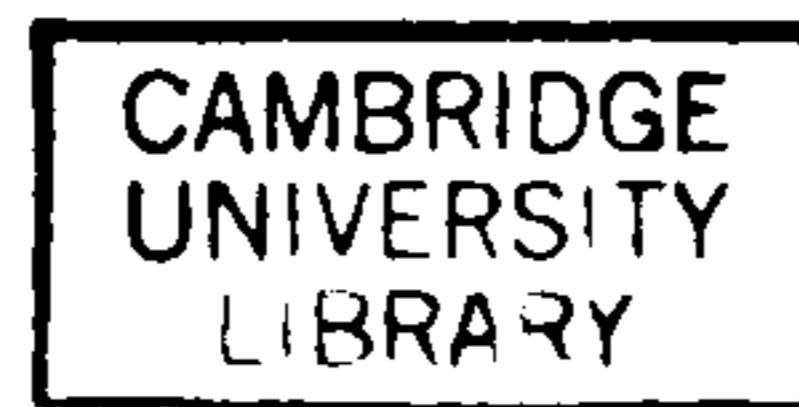


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**Passionate Constructions:  
Democracy and Islam in Anglo-American Relations with Iran,  
1979-1989**

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**Centre of International Studies  
and  
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**This dissertation is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

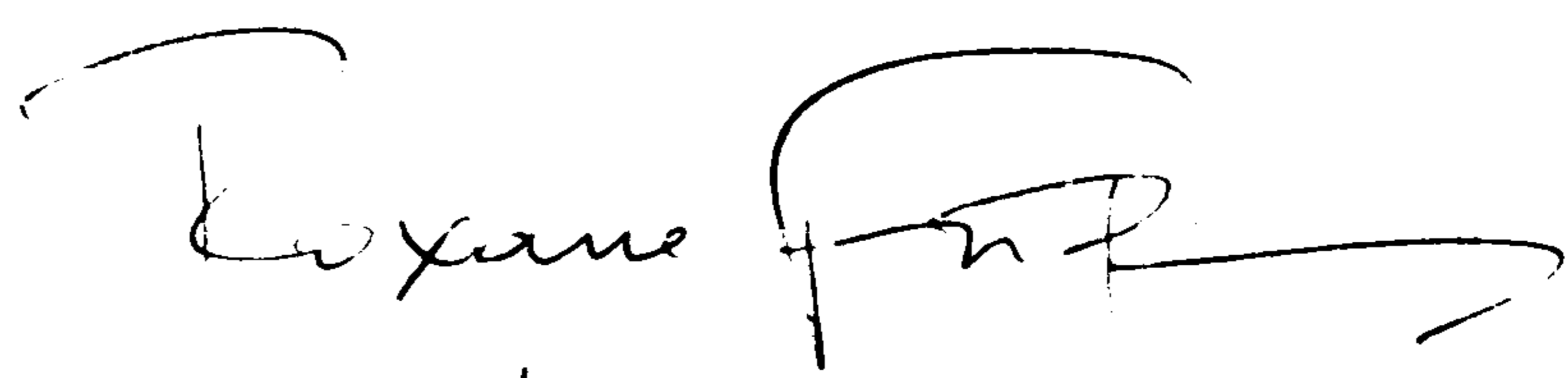
## **Declaration of Originality**

This dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration.

*Eoxane FR*  
*March 20 '09*

## Statement of Length

This dissertation does not exceed 80,000 words in length, including charts, but not including references, footnotes and bibliography, as required by the Centre of International Studies Faculty Degree Committee.

  
March 20, '09

To My Mother  
A Student and Teacher

RLG

## Passionate Constructions: Democracy and Islam in Anglo-American Relations with Iran, 1979-1989

Roxane Farmanfarmanian, Centre of International Studies

### SUMMARY

This study explores the processes unleashed when state identity security is threatened through the endangerment of primary norms (including practices of democracy, as well as power). In particular, it examines how these issues are played out in the context of 'special relationships'. The responses do not always appear easily explicable in rational terms of state interest or codes of practice. Instead, what emerges is the state's need to protect the hegemony of norms against perceived subversion by the 'other'. This leads to an exploration of whether there is a 'politics of passion' that makes thinkable subjective responses that are externalized as 'rational' policy, and if so, how it plays out in discourses and practices in close state relationships over the short- and long-term.

Using the case of American and British relations with Iran from the time of the Shah to the Rushdie Affair, I ask, 'What does the Anglo-American discourse, in its encounter with Islamic Iran, reveal about the dynamics of passion in special relationships?' First, I propose a method for analyzing the contribution of emotions in discourse and its effect on policy-making, using identity theory and practices of constructivism as a framework. I narrow the focus to the reflexive emotions of pride and shame, and their discursive impact on establishing social bonds between states. Second, I argue that discourses of political passion inform the power politics of special relationships in two guises: through *political love* (in close relationships of solidarity and pride) and *political strife* (in 'bad' relationships of shame and isolation). The analysis demonstrates that special relationships are not purely felicitous, but fall along a spectrum from those in which the social bonds are positive, to those in which false claims to solidarity and trust make them 'engulfing' (as was the case with the Shah), to those in which they are negative, being perpetually at risk and under attack (as has been the case with the Islamic Republic ever since). Third, by tracking discourses of political love and political strife across time, I demonstrate that emotionalized decision-making at moments of crisis can become reified into long-term policy orientations.

In analyzing passionate constructions in Anglo-American discourses toward Iran, the 'special relationship' with the Shah can be seen as based on false pride, which vested British and American identity security in sentimentalized presumptions and practices of 'Iran-as-Shah', rendering opposition to him as dangerous and anti-democratic. With the Shah's fall, 'the loss of Iran' was constructed as a betrayal of Western universalist ideals of democracy and their subversion by Islamic radicalism. Political love devolved into political strife as shame and anger on both sides maintained the social bonds, but transformed them into ones of pain and vulnerability. Iran's perceived humiliation at Washington's acceptance of the Shah into the US, and America's humiliation at Iran's seizure and holding of hostages, served to reify emotionalized responses in US policy as appropriate. Suspicion and blame, characteristic of a politics of strife, made possible the labeling of Iran as a rogue, and the launch of President Reagan's First War on Terrorism. In Britain, the Rushdie Affair and the accompanying *fatwa* issued from Iran were interpreted as endangering core values of freedom and democracy, inspiring emotionalized responses that mirrored those of the US, and strengthened a mutualized Anglo-American politics of passion toward radical Islam at home and abroad.

‘Fear of Persia was our chief motive: though afterwards we thought, too, of our own honour and our own interest.’

--Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, p.80

‘Qualitatively, the emotional intensity of the identification of the individual with his own nation stands in inverse proportion to the stability of the particular society as reflected in the sense of security of its members.’

--Hans Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, p. 125

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**Chapter 1****Introduction**

‘We have it in our power to begin the world over again.’ –Thomas Paine. *Common Sense*<sup>1</sup>

In response to the events of 11 September 2001, President G.W. Bush invoked democracy and liberty as the primary sources of American strength and leadership when he said, ‘Today our fellow citizens, our way of life, our very freedom came under attack.... Yet, we go forward to defend freedom and all that is good and just in our world’ (Bush 2001). Earlier that day, Prime Minister Tony Blair pointed to the strength of the community committed to those sentiments, declaring: ‘We, the democracies, must come together.’ (Blair 2001). Bush and Blair, by invoking values their publics would inherently understand and identify with, were drawing on a heritage of meanings that would serve not only to unify their nations in crisis, but place Americans, Britons and other ‘freedom-loving’ peoples in opposition to those who were supposedly not (Silberstein 2002: 7).

Bush’s and Blair’s responses were swift and emotional, and underscored the basic normative building blocks of their nations’ identity: democracy, freedom, justice, and the defense of ‘good’ in the world. For both, 9/11 was not just a terrorist attack on a pair of buildings that cost many lives, but an attack on the primary norms that defined their nations, and a clear warning that the world had changed as a result (Larsen 1997: 17)<sup>2</sup>. These were not moderate responses to soothe popular suffering, but incitements to anger and outrage. Theirs was a passionate call to arms to protect the honour, credibility, legitimacy and power of Britain and the United States – an act of what I call political passion (Kelman and Fisher 2003: 322-3).

Democracy as exemplified in Britain and the US, is generally understood in the discourse of their elected leaders, themselves the models of its application, as a benevolent and inclusive political system, and hence, the cornerstone of peace and

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Paine, in Isaac Kramnick, ed. (1987) *Common Sense* (Harmondsworth, Penguin), p. 41.

<sup>2</sup> Larsen uses the term ‘governing statements’ for what I call here ‘primary norms’. see Henrik Larsen (1997) *Foreign Policy and Discourse Analysis* (London: Routledge).

stability (Doyle 2005: 463; Kissinger 1957: 1). When, for example, President Jimmy Carter stated in his inaugural, 'The United States will meet its obligation to help create a stable, just and peaceful world order,' (January 20, 1977). Cold War differences among democracies were recognized as being relatively peripheral, and democracy of any kind was considered preferable to communism, though perhaps not to all manifestations of dictatorship (Oren 2004: 17; Shaw 2001: 187). At the time, the prevailing, or dominant discourse presupposed democracy to be a 'brute fact' and therefore conceptually unproblematic (despite wide variations in practice and purpose) (Searle 1995:2). This constitutive view of democracy, based as much on domestic political norms as on the ability of those norms to be distributed, was understood to embody not just American and British identities but universal human identity based on incontrovertible, and thus, shared common human values and aspirations. The representation that American and British democracies epitomized models of these values informed their relations and encounters with non-democracies, producing an inclusive discourse constructed on the presumption that all nations and peoples could become democratic. Difference, in this discourse was constructed as acquired rather than inherent and therefore as temporary, and bounded only on 'the basis of a past/present dichotomy' in which the 'present' of others was akin to the West's 'past' (Barkawi and Laffey 2001: 4; quote in Rumelili 2004: 32).

