the country's strategic national security plans, including fulfillment of Iran's nuclear program and consequent enhancement of its regional and global strategic standing. Building up their military capabilities in the region, Washington and London sought to establish their all-out presence in Iraq and escalated the war in Afghanistan, both Iran's immediate neighbors. Simultaneously, thanks to Ahmadinejad's reckless foreign policy rhetoric and moves, the West came to believe that Tehran had reinvigorated its revolutionary identity and Islamist ideology domestically and internationally. Consequently, the Western powers gravitated toward viewing the principle-ist government of Iran overall as a destabilizing force in Iraq and Afghanistan, a hindrance to the Palestinian-Israeli peace process, and generally an actor that poses a serious threat to their strategic interests in the

Middle East. Now at loggerheads with each other, Iran fears the West, accusing it of conspiring against the "Islamic system" and undermining it by inspiring "sedition" inside the country, sowing discord and discrepancy in the Muslim world, and instigating Iranophobia among its neighbors. Similarly, the West fears Iran, accusing it of suppressing its freedom-seeking people, threatening its neighbors, spreading instability and insecurity in the region, and seeking dominance over it.

These phobic discourses, both largely ideologically driven and identity affected, are to a great extent, one may conclude, responses to each other, and having been represented widely in the state-sponsored Western and Iranian media, serve to solidify the deep-seated distrust already existing between the two sides, which amounts eventually to material responses and also political deadlocks in solving problems of mutual interest such as Iran's nuclear case, the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, and the Afghanistan war. Drawing on the political experience of the preceding years, Iran's current leaders now believe that further concessions from them will not bring reciprocal concessions from the West but rather more demands. Many within the Iranian establishment stress that the United States and its allies should show they can act to the contrary. They maintain that any move by the United States toward normalization of relations with the Islamic Republic should be practical and consider Iran's internal and external security situation as well as national and transnational interests. Among the abovementioned major areas of tension, Iran's nuclear program and its enmity with Israel occupy center stage in the IRI political dynamic and are treated with much greater rigidity and importance than the human rights issue, as they are critical to the maintenance of its nation state identity. The Islamic Republic has shown that it can compromise on its Islamic ideology as it did in the case of Russia's suppression of Chechnyan Muslims, the Chinese crackdown on Muslim minorities, the Azerbaijan-Armenia conflict, Tajikistan's civil war between the state and certain Muslim/tribal groups, and finally, the U.S. war on the Taliban, but then it should be acknowledged that such ideological compromises did not have a direct bearing upon the IRI identity, whereas its demonization of the United States and hostility to Zionism have.

Given the Israeli lobbies' noticeable influence over U.S. foreign policy-making (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007) as well as the hard-line anti-IRI neoconservatives' powerful presence in its strategic and decision-making centers on the one hand, and the dominance of principle-ist hard-liners in Iranian politics as well as Iran's 2009 presidential election crisis, which dealt a heavy blow to its credibility abroad, on the other, the prospects for any thaw in Iran's relations with the United States and subsequently its Western allies are bleak. Whether any side will retreat from its political position is a moot point. But to quote Wendt (1992), "identities and interests are constituted by collective meanings that are always in process. . . . If states find themselves in a self-help system" marked by conflict, "this is because their practices made it that way. *Changing the practices* will change the intersubjective knowledge that constitutes the system" of relations (p. 407, emphasis added). Now what is clear is that in order for Iran-West tensions to end and for relations to improve, a structural overhaul of both sides' ideological attitudes and geopolitical practices toward one another appears necessary. The improvement of these relations can help solve many security prob-

lems in the Middle East and South Asia, ranging from the war in Afghanistan through the resurgent terrorist insurgency in Pakistan to the Arab-Israeli peace process.

Acknowledgments

Notes

[1]Ahmadinejad speaking to a gathering of supporters in Tehran (Richards, 2009).

[2]See The White House, George W. Bush's State of the Union (2002).

[3]In the Iranian calendar, 28 Mordad 1332 is equivalent to 19 August 1953 when the U.S.-U.K.-orchestrated coup overthrew the democratically elected nationalist government of Iranian Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddeq and brought Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi to power. Highly dependent on the West, the Shah ruled Iran until the Islamic Revolution of 1979.

[4]*Sahife-ye Emam*, vol. 5, p. 524; vol. 12, pp. 308, 367; and vol. 19, p. 377; vol. 20, p. 319 (Khomeini, 2006). For Ayatollah Khomeini's definition of the "Islamic Republic," see *Sahife-ye Emam*, vol. 4, p. 479; and vol. 5, p. 170.

[5]It is well worth noting that the West has often been regarded, not least in principle, as a monolithic homogenous totality by the Islamic Republic leaders, an assumption that is practically unhelpful and even dangerous and runs the risk of analytical oversimplification and theoretical reductionism. The other way around also applies, however to a lesser extent, that is, the Western view of the Islamic Republic has at times proved to be founded upon such a false assumption of homogeneity and uniformity. In fact, there are many "Wests" just as there are many "Irans."

[6]The mentioned serial is based on a popular Persian novel of the same title—*Dayi Jan Napelon* (*My Uncle Napoleon*)—by Iraj Pezeshkzad, a former Iranian diplomat, which was first published in 1973 and later translated into English by Dick Davis.

[7]For an analysis of the Kantian underpinnings of Khatami's foreign policy, see Ramazani (1998).

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