Promoting democracy as an enabler for others to become more like Western liberal states, instantiated the production of a set of 'guardian/child' relations with those non-Western states, outside the grip of the Soviet Union, that expressed a desire to democratize, including Bhutto's Pakistan, Perez's Venezuela, and Pahlavi Iran (Doty 1996: 89; Millikin 1999: 94). This set of relationships, 'ostensibly nurturing' but obscuring 'and justifying practices of domination', had the advantage of including these states within the West's security framework, and thereby performatively producing (and reproducing) the US role as the leader of the free world, and the West as the bulwark of a liberal political paradigm (Doty: *ibid*). This was seen to systemically reduce the likelihood of interstate war through what were perceived as the shared norms that inspired peace among those within the community (Diamond 1992; Doyle 1986, among others; for contrary view, Barkawi and Laffey 2001).

Yet, events unfolding in Iran two years after Carter's assumption of the presidency revealed the application of democracy to be a project of plural interpretations, re-problematizing the presumption that the Western model held universal appeal. American and British reactions to the revolution, the fall of the Shah and the rise of an Islamic government in Iran further showed that their own interpretations of democracy and even freedom were not inclusive when the 'child' does not proceed down the 'guardian's' chosen path (Rumelili 2004: 38). Rather than being universalist, their interpretations were contingent on notions of secularity, and capitalist modernity, as well as their own Western-centric historical and religious traditions (Petito and Hatzopoulos 2003: 6-9; Rupert 2001: 158). In fact, these were the very components which represented how they articulated themselves, and the points of difference that defined their identities in respect to 'others' (a point made by the proponents of democratic peace, see for example, Brown, Lynne-Jones, and Miller, eds., 1996: ix-xxxiii).

Iran's blurring of the boundaries of what constituted the hegemonic discourse of liberal democracy, combined with its rejection of important Western norms and practices, was shaming for Britain and the US, which represented themselves as avatars of its practice and morally chosen for its dissemination. The special relationship with the Shah, discursively expressed in what I label political love, and which was constructed around social bonds of we-ness, shared security concerns, development commitments, trust, and other elements of mutuality, was transformed as the discourse eroded into what I call political strife, in which the social bonds remained vibrant, but became constantly threatened. As the political ideology and form of government adopted by Iranians fell outside the Anglo-American discursive geography of comfort, Islamic Iran was understood to be inherently 'Other' (that is, as non-Self, rather than less Self), and therefore, having a 'present' that was unlike the Western 'past' and hence, un-moldable. This view was based not on objective fact – that Iranians did not want and could not achieve democracy – but on subjective perceptions of what democracy entailed, and how Iranian practices failed to conform to those entailments. In an externalization of these sentiments, the Islamic Republic was labeled an illiberal democracy, theocracy or as simply 'barbaric and beyond the imagination' (Senator Abraham Ribicoff, 'Proceedings and Debates of 96<sup>th</sup> Congress', May 17, 1979, quote in Bill 1988:284). Anglo-American

political discomfort with the religio-political content of the new Islamic Iran figured it as a danger to Western security, and Shia radicalism as a threat to the universalist creed of democracy and Western hegemony over the 'modern' (Zakaria 2003; Geldenhuys 2004). Labeling it a rogue and terrorist ensured it remained a focus of discursive strife, indicating that a 'special relationship' was being perpetuated, but as one of isolation, in which the bonds were perpetually being put at risk (Scheff and Retzinger 1991: 18)

Yet, the danger Iran represented was *not* an objective threat to Western territory, economic practices, or security establishments (except for its withdrawal of US rights to the observation posts along the Soviet border). It did not strike up alliances with the West's enemies, and did not fall into the Soviet camp (Cottam 1990; Hermann 1990). The threat Iran represented was subjective and more fundamental. By adopting its own universalist creed based on the laws of an established and wide-ranging religion, it rejected the special relationship it had enjoyed with the United States and the Western alliance, and by so doing, endangered the hegemony of the universalist idealism of American, and more broadly, Western liberal democracy; though a regional power, it suggested an alternative to global ordering, particularly regarding the unsettled claims that the only way to be humane and modern was according to American-led Westernized norms. Iran's threat was normative and inspired strong political emotions: it endangered the security of Western identity.

In this study, I explore the processes that are unleashed when identity security is endangered and primary norms defining the self (including practices of democracy as well as power) are threatened. In particular, I look at how these issues are played out in the context of 'special relationships'. The responses do not always appear easily explicable in rational terms of state interest. Instead, what emerges is the state's need to protect against the perceived subversion by the 'other'. This leads me to explore how a 'politics of passion' plays out in the discourses and practices of states in close relationships with other states over the short- and long-term.

### **The Questions Posed**

This study addresses the issue of identity security as it relates to that of a hegemon and its normative community, which together empower a specific international order and define

who can be party to it. From a theoretical standpoint, the central question is: 'How does hegemonic identity, conceived by the United States and Britain as being empowered by a universalist normative vision of democracy, confront the threat of a competing universalist vision? In unraveling the answer, a second theoretical question arises in regards to the emotionalized, apparently 'irrational' approaches to policy-making that appear to privilege primary norms over 'interests': Is there a politics of passion that is activated when primary norms are threatened? This leads to several specific questions. In the context of the case study adopted here, the first is: How did 'the loss of Iran' and the special friendship it offered, govern Anglo-American identity politics to produce radical Islam as a threat to democracy and the next global enemy? The second is: What does the Anglo-American discourse, in its encounter with revolutionary Islamic Iran, reveal about the dynamics of special relationships? Rather than conceiving them as simply felicitous, can they instead be analyzed across a continuum, from positive to negative?

I attempt to address these issues in the context of relations between Iran and the two leading proponents of the Western democratic project, the US and Britain. I do so in a period that begins with the last years of the Shah's reign and ends with the Salman Rushdie Affair. In the course of this enquiry, the norms and moral equivalencies associated with liberal democracy appear to shift in response to the perception of threat and the need to learn new ways to confront it, implicating not only short-term cognitive engagement in decision-making, but a reifying of sentiment in long-term outlooks. The third specific question therefore is: How did Anglo-American responses to the politics of Islamic threat result in an increasingly exclusive interpretation of the conditions possible for Western-defined democracy?

The context for the study of Iran's relations with Britain and the United States is therefore the shared Anglo-American discourse. This is not to claim that Washington and London had parallel relations with Iran during this period. They did not. The relationship between Iran and the US was openly referred to as 'special', certainly from 1972, when Kissinger and Nixon gave Iran unfettered access to US military products, until the Shah's fall (Zonis 1991). Though Britain's relations were 'special' with Iran until the nationalization of Iranian oil under Prime Minister Mossadeq, thereafter it was less so, although the two countries remained close diplomatically, militarily, and commercially

until the advent of the Islamic Republic, and it was Britain's Ambassador Anthony Parsons, as much as the United States' Ambassador William Sullivan upon whom the Shah relied for advice and support in the last days of his reign (Parsons 1984; Sullivan 1981). Thereafter, the hostage crisis had a special effect on US-Iran relations, which did not characterize Iran-British relations until ten years later when the Rushdie Affair erupted.

The claim being made is that American and British conceptions of self, and the historical continuity of the role identities they have assumed in global affairs constitute a shared field of Anglo-American discursivity (Bell 2006; Bially Mattern 2005; Dumbrell 2001; Laffey and Weldes 2004:355). Further, their own 'special relationship' of close alliance, bolstered by intelligence and security exchanges, is constitutive of 'we-ness', a discourse of mutuality that is sufficiently thick that 'there is a conscious project to merge identities by making domestic structures more alike' (Bially-Mattern 2001: quote in Buzan 2004:30). At times, their differences (or disagreements) will trump that which is shared, and the discourse is interrupted (Bially-Mattern 2001). Yet, the linkages that inform their actions as well as the meanings associated with them, form a complex mesh of discursive practices that often confounds critics for how easily it re-connects into a mutual discourse in times of insecurity and fear (Dumbrell 2004: 237). The 'we-ness' of shared norms surrounding democracy, which is constitutive of both nations' sense of mutualized identity and common perceptions of threat, provides the foil for the subsequent analysis of how Anglo-American constructions of Iran became passionate. A brief review of the shared aspects of British and American identity as constitutive of this discourse therefore follows.

### **The 'thick' Anglo-American discourse of democracy**

The term 'exceptionalism' is most commonly associated with the American creed of Manifest Destiny, what Weinberg defines as 'in essence, the doctrine that one nation has a pre-eminent social worth, a distinctively lofty mission, and consequently, unique rights in the application of moral principles' (Weinberg 1963: 62). Yet, it is equally applicable to the political self-image of Britain, which, though contributing to the precariousness of British identity, hangs on despite the stripping away of its empire (Gamble 2003: 51, 63).

The concept of bearing trusteeship over other nations less developed than their own is deeply ingrained in the identities of both nations, what Kipling described in ‘The Recessional’ as ‘the White Man’s burden’, or in American terms, ‘the burden of leadership in the fight for world peace’ (Truman 1952, State of the Union speech)<sup>3</sup>. For both states, this is instantiated by their conception of themselves as standard-bearers of Western democratic civilization (Colls and Dodd, eds.1986; Shama 2002: 262-314). Each takes credit for pioneering fundamental cultural, political and economic aspects of liberal democratic modernity that evolved originally as domestic expressions of governance before being projected outward (Habermas 1996:21; Laffey and Barkawi 1999:408). Importantly, the interlacing of this process through the politics and institutions of Christian ethics—that ‘covenant between God and man’ in John Winthrop’s words, or *civitas* in Hobbes’—served to ground its legitimacy on moral grounds (Gutman 1996:342; Hobbes 1969:II.10.8; Roper 1989:quote on 4; Tuck 1989:57-58).

Although the ‘universalist’ claim has more often been seen as a typically American form of idealism (Kennedy 1961), the deep British conviction that their system of freedom is not only ‘universalist’ but the original altruistic inspiration for the internationalist project can be seen in this speech by Queen Elizabeth II on the 17<sup>th</sup> of October 1953 marking the anniversary of the Magna Carta:

‘It was in these fields of Runnymede, seven centuries ago, that our forefathers first planted a seed of liberty, which helped to spread across the earth the conviction that man should be free and not enslaved!’ (Engraved plaque, Lincoln Castle).

The use of concepts such as ‘destiny’, ‘leadership’, ‘sowing seeds of liberty’, ‘morality’, and ‘civilization’ as narrative staples to illustrate British and American perceptions of their particular democratic vision, privilege the benevolence (and veil any ulterior purposes) with which they understand their project of dissemination to be motivated (Dunne 2003). By its very nature, then, it is a ‘natural’ goal for humanity, which admires and aspires to emulate it. Hence, its ‘goodness’ has been naturalized (and thus, can be

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<sup>3</sup> This is not to say that other empires have not arrogated to themselves the unique capacity to rule over less favoured peoples and lands than their own, beginning with the Romans, and including the French, who described their purpose as a ‘mission civilizatrice’. In all of these, the imprimatur of the divine is an important factor, playing a role similar to that used by monarchs and sovereigns to justify their rule over their domestic population in pre-democratic times.

continuously defended). Not only do the ends offer a rationale for justifying means, but the means are perceived as to be naturally above reproach, since they are being undertaken by those already espousing (and benefiting from) universal values of freedom (Bisely 2004:50; Doty 1986; Thatcher 1986: 41-2).

The use of such rhetoric, and the passionate belief in relational hierarchy, remained (and remains) little sullied by contradiction or adverse circumstance—an important aspect of the nature of exceptionalism, and an important interest of this study (Ikenberry 2004:613; Oren 2004: 21). Yet both states have consistently encountered the dilemma that bequeathing freedom on others constrains their own (Burke 1912: 26; Doty 1996; Mayall 1998; Tidrick 1992:4). This has meant that the contingency of British and American identity as the paragons of ‘good’ (in British parlance, chivalry and altruism) is continuously at risk, since, in the words of Kermit Roosevelt, it is necessary at times to ‘do the dirty work of democracy’ (Doty 1986:chapter 3; quote in Kinzer 2003: 4). Leadership has required independence to choose which ‘good’ should predominate. Yet, for the US, even more than the UK, the need to be *seen* as acting with rectitude so as to ensure it was loved and admired as a moral force, continuously has undercut that independence (Doty 1986; Ignatieff 2005). Because it was the image that was important, the ‘pleasing illusion’ (Michael 2000:159), the unassailable position of the US as leader, therefore, perpetually has depended on its being the arbiter of meanings and practices it could define as ‘democracy’ and ‘freedom’. To maintain its image, the discourse of ‘ends’ has had to trump any tarnishing aspect of ‘means’. These ‘means’ (and hence, meanings) must be positioned so they can be viewed and adopted as acceptable, ‘natural’, and honourable, a risky and yet crucial component of the Anglo-American discourse, and one that has made it continuously dependent on the approbation of others, not least their allies in the third world (Doty 1996).

The points of similarity—and familiarity—between Britain and the US in their interpretation of power and its discursive projection in role identities of world democratic leadership can be seen to have roots in a broad field of Anglo-Saxon hereditary claims, as well as specifics of territory, the sequential linkage of global power, and as mentioned earlier, the institutionalization of ‘we-ness’ in a special relationship ‘persistently sentimentalized and mythologized’ by both (Danchev 1998: quote on 2; Haseler 2007:



65). For Britain, the building not just of empire but of Pax Britannia, as well as her special role as the dowager of all other English-speaking nations, 'proved' and was productive of the view that international order was best preserved through the leadership and diligence of the Anglo-Saxon model (Bell 2007; Churchill speech to American Congress 1946). To Churchill, as to Seeley, Truman, and many of their successors on both sides of the Atlantic, an Anglo-American discourse was a natural development, sharing not only kinship but common values, aspirations and capacities (Gamble 2003:34; Haseler 2007:73; Mayall 1998; Michael 2000). With the devolution of the British empire and the passing of Western (or non-communist) leadership to the United States, a former colony, power, in a unique twist of history continued to be expressed in the same language and according to similar socio-politico-economic models (Gamble 2003:90-91; Halliday 1994: 112-113; Harvey 2003; for contrary view, see O'Brien 2003). The perceived right to steward mankind sat easily upon their respective 'exceptionalist' shoulders, despite moments of extreme friction between the two, particularly in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and over Suez (Haseler 2007:72). As the US took on the role of hegemon, it enabled their shared claim to universalist values to inform not only the global project of democracy, but to become the core of Western discourse.

Complementing the similarity of their cultural approaches was the fact that the US, like Britain, was territorially separated and self-contained, a maritime power protected by its oceans and therefore able to choose the level of insularity or openness with other states<sup>4</sup>. Territorial self-containment contributed to both states' perception that notions of public and private are only thinly divided, individual threat quickly being interpreted as national insecurity, and vice versa (McAlister 2005: 209). Arrighi interprets this similarity in concrete terms when speaking of the changeover from the British empire to the US:

'In both instances, the hegemonic role fell on a state—the United Kingdom in the eighteenth century, the United States in the twentieth century—that had come to enjoy a substantial 'protection rent', that is, exclusive cost advantages associated with absolute or relative geostrategic insularity.' (1994: 62).

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<sup>4</sup> This argument is made persuasively by Mead, Russel (2007) *God and Gold: Britain, America and the Making of the Modern World* (New York: Knopf).

This ability to be insular or engaged at will can be seen in their approaches to the Middle East, where the US and UK have filled complementary roles, the former almost seamlessly replacing the latter as geopolitical heavy-weight, and filling its shoes as the main trade partner, military strategist and supplier, and protector of the Gulf and its surrounding states (Beeman 2005: 65). In no instance was this partnership of engagement and withdrawal clearer than in the coup that overthrew Iranian Prime Minister Mossadeq in 1953, a project conceived by the British government in response to his nationalization of Anglo-Iranian Oil, but which was conducted by the CIA under President Eisenhower, though still bearing the imprint of British design (Farmanfarmaian et al. 1997; Kinzer 2003; Roosevelt 1979). In fact, as Beeman dryly notes, 'the United States repeated all the old political patterns that the British had employed: strong-arm tactics in the oil market, demands for diplomatic immunity, undue influence on the throne, monopolistic trade concessions and an imperious attitude' (Beeman 2005: 65). Significantly, though the US dominated Iranian military and commercial trade, and exercised the greater political influence on the Shah at the time, it was Britain's BBC which was credited by supporters and detractors alike of being a key media player during the revolution (Sullivan 1981: 191, 210).

Media dominance by both the US and the UK, is a key emblem of their conceptions of self, liberal democracy, and mutual esteem, and fulfills an important role in projecting this image abroad (Larson 1986). At the same time, their respective media serve as the rhetorical loudspeakers through which political players in different parts of the world are figured as pro- or anti-democracy, freedom loving or anti-Western, and, as such, provide imagery and signification to events and agents that come to be understood as such not only throughout those parts of the world less able to provide themselves their own media voice, but within the larger Western community in which allies are vested with an interest in maintaining a community of broadly shared values for shared gains (Barnett 1994: 411). Information dominance, with its implied success in the marketing of news, as well as in its collection and analysis, plays a key role in positioning Anglo-American narratives at the core of Western discourses on democracy (Hippler 2000: 68).

In short, though British and American social and political identities spring from different histories, the shared normative underpinning of the liberal doctrine that informs

their view of the international order and their own roles within it, and which has constructed their powerful relationship of 'we-ness', constitutes a surprisingly resilient Anglo-American discourse (Bially Mattern 2005). Both are strong proponents of the idea that security is best maintained by a system of like states with similar political systems, and social and cultural structures. Cultural and religious pluralism must thus be privatized if peace among states is to be maintained (Petito and Hatzopoulos 2003:6). The idea that domestic political similarities are determinants of collaborative relations underpins, of course, the theory of democratic peace, as well as Oren's critique of that thesis in which he sees 'democracy' as 'America-like' and hence, that there should be no surprise in 'the proposition that "America-like" countries do not fight each other' (see Lynn-Jones et al 1996: preface; Doyle 1986; Mearsheimer 1990; Oren 2004: 179). Thatcher summed up the we-ness behind the shared identity security in her 1983 speech at the Winston Churchill Foundation awards dinner,

'Differences between us? Yes, we have few, but they are as nothing compared with the things we share – our resolve to defend our way of life, to deter all threats and to ensure in the end that triumph of freedom which American and Britain work for, long for, and believe will one day come' (1986: 95).

In the next section, I offer a general overview of the literature on identity security and its effect on East/West relations, pointing out gaps particularly as related to the questions posed in this study. As my intent is not an exhaustive review, but to illuminate the existing discursive figuration of Anglo-American identity security in relation to democracy and Islam, I will focus here on themes that reflect the logic of the literature that does exist (Sayyid 1997:18). A more detailed literature discussion accompanies each chapter. The review below is followed by a description of the five key periods proposed for study, and more generally, why a re-assessment of the Anglo-American relationship with Iran is an apposite subject, not only for the theoretical insights it offers, but because it remains misunderstood, and yet, is so critical for policy formation going forward.

### **Evaluating the Literature**

There is a vast literature dedicated to American and more generally Western security issues, such as grand strategy, security communities, and response to threats (Adler 1997;

Adler and Barnett 1998; Barnett 1996; Doyle 1995; Frederking 2003; Geldenhuys 2003; Ikenberry 2001; Walt 1987. among many others).

In contrast, there are few examples of literature on American and European identity security, although it is a growing topic. Particularly apt are Buzan (2004) *The United States and the Great Powers*, which examines identity in terms of polarity and power; Campbell (1998) *Writing Security*, in which American concepts of self and other form a narrative of identity discipline that evolves from re-creations of historical discursive practices; Chilton (1996) *Security Metaphors* which investigates American security through foreign policy paradigms; Doty (1996) *Imperial Encounters* which unpacks the North South relationship as constitutive of northern - and especially American and British - concepts of security and power; Kubálková (2001) *Foreign Policy in a Constructed World*, which addresses identity security in the context of several different regional conflicts; Geróid Ó Tuathail (1996) *Critical Geopolitics* (particularly chapter 6), in which American strategy toward internal conflict in Bosnia is viewed through the lens of ego idealism and metaphor; and Weldes' (1999) analysis of the production of US credibility, toughness and masculinity in a politics of identity played out in the Cuban missile crisis. All of these have been extremely useful in the development of this study.

There is also important literature on special relationships, although it tends to focus on specific relationships between the US and other states: Britain (Bartlett 1992; Danchev 1998; Dumbrell 1997, 2004; Gamble 2003; Walsh 2003; among others); Thailand (Fineman 1997); and Israel (Stephens 2006; among others). There is little theoretical analysis of a structure which bears a name coined by Churchill, but which Stephens notes is 'under-theorized and under-conceptualized' (p.1). Instead, she observes, 'We are left with little more than assertions by politicians that the relevant relationship is "special" (ibid). Although she defines 'specialness' as necessitating specific attributes, such as 'pervasiveness, durability and legitimacy', as well as transparency and multi-level engagement, she does not offer a rounded theory of special relationships, nor does she address variations on the theme (chapter 1, quote on 4; Danchev 1998).

In terms of Anglo-American relations with Iran, there is no lack on engagement with the Shah and thereafter the Islamic Republic (Cottam 1988; Ehteshami and Vareshteh, eds. 1991; Ganji 2006; Gasiorowski 1990, 1991; Halliday 1979, 1998; Keddie 1981; Kinzer 2003; Ramazani 1982, 1990; among others): on political Islam, particularly Iranian inspired (Fuller 2002; Hippler and Lueg 1995; Pipes 1983, 1993, ed.: Roy 1994; Wright 1985), or Islamic terrorism (Celmer 1987; Hoffman 1998; Kepel 1994; Lacquer 1999; O'Ballance 1997; Piscatori 1983; Post 1984; Taheri 1987; Turner 1991). However, there is little that addresses these questions in the context of Western identity security, as analyses tend to be realist and instrumentalist (see for example, Hunter 1992). It can be argued that Zonis' (1991) *Majestic Failure: The Fall of the Shah*, which explains the Pahlavi era through political-psychology, addresses in passing the identity security of the US in relation to the 'grandiosity syndrome' he contends was the Shah's dominating flaw.

Perhaps most useful is Pollack's (2004) *The Persian Puzzle: Conflict between Iran and America*. Pollack's encyclopedic history of modern Iran sums up the 'might makes right' celebration of the tension between American power based on legitimacy and American power based on force – that is, in Thucydides' terms, between *hegemonia* and *arche* (Lebow 2001: 548-9). As the most significant American academic practitioner to compose a serious treatment on Iran in the wake of 9/11, his discourse can be understood to represent mainstream American practice and outlook over time, and indeed, his knowledge of Iranian social and religious trends, particularly the sources of the Islamic political doctrines that Khomeini espoused as the basis of his ideology, reflects that of many other US analysts (see Kemp 1994; Rubin 1981, Wright 1985, among others). In this regard, specific information on the Islamic opposition to the Shah, and its theoretical bases, is either absent from these accounts, or dismissed as irrelevant (for discussion of this in general Middle East context, see Ayoob 1991; Niva 1999). This persistent gap helps to illuminate the self-referential nature of American power. In this sense, Pollack's can be construed as a primary source as it is both revisionary and a discursive marker.

There is considerable analysis of identity security leading up to the end of the Cold War oriented toward Iran and its internal responses to events both ideological and military (Arjomand 1988; Ehteshami 1995; Fischer and Abedi 1990; Rahnema and

Behdad 1991; Sciolino 1999), or the impact on Iran and the Middle East of various actions and ideologies emanating from the West (see for example Afary and Anderson 2005; Esposito 1990; Keddie and Gasiorowski, eds. 1990; Menashri, ed. 1990; Ramazani 1986; Tehranian, ed. 2003). Works by Iranians tend to fall into three camps: pro-Shah apologists, who see little but barbarianism in their successor regime (Hoveyda 1998; Nahavandi 2005; Taheri 1987), Marxist-liberals attempting to unpick why the revolution never developed into a leftist or secular movement and seeing the hostage crisis as a means for the clerical leadership to claim the radical high ground (Abrahamian 1993; Ganji 2006; Irfani 1983; Milani 1994); and members of the disenfranchised intelligentsia both horrified and deeply disappointed by the revolution's actions (Arjomand 1988; Bakhash 1985; Bani-Sadr 1982; Zabih 1982).<sup>5</sup> For a lyrical and scholarly exploration of identity without these resistances, see Mottahedeh 1985.

Interestingly, although there are various analyses dedicated to the changing security challenges of the Gulf, particularly as a result of Iran's revolutionary export programme (Adib-Moghaddam 2006; al-Saud 2003; Potter and Sick, eds. 1997), and the implications on foreign capabilities and interests (Adib-Moghaddam 2007; Chubin 1994; Chubin and Tripp 1988; Cordesman 1987; Ehteshami and Vareshteh, eds. 1991; Joffe 1991; Halliday 1996; Mojtabeh-Zadeh 2003), there is little that addresses their impact on the identity of Western powers as perceptions of danger and the role of Islamic resurgence shifted (Ansari 2000: 49-51; Esposito 1992; Hiro 1985: 164-185; Murphy 2003). Zunes (2003a) is unusual in his willingness to identify both American and British approaches to the Gulf in terms of their investment in a specific post-Cold War order, and their impetus 'to defend their hostility towards these countries in the name of collective security and other liberal ideals' (p.100; see also Keddie 1987).

A claim made particularly in American, 'conservative' scholarship on political Islam and its historical engagement with domestic as well as Western societies, is that 'inferiority', 'collective paranoia', 'conspiracy theories', 'inability to keep up with

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<sup>5</sup> By the time these works were published, most of these writers were already immigrants, whose views, however neatly put, reveal the pain and bitterness of their own loss in the face of Khomeini's gain. The hostage crisis in particular serves as the crucible of their own misreading of Iranian identity and the modern political power of Islam. For those scholars that have continued to analyze Iranian policy, their subsequent books do not reflect the political emotion that emanates so clearly in this set, suggesting that as catharsis was achieved, the passion subsided, if not the pain.

modern technological advancement' and other 'typical' Middle Eastern 'characteristics' contributed to an outpouring of militant Islam directed at the West (Lewis 2002; Netanyahu, ed. 1986; Pipes 1983, 1993, 2002; for contrary view, Ajami 1992; Bill 1988). Yet, analysis is sparse regarding how Western society became articulated as the object of Islamic ire and how its own responses to this development are socially derived.

The exceptions, which address Western identity and conceptions of self in relation to security and democracy as formulated through the lenses of the Middle East, are impressive for their acuity, and their care in avoiding passionate constructions. See particularly, William Beeman (2005), who couches his study of the demonization that characterizes relations between the US and Iran in anthropological terms that addresses both cultural and discursive resistances; Melani McAlister (2005) whose *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media and US interests in the Middle East since 1945* examines the 'politics of representation... as well as the development of an often uneven and contested public understanding of history and its significance' in relation to American entanglements in the Middle East.; and Bobby S. Sayyid (1997) *A Fundamental Fear: Eurocentrism and the emergence of Islamism*, who adopts a constructivist approach to analyze Western concepts and fears of fundamentalist Islam. Other works worth mentioning are A. Salvatore's (1997) analysis in *Islam and the political discourse of modernity*, A. Mirseppasi's (2002) study of Iran in terms of development theory; Naveed Sheikh's (2002) *The New Politics of Islam*, which situates analysis in terms of international relations; Ofira Seliktar (2000) who utilizes discourse analysis to problematize American policy conflicts within the Carter administration; and Yilmaz and Bilgin's (2005/6) discourse analysis on Turkey's identity production.

### **The Structure of the Study**

Chapter 2 lays out the critical constructivist theory that provides the framework for this study's analysis of identity endangerment and responses to it. In this section, I advance an approach for expanding theoretically on emotionality within identity politics, placing it in the larger paradigm of normative theory. As the emotional motivators upon which I focus are those released by perceived threats to well-being, and prompt defensive moves and discourses of 'love' or 'strife', I have called them a 'politics of passion'. To test my

initial hypothesis that political passion not only affects decision-making, but becomes reified in long-term policy profiles. I confine my theoretical analysis to the specific case of dyadic security communities, that is, special relationships, and suggest that these in turn can be viewed across a continuum of felicitous special relationships, special relationships of false pride, and negative special relationships. Using aspects of political psychology as it applies to shame and pride in state decision-making, I utilize discourse analysis to develop an understanding of the role of normative self-defense in both short and long-term processes of international relations.

In focusing on Anglo-American relations with Iran, I propose five periods for analysis in which policy is most clearly informed by passionate political constructions of democracy and Islam as contingencies of identity security: 1) the year leading up to the fall of the Shah, 2) the revolution, 3) the hostage crisis, 4) the first War on Terrorism, and 5) the Rushdie Affair. These constitute important resource points in US and British articulations of their own universalist ideals and how they engaged with and confronted Iran's; likewise, these were critical moments in establishing the conditions of possibility for enabling policies later adopted in response to the (second) War on Terror.

The third chapter addresses the period just before the Shah's fall in which American and British discursive relations with Iran were sufficiently close as to be definable as political love, but in fact, one that was over engulfing, and which thereby established what became thinkable and possible in policy terms during the revolution and after. The passionate construction that 'Iran was the Shah' had implications for the close 'guardian/child' duality that compromised Western preparedness for change inside Iran, and led to the passionate discursive patterns concerning democracy and secularism that would structure ensuing Anglo-American perceptions.

The fourth chapter investigates how processes of American and British identity-creation (and their conceptions of democracy and security) were elaborated in their responses to the revolution proper. The main focus is on US responses to Iran, as this was the dominant relationship and is the source of the richer body of textual material for the period. Nevertheless, it was the Anglo-American ideological investment in Iran, inscribed in the promotion of democracy and modernity, and Western universalist values that governed their perceptions of events. This influenced whether Iran's experience was



understood as a nascent popular democracy attempting to reformulate goals of modernity and articulated sovereignty within a legitimating Irano/Islamic context, or as a clerical coup, a medieval throwback that rejected modernity and was a danger to regional, and eventually, global, security.

The focus on US discourse continues in Chapter 5, which takes up the hostage crisis. This was a specifically American experience, a point of 'no return' which solidified the construction of Iran as a rogue and the US as innocent victim, elaborating the discourse around radical Islam in emotionalized terms as a more generalized site of threat. The revival of historical memory enshrined in the captivity narrative provides a useful paradigm by which to understand US perceptions of private and public, as well as the appropriateness of passion in policy development.

In Chapter 6, the analysis remains almost exclusively on American discourses toward Iran during Ronald Reagan's War on Terrorism, not only because the US (in conjunction with Israel) was the primary power articulating the threat of international terrorism as emerging from the rise of militant Shia Iran, but because Iran did not significantly figure in Britain's identity construction during this period. This chapter explores how the US constructed terrorism along similar discursive patterns as totalitarianism, enabling the two dangers to merge as primary threats to Western notions of democracy, and eventually, making it possible for Islamic terror to replace Soviet communism as the West's greatest enemy.

In Chapter 7, the focus shifts to Britain and the discursive crisis that emerged with the Rushdie Affair. This event had important domestic and international implications for Britain's identity security, as it exposed the contingency of deeply embedded notions of tolerance and inclusivity in the face of alternative interpretations by the Muslim community. Khomeini's *fatwa* further served to polarize emotional responses around 'freedom of expression' versus 'freedom from blasphemy', contributing to a discourse of Islamophobia that linked the threat of Shia and Sunni militancy both inside and outside Britain. The Affair served not only to narrow liberal constructions of acceptable democratic practice in Britain, but acted as a landmark in the affirmation of a shared narrative field with the US, revitalizing an Anglo-American discourse toward Iran and radical Islam as dangers to international order.

In conclusion, the discourses by which the United States and Britain represented themselves, their articulation of democratic norms and their construction of Islamic danger as a product of identity threat will be analyzed over time. In the process, the politics of passion will be examined for its ability to signal how the social bonds linking states together are maintained and transformed. Emotionalized behaviours expressing alienation or solidarity will be examined for their ability to motivate learning and promote change. Although policy is always a construction of choices and preferences, this study attempts to locate how certain preferences and choices become privileged, and makes the claim that threats to identity evolve upon defense of fundamental, constitutive norms, rather than material self-interest, engaging the play of emotion in their protection (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998: 912). Although this does not disclaim that other forces are at work as well, the intent of this study is to identify the causal impact of sentiment on international relations in the short and long term. The purpose of unveiling these discursive patterns is not just to understand American and British policy in the Iranian case, but to understand ‘the historical conditions of possibility of meaning and action’ (Torfing 2003), that is, how the politics of passion refigures the range of policy options, and how dependent identity is on the precarious imaginary of self and conceptions of security.

This research, confined as it is to one case study, thus suggests possibilities for a further research agenda that utilizes political passion to enquire into special relations in other situations and with other states, such as US relations with Batista’s Cuba and Chang-Kai Chek’s China, its close alliance with Israel, and the fraught relationship between Greece and Turkey. The Rushdie chapter likewise suggests the possibility for research on relations between host states and internal ethnic communities, such as The Netherlands and its Moroccan immigrant groups.<sup>6</sup>

### **Iran as a case study for political passion**

Iran’s revolution and democratic experiment offers an important case for re-theorizing US and British policy responses not only for its immediate and ongoing relevance to the Anglo-American grand strategy in the Gulf region, but for what it can reveal about the

construction of Britain and America's own passionately held positions in relation to radical Islam and Islamic-terrorism (a term first used in the Shia Iranian context). Importantly, the change that the relationship underwent – from passionate embrace to bellicose dislike - offers an ideal discursive structure to study the politics of passion, and map out the factors that affected the transition from political love to political strife. Additionally, it offers a significant case where the exchange of rhetorical salvos between the two sides – the 'representational force' used in the attempt to compel the other to behave differently – involved similar discursive charges of irrationality, barbarity and terrorism, a power politics of identity that in effect failed to affect the 'other' in the way intended, leading to long-term implications for their figuration not only of the 'other' but of the dangers embedded in the current international order (Bially-Mattern 2001:351). Approaching the issue in this manner may likewise offer a theoretically based answer to the question, why have they narrated the same identities vis-à-vis each other for so long? (Bially Mattern 2005:23).

Prevailing rationalist theories, both realist and liberal, for the breakdown in British and American relations with Iran explain it in terms of straight-forward power politics reflecting the fact that when principle (such as support of human rights) and interest conflict, the latter will triumph (Ganji 2006; Ikenberry 2001; Moravcsik 1997; Walt 1987; Waltz 1979). Such approaches take for granted that the anti-Western political-religious movement in Iran was anathema to the ideological framework of American and British democratic universalism, and thus hostile to their security and national interests. This *realpolitik* argument explains American and British responses in terms of Soviet-American regions of influence (Kuniholm 1990); the drying up of Iran as a significant arms market (Pollack 2004); the 'loss' of Iran as an important regional ally for the West and for Israel (Hoogland 1990); the growth in Iran's rapport with the PLO and adoption of its terrorist methods (Ledeen and Lewis 1996; O'Ballance 1997; Taheri 1987); the impact on OPEC and specifically the stability of the Gulf monarchies (Murphy 2003; Potter and Sick 1997); and the awkward non-aligned character of the revolution outside common proxy-war boundaries (Adib-Moghaddam 2006; Rubin 1981). The difficulty is that the explanatory power of this argument is insufficient: it fails to address

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<sup>o</sup> Appreciation goes to Dr. Jerrold Post for this observation.

the roots of the breakdown, why the new Iranian system was viewed with such fear and suspicion by the US and the UK, and why, in all the years since, no dialogue has been able to be cobbled together by states that share many material and geo-strategic interests.

Because the hostage crisis followed so soon after the changeover from the Shah to the Islamic leadership (just nine months later), and was itself such an extraordinary event, the significance of the initial stage of the revolution—labeled by contemporaneous studies, and the media as a ‘debacle’ (Ledeen and Lewis 1981) and ‘tragedy’ (Bill 1988, Sick 1984)—has largely been eclipsed. Yet, it was the broader implications of the revolution, not specifically the hostage crisis, that first drew Samuel Huntington’s attention as sparking ‘an intercivilisational quasi war...between Islam and the West (1996: 216). And although many analysts have taken subsequent catastrophes in the Middle East as the genesis for the negative Anglo-American discourse toward fundamentalist Islamism, such as the Beirut bombing, Iran-Contra, the first Gulf War, the first World Trade Centre bombing (Bennett 1994, Fuller 2002; McCrisken 2003; O’Ballance 1997), it was Iran’s revolution that constituted the first case in which Islam was politically incorporated into the structure of government, and served as the introduction of politico-Islamic imagery as a staple in TV newscasts beamed into American and British living-rooms (McAlister 2005). So interchangeable were Iran and Islam in fact, that, Richard Cottam observed, ‘by Iran, everyone understood, was meant the forces of Islamic political militancy’ (1990:285).

In an attempt to further understanding, rather than just explanation, a re-examination of Anglo-American discourses from the inception of the Iranian revolution through to the Salman Rushdie Affair a long decade later, appears overdue. Rather than presupposing democracy, the nexus of secularization with modernization, or security, to be objective facts, this study conceives of them as cultural constructions formed in the ongoing production of identity. For this purpose, the Iranian case offers an ideal magnifying glass, for it was perceived from the outset as threatening three fundamental and inter-related aspects of American and British identities. In rejecting the Anglo-American model of democracy, Iran was seen to threaten its universalist appeal: by incorporating Islam into nationalist politics, Iran was understood to be obscurantist, putting at risk secular liberal modernity as an internationalist creed; by aggressively

adopting a 'neither East nor West' policy and instead promoting Islamic community as an active alternative to Westernization (or world communism). It was construed as hostile to American and British policies for a world order based on economic liberalism and democratic peace (Huntington 1999; Ikenberry 2001:22). It is not the purpose of this study to ascertain the 'truth' or 'falsity' of these representations, but rather, to reveal how they enabled certain practices and policies that can throw light on Anglo-American behaviour.

The Iranian revolutionary period brings together several elements that critically affected discourses of democracy, modernity and security. First, it serves as an emblematic beginning point in the relationship of the United States and Britain towards political Islam as the Cold War wound down and a landscape of Islamic terror began to take shape. Not only is it a critical juncture in light of Halliday's description that, in combination with the hostage crisis, 'no single event in modern history since the outbreak of the Korean war in June 1950 has so concentrated US attention on a Third World crisis' (1990: 250), but it prompted the first War on Terror(ism) under President Ronald Reagan, an initiative that, though itself unspectacular, codified policies that would ballast and inform the second War on Terror under George W. Bush (C. Simpson 1995). Though both these developments are normally framed as security issues, they can be seen to reflect a shift in Western perceptions of the global order as no longer divided between the 'free world' and the 'communist' world.

This is not to suggest that Iran constituted the first or only case of democracy alternatively interpreted. Revolutionary Iran's importance stems from how it served to reconfigure the concept of Western democracy as an international project. Within the US and England themselves, democracy has undergone a history of interpretations often informed by significant events that have reflected issues of domestic as well as foreign concern. For the UK, the loss of the Suez Canal connoted in effect the final demise of the British Empire, an event that fundamentally changed British identity and self-imagery, and made possible the impulses that led to the important period marked by social democracy (Colls and Dodd 1986). For the United States, it was the war in Vietnam, which focused public doubt on the internal functioning of America's democratic model, with political and academic reformist repercussions that for a time painted American

exceptionalism as having reached its final demise (McCrisken 2003: Chapter 2; Oren 2004).<sup>7</sup> In both these cases, outside phenomena were seen as sites of contestation for what Oren has termed a ‘nationalist’ drive in both the US and UK to perfect their own democracies.

The case of Iran, by contrast, resulted in contestation over the discourses of British and American ‘international’ democratic identity, positioning it squarely in the realm of international relations. Iran’s metamorphosis, and Anglo-American responses to it, therefore raises the question of what exactly was being secured. What is clear is that Iran became not just another little Third World ‘other’: it represented its own, confusing, uncharted danger to Western democracy, complete with its own expansionist capability.

On a macro level, it can be argued that what was being secured was the hegemonic discourse of democracy—the North’s versus the South’s as a determinant of world order. The power of the former to ensure exposure for its discursive construction across a wide spectrum (through scholarly exchange, commercial relations, media reach and government clout) would generally be assumed to ensure that the discourse of the stronger and more powerful American and British entities would trump Iran’s on the world stage (Doty 1996; Karim 1997; Weldes, Laffey, et al 1999). Yet, Khomeini’s designs to export Islamic revolution succeeded in exposing to those in the Islamic *ummah* an image of the West as imperialist, exploitative, debauched, and godless, while at the same time inspiring new visions of a *Shari’a*-based alternative. This, combined with the support President Carter gave to the mujahedeen in Afghanistan, contributed to a new and resurgent politico-theocratic discourse and sense of identity in the Middle and South East. Though willing to partner with the US against the Soviets in Afghanistan, the success of that venture was imputed by the mujahedeen to a radicalized Islam – much like it had been in Iran. The genesis of the competition between the ‘the West’s’ and the ‘Islamic’ hegemonic discourses, therefore, can be seen to have its roots in the Iranian experience.

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<sup>7</sup> See, likewise, Caparoso 1978 on the wave of democratization in Africa and Latin America which led to discussions that questioned British and American (and other Western) representations of their own motives as benevolent. At issue, however were not the basic tenets of the universalist ideal but how capitalist greed was being allowed to over-ride this ideal. Finally, more moderate communist states, particularly Yugoslavia, offered at times the promise of socialist-capitalist structures worthy of emulation: see Oren 2004:17.

At the same time, norms of modernization needed securing. The parlay of Islam within new conceptualizations of democracy, in an atmosphere of freedom not only from the Shah's oppression but from interference by great powers, sparked a significant reformulation of the modern, which had until then preconditioned development and liberal governance on Western secular models. Iran's Islamic government represented an independent reading. As one example, the Islamic Republic's success in carrying out one of Ernst Gellner's two revolutions linked to 'the tidal wave of modernization', that is, the conversion of subjects into citizens (1992:11), remained (and remains) widely unrecognized by Anglo-American policy makers (see also Cottam 1986). Iran represented the first example—and an enduring one—of the return of religion into the formal structure of government, and a strong model of its legitimating power in modern nationalist politics and social organization. As Petito and Hatzopoulos (2003) point out, the reappearance of religion has re-introduced the 'clash of civilizations' debate, not as Huntington conceived it, but as a dissonance between the Anglo-American code and the needs of those nations whose own codes fail to mesh with it. This is reflected in the growing emphasis on 'authenticity' in third world development, where values associated with liberal democracy, seen to be the products of Western tradition, fit uncomfortably and are ill-suited to the cultures and needs of emerging states (Mirsepassi 2000).

Finally, representations of political Islam as 'dangerous' necessitated securing, a project that for over a decade entailed its close association with the 'subversions' of Iran. For example, symbols and concepts associated with such terms as 'fundamentalism', 'jihad' and Islamic terrorism, among others, derive their modern interpretive meanings from the experience of the US and the UK with Iran. Further, as other events unfolded which have enmeshed the Islamic world with the West, the process of constructing and reconstructing Islam has simultaneously and continuously impacted on representations of Iran. This study conceives the representation of Iran, therefore, as not only the first, but an ongoing incidence of what has become within the Anglo-American discourse, a conceptualizing of states and political movements characterized or influenced by radical Islam. The reification of this discursive pattern has produced tension and fear, an outcome that was not inevitable, as privileging different narratives in both British and American traditions could have evolved different grammars and different outcomes.

## Chapter 2

### Theorizing Political Passion

‘The possibility of constructing, as it were, a counter-theory of irrational politics is worth exploring’.

--Hans Morgenthau<sup>1</sup>

Over the past decade and a half, a growing body of scholarship has been drawn to analysis of state relations within close communities, and the discourses they use to secure solidarity, normative confluence, belonging, and shared views of international ordering (Adler and Barnett 1998; Bell 2006; Bially Mattern 2005, Buzan 2007; Campbell 1992; Dietz 2001; Frederking 2003; Levy 2003; Rumelilli 2004; Wendt 1992, among others). This reflects a departure from the theoretical dominance of power politics and material interests, and a growing acceptance that identity can act as a determinant of security communities (Bially Mattern 2005; Jepperson, Wendt and Katzenstein 1989). Using security relationships as a locus of examination, therefore, avoids difficulties that other state relationships might incur. In this study, special relationships, which inculcate the security dimension, are my focus: the Anglo-American special relationship, and the special relationship enjoyed by Iran with both the US and the UK at the time of the Shah. However, in exploring the rupture of the latter security community, patterns that marked closeness reveal themselves in chiaroscuro and mirrored in a relationship of hostility. Thus, I argue, a positive special relationship has its opposite in a negative one, characteristics of which escape definitions of pure power politics, and, inasmuch as they reflect aspects of felicitous security communities, can be studied using similar theoretical markers of identity.

Adler and Barnett (1998) argue, as do Janice Bially Mattern (2001:350), Buzan (2007), Ickenberry (2004:616-17), Lincoln (1989:9) and Rumelilli (2004) that security communities are characterized by a compelling identity of ‘we-ness’, in which practices of violence and power politics appear to become secondary to the application of trust and a discourse for resolving differences. This ‘we-ness’ evolves not just from the shared interests and mutually advantageous gains that elicit the choice to join together. It is reflective of the act of communion itself, and the discourse that elaborates what it means to be a member of a

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<sup>1</sup>Hans Morgenthau (1985) *Politics among Nations: The struggle for power and peace*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed., rev. Kenneth W. Thompson (New York: Knopf), p. 7.



specific 'in' society. Learning to be a member of the community is part of the shared process of establishing 'transnational...'cognitive regions'', with different members acting as 'teachers' at different times (Adler 1997; Adler and Barnett 1998:33). The shared discourse adopted by those on the inside therefore itself constructs and shapes the membership, since, as observed in social theory, discourse 'is not only an instrument of persuasion, operating along rational (or pseudo-rational) and moral (or pseudo-moral) lines, but it is also an instrument of sentiment evocation' (Lincoln 1989:8). The discourses of identity that secure those inside, work to empower the group's members against mutually perceived threats on the outside – dangers that are socially constructed in opposition to their shared norms (Doty 1996). Friendship, therefore, can only be truly established with a state (or states) that shares fundamental similarities of identity, or which chooses to so define its interests that they mirror those of the other state in critical respects (Kernberg 1976; Post 1986). In psychological terms, this type of relationship has been labeled narcissistic (Freud 1971:526). In a hostile relationship, shared discourses likewise construct a 'cognitive region' and often in narcissistic forms, though in an atmosphere of continual suspicion and alienation. These negative special relationships are oriented toward rhetorical conflict maintenance rather than peace-building..

Yet gaps remain in our comprehension of how group composition (and interaction) affects long-term policy-making, or reflects processes and heuristics outlined in political psychology (Levy 2003; cf Dietz 2001; Lebow 1981:chapter 5; Neumann 2004; Weber 1995). Important investigation has gone some way in analyzing the effect of external crisis on inter-community behaviours and its impact on re-assigning meanings to signifiers of self and other in the discourses of foreign policies that ensue (Ross 2006; Tuathail 1996; Weldes 1999). There is less analysis on the effect of internal crisis on state friendship. Bially Mattern has investigated the rejection of the discourse of community by both members, and the re-fastening of the discourse of we-ness through representational force with effects at the leadership, bureaucratic and public levels (2001; 2005). She does not address the intended rupture of a security community by one of its members, the inadequacy of representational force to refasten norms and preferences to the special relationship, or the impact this has on the need and ability to secure the identity of the one (or ones) that remain.

By looking at the simplest form of international community, that of a special relationship between two states, I investigate first, how the breakdown in the shared perception of mutualized identity, that 'extension between self and other' (Wendt 1992: 386), becomes an issue of identity security as one party adopts an alternative discourse of norms

and international ordering; second, how this impacts the ensuing representational politics of re-signifying friend as foe. The process of re-securing identity can be deconstructed to reveal both 'rational' and 'irrational' responses to new contingencies. In the realm of the 'rational', the responses by the 'jilted' state, for example, might include redrawing the boundary defining self from other, re-signifying the danger represented by the other, and disciplining the discourses of self so that the new practices and meanings that constitute identity are produced as an apparently natural consequence of, and consistent with, prior preferences and perceptions (Walsh 2003). However, observation suggests that often responses are highly emotionalized as the 'jilted' state – finding itself rejected, along with the norms and other shared values of 'we-ness' that contributed to its self-definition – perceives the need for immediate and mobilizing self-defense. Protection of primary norms, such as honour, legitimacy and credibility will trump material interests until the danger has been discursively overcome. These responses, drawing on primary norm protection rather than 'objective' or 'material' self interest, may not, according to the lexicon of power politics, be 'rational' (even though they may be rationalized as such), though in the language of identity politics, they constitute a (subjective) claim to survival.

Closer examination reveals this is only half the picture; actions by states within what appears to be a felicitous normative community (such as a security community or special relationship) likewise may reveal subjectivities in policy. Extreme commitment to 'we-ness' will at times promote tolerance by one state for internal inconsistencies or threatening behaviours in the other which, if practiced by other states, would not be overlooked (Ikenberry 2004:617); the 'blind' trust shared by 'in' states may also lead to a relaxing of foreign policy practices in regards to the other that can open vulnerabilities in intelligence gathering and security measures (Marcus 2003). The question arises therefore, are such special relationships in fact 'good'? Scheff and Retzinger, in their study of emotions and violence, suggest that 'engulfing' relationships that demand conformity and identity 'fusion' on the part of one or both parties, might appear outwardly strong but are in fact suffocating, and therefore, contain the seeds of strife (1991:15). Similarly, a relationship of enmity in which two states are involved in a spiral of negative rhetoric and rejection, is in fact still an enmeshing liaison with ongoing social bonds, but it is one of isolation, constantly vulnerable and threatened by the other.

Although post-structural explanations offer a partial picture, they do not fully explain policies in which states apparently ignore their own best material interests or codes of practice for the sake of promoting the sentiments of *summum bonum* or *summum malum*.

Political psychology goes some way in explaining this conundrum in that motivated bias (that is, emotionality) at the decision-making level has been observed to be common at times ‘involving high stakes and consequential actions that might affect important values’ (Levy 2003:264). The result is judgments that ‘are often rationalizations for political interests or unacknowledged psychological needs’ such as fear, guilt and desire (Jervis 1985:25). The study of motivational bias, however, has been confined to the agent level at particular decision-making points, and has not been tracked as an aggregate affecting and becoming embedded in long-term policy orientations (Ross 2006).

I therefore suggest a broader theory to include the emotional. The ability of the constructivist method to ‘defamiliarize’ the familiar by throwing new light on meanings and practices, offers a useful approach for the analysis of emotions’ impact on those same processes (Bleiker and Hutchison 2008; Ross 2006:198). However, tracking emotions cannot mirror norm analysis, since as Ross argues, emotions are ‘fugitive’ and hence difficult to pin down in regards to how much control they exert and to what unexpected objects (memories, social habits) they may become attached. It is my contention that constructivism contains the tools to address such ambiguity, since, although norms and emotions are different, norms can likewise function in unpredictable ways and perpetuate perplexing combinations – particularly in relation to identity and normative change, challenges that constructivism has met (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998; Ross 2006; Seliktar 2000:3,6).

It is my intent to investigate the social construction of meaning through discourse analysis not only to focus on specific moments within the decision-making process, but to situate them in a broader decision-making framework over time – thereby illustrating how the parts sequentially fit into the whole, and vice versa. My purpose is to unpick the role of sentiment from that of norms within the discourses of amity/enmity and to illustrate how it contributes to the construction of estrangement and the policy formations that follow, in this case specifically in a binary relationship. A useful framework upon which I draw is the concept of political narcissism, which reflects the self orientation of the state, and enables emotionality to be contrasted with cognitive processes. In so doing, I argue that political passion as expressed through special relationships informs the power politics of identity in two guises: as *political love* and *political strife*.<sup>2</sup> These opposite discursive formations are

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<sup>2</sup> I have adopted ‘love’ and ‘strife’ from the fifth century BCE Greek philosopher Empedocles, who described all social processes as emanating from two opposing forces, *Love (philotēs)*, which unites, and *Strife (eris)*, which divides. See Bruce Lincoln (1989) *Discourse and the Construction of Society: Comparative studies of myth, ritual and classification* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 176 ft. 9.

not confined to moments of crisis, but are instead, long-term continuities that function as rhetorical strategies of inclusion or exclusion.

I develop these points in three sections. The first discusses state identity and state relations using both the theory and method of constructivism and discourse. The second proposes a theory of political passion, specifically in the context of a special relationship, highlighting the political impact of two families of relational emotions: shame and pride; and draws on cognition in political psychology as well as the study of narcissism. The third suggests a methodology for studying the role and effect of political passion in response to identity (in)security in special relationships.

### **Discourse, Agency and Part-Whole Analysis**

In problematizing the role of passion in interstate relations for the purpose of understanding Anglo-American constructions of Iran (and vice versa) over time, I go beyond the ‘hermeneutics of recovery’ in which hidden meanings are made intelligible, to focus on social structures in which meaning is constructed through discursive practices such as negotiation and decision-making (Howarth et al 2002:129). To this end, I locate analysis on an anti-foundationalist epistemology. I recognize that events or the existence of objects as real-world phenomena exist ‘external...to thought’, but that truth is contingent (Campbell 1997:7; Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 8,10). To discover processes of truth creation involves denaturalizing the practices and meanings that have become fixed in representations of self and other by recognizing them to be reified and socially constructed. At the same time, as Kowert notes, constructivism ‘insists on the importance of agents as well as structures’, how they see themselves and how their world views shape national behaviour (Kowert 1998/9:2). This last point is critical, since it is an agentic contribution (emotionality) to the normative structures that is of interest here<sup>3</sup> (Fierke 2004:484).

Further, to discover how certain meanings and practices come to inform specific state relationships requires investigation into how presumptions and habits of thinking become embedded in state identity – and how resistant to rational decision-making that might make them. In other words, if state identity becomes defined through reified practices, identity security, by implication, would appear to become increasingly important. A moratorium on questioning and challenging accepted truths would suggest the need for a discourse that

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<sup>3</sup> This stands in stark contrast to the behaviour outlined in ‘agent-driven’ utilitarian and instrumental approaches, see J.G. March and Johan P. Olsen 1989 ‘The Institutional Dynamics of International Political Orders’, *International Organization*, Vol. 52 (4) Autumn : pp.943-969 .

justifies marginalizing alternative voices and interests, while increasingly disciplining domestic perceptions of the danger of the inter-subjective space. In this critical theoretical approach, the 'egoistic' state that proceeds toward self-protection through cold rationality, as understood in realism and liberalism, instead reveals itself to be a 'passionate' state, risking its self interests and inter-relational position for the sake of defending subjectively embedded truths, even if – or particularly when – still justifying its moves as rational. The emotionalized construction of truth, therefore, would appear under certain circumstances to be contributory to a politics of passion. What interests me here is to determine when and how a politics of passion over-rides balanced politics to become critical to the conduct of foreign affairs. If and when those circumstances prevail, how does a politics of passion then affect the construction of such concepts as democracy, freedom, and danger?

### *The state of the scholarship*

Theorizing the politics of representation, that is, the social rules that give meaning to material facts and structures through the constitutive power of language and text, has drawn from an array of methods and approaches developed in various fields including psychology, sociology, anthropology, history and linguistics. Interpretation of what constitutes the ontology of power politics is as variable as the labels used and the methods adopted, despite there being claims of universalist intent (Doty 1996:168; Guillaume 2002:12). Indeed, a plethora of nomenclatures have been adopted, depending on the disciplinary roots of the practitioner, or the influences adopted (Ashley 1989; Bakhtin 1981; Bially Mattern 2001, 2005; Checkel 2004; 1998; Der Derian 1997; Dietz 2001; Doty 1996; Frederking 2005; Guillaume 2002; Howarth et al. 2002; Laclau and Mouffe 1985; Seliktar 2000; Weldes 1999; Wendt 1992, among many others)<sup>†</sup>.

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<sup>†</sup> Criticism has been rife concerning the lack of focus on research and method in this endeavour at re-evaluating international relations scholarship. One criticism derives from discomfort with what is seen as relativism in post-positivist, a-causal approaches to international relations, see John A Vasques (1995) 'The Post-Positivist Debate: Reconstructing Scientific Enquiry and International Relations Theory after Enlightenment's Fall' in Ken Booth and Steve Smith, eds., *International Relations Theory Today* (Pittsburgh: Pennsylvania State University Press); 17-240; for ripostes to this view see W. Connolly (1991) *Identity/Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox* (Ithica, NY: Cornell Univ. Press), p. 174; James Der Derian (1997) 'Post Theory: Ethics in International Relations', in Doyle, Michael W. and G. John Ikenberry, eds., *New Thinking in International Relations* (Oxford: Westview Press), p. 58.). Another criticism, stems from the perception that it is 'fuzzy', without rigorous empirical methods or testable criteria, see Friedrich V. Kratochwil and John G. Ruggie (1986), 'International Organization: A state of the art or an art of the state,' *International Organization*, Vol. 40 (4) Autumn, pp. 753-76.. For discussion see J. Milliken (1999) 'The Study of Discourse in International Relations: A Critique of Research and Methods', *European Journal of International Relations*, 5 (2), pp. 225-254, and Maja Zehfuss (2001) *Constructivism in International Relations: The Politics of Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

My theoretical approach runs close to Millikin's (1999) three 'commitments' of a generalized (and in some sense hierarchically ordered) discourse analysis: 1. 'Discourses as systems of signification' in which 'people construct the meaning of things' in a relational structure of signs; 2. 'discourse productivity', in which 'discourses define knowledge' and authorize certain truth regimes and their spokespersons while silencing others; and 3. 'the play of practice', in which discourses are seen to be constantly re-articulated, and hence, are 'historically contingent'. (which suggests that the 'constructivist turn' offers a useful dimension to international relations study through engagement with subjugated discourses, not just dominant ones').<sup>5</sup>

What emerges is the need to problematize that which others have taken for granted, assumed, or reified as exogenous to what are subjective contributors to relations between states (Ashley 1989; Campbell 1992; Connolly 1991; Foucault 1980; among many others). Looking at structures and practices as endogenous variables enables analysis of how identities inform interests and behaviours, which Jepperson, Wendt and Katzenstein point out is 'a characteristic blind spot in the rationalist vision' (1989:66).

Developing theories that include those subjectivities in international relations is gaining traction, its current hurdle being to re-introduce emotionality back into a scholarship that has, since the behaviouralist and realist turns, been dominated by positivist approaches (and biases) (Marcus 2003: 183,185). Yet, as Crawford (2000) observed in her groundbreaking 'The Passion of World Politics' in *International Security*, 'Theories of international politics and security depend on assumptions about emotion that are rarely articulated and which may not be correct' (116). Emotions, she contends, are 'ubiquitous' and 'implicit', a view backed up by Hill, who states 'Feeling and intuition are just as vital attributes of decision-makers as thinking and sense-based observation' (2003:116). Nonetheless, as a recent reprise of the subject by Bleiker and Hutchison point out, scholarship on emotions in world politics is still thin, there being little discussion of methodology or systematic inquiry into critical issues, despite general acknowledgement in the academe after the appearance of Crawford's paper (and one by Jonathan Mercer delivered to the ISA in 1996), that it was a subject of significance (2008:116; see also Fierke 2004; Linklater 2004; Mercer 2005).<sup>6</sup>

## Emotions in International Relations

<sup>5</sup> For an alternative paradigm of commitments, namely, 'Semiology, Genealogy and Dromology', see James Der Derian 1997, 'Post-Theory: Ethics in International Relations', op cit., pp.63-34.

<sup>6</sup> Bleiker and Hutchison's citations, however, indicate that there has been significantly greater interest in how emotions impact IR in the intervening eight years (see particularly footnotes 39 and 40, 2008 op cit.: 123).

Why study political passion as a separate or 'subset' process in the relations of states? After all, normative theory has until now generally defined perceptions as incorporating emotional propensities as much as values and historical experience in the construction of identity. The best reason for adopting such an approach is that it offers the ability to explain puzzling actions of states that don't fit within either a realist/liberal paradigm or a straightforward normative one, and therefore, remain unsatisfactorily explained. Critically, understanding emotional positioning can throw light on why certain identity roles or norms are privileged over others, that is, why states make certain choices and not others at any given point. By examining the role of passion in politics, states can be understood to act for reasons that reflect other continuities within their makeup – and which are there whether we as scholars choose to recognize them or not. Just as the normative relationship to the ontology of international relations analysis was obscured in the period predating the post-positivist debate by the proposition that reason could be separated from perception, so too with the emotional content of both international relations practice and theory (Smith 1992:490). It is not just that emotional influences should be focused on more thoroughly, but, to paraphrase Smith, the more problematic is the premise that the subject is unavoidably emotionalized. The bearers of agency (however the debate on agency evolves and however agency is configured in any given state) have bodies and minds with capacities 'that interact, and which in politics will always exceed the agency exercised by rational subjects' (Coole 2005:125).

One important observation must be made here: emotional motivation is a frequent attribution in international relations, but tends to be attributed to 'others', particularly Middle Eastern, and other Third World or 'southern' 'others', in contrast to the 'self' (Doty 1996; Kabbani 1986; Karim 1997). Atkin observes this of the perceptions that informed US-Soviet relations: '[I]rrationality is credited too often with too much influence in tsarist and Soviet foreign policy...because beliefs in certain irrational motives is viewed as a criterion for disapproval of the policies themselves' (1990:101). This itself is an emotional response, as Said makes clear in his landmark works investigating normative and emotionalized constructions in history and international relations (1979; 1997). What remains under-studied is the emotional content of political representation and power relations as a generalized factor, and not just as the expressions of certain cultures and peoples that 'cannot discern between reality and fantasy' (Peretz 1984, quote in Said 1997: xxiii).

Classical political philosophers including Hobbes, Hume and more recently, Morgenthau, grappled with the way reason and the passions interacted; yet, the view that the emotions were not only ephemeral and hard to track, but detrimental to reason and in need of

control, has dominated modern approaches in international relations (Bleiker and Hutchison 2008:118; Finnemore and Sikkink 1989:911; Freud 1971:635; Marcus 2003: 184-5; Mercer 1995:1; Tuck 1989). Emotions, as Bleiker and Hutchison point out, have traditionally been perceived as temperamental and 'feminine', and an expression of the more primitive politics of underdeveloped societies (Bleiker and Hutchison 2008: 116; Doty 1996; Marcus 2003:189) What is more, 'Emotions can be politically dangerous and undesirable in politics...[b]ut to pretend that affect and empathy do not exist is to miss fundamental dynamics of political life' (Finnemore and Sikkink 1989:916). Mercer condemns realism and constructivism, as, for the most part, eliminating emotion on grounds that it is 'irrational', and in particular, accuses constructivists as interpreting cognitive beliefs (norms) as 'free of affect' (2005:97).<sup>7</sup>

Like both Crawford and Fierke, I see a link between norms and emotions, in that they share aspects of being socially derived, are variable across cultures and time, and are able to be studied primarily through their articulation in discourse (Crawford 2000:130-133; Fierke 2004: 480). Yet emotions and norms, though reflexive and entwined, are different. Norms, according to Finnemore and Sikkink, who draw on a rich heritage of norm-based scholarship, are rules of appropriate or 'proper' behaviour according to the judgments of a given community. They are derived from experience, affected by learning, are constitutive of the society in which they are a part, come in various strengths depending on how fully they are acknowledged, the strongest being internalized to the point that they are taken for granted. Norms are seen as 'good' – there being no 'bad' norms from the vantage point of those promoting them (1989: 891-892). Norms, therefore, are purely socially derived phenomena: they are cognitively 'created' products and productive of inter-subjective interaction.

Emotions, on the other hand, are biological and cognitive, as well as socially derived. Instinctual and physical attributes attend the expression of emotion – quickened heartbeat, perspiration, sudden laughter – which do not accompany the expression of norms, although the process of protecting threatened norms can inspire strong emotions (Crawford 2000:126-7). What is more, emotions are understood to provide the force and vitality to motivate action and make choices – providing the impetus to enact normative behaviours, for example, or choose between competing requirements of power politics. What is more, Marcus cites neuroscientific studies that establish 'the central role of emotions in the resolution of moral

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<sup>7</sup> I have not explored the gendered contributions to the examination of emotionality, which undoubtedly have brought a rich perspective to the study of perception and response, but which have done so without offering sufficient explanatory power to the decision-making processes of states in crisis to be included here, nor have they offered a method to track emotionality in decision-making, see Bleiker and Hutchison 2008, op cit: 118..



dilemmas' (2003:187). Finally, Fierke states: 'A socially constructed view of emotions places *meaning* at the core of experience, and language as the place where boundaries are drawn, whether between individuals or between collective entities, such as states' (2004:489, emphasis in original). The difficulty in assessing and theorizing emotions, therefore, lies not in arguing their importance, but in their seeming inability to be easily analyzed, their multi-level inspiration and reflexivity, and their elusiveness in fulfilling the positivist requirement of showing how they contribute to obtaining outcomes through falsifiable means (Mercer 2005:98). As Marcus admits, 'the terms "emotion" and "reason" remain notoriously confused, even in contemporary psychology' (2003:187). Nevertheless, there seems a growing consensus that emotion and reason operate as collective capacities, rather than being opposed forces, and that 'to reason requires emotion, not only to recruit its abilities but to execute its conclusions' (Marcus 2003:206; McDermott 2004).

To recognize that emotion is endemic in rational thinking and decision-making enables a further claim: rational and irrational thought are themselves constituted as such and therefore, it makes no sense to distinguish between rational and irrational, except as reflections of social rules. The behavioural revolution, and its emphasis on measurement privileged preferences over process, lending credence to the argument that rational preferences were those that privileged self-interested outcomes (with little regard to how they were obtained) over preferences for strategy (for example, acting with empathy) (Mercer 2005:98).<sup>8</sup> The return to norms and the growing interest in what role emotions play in policy formation and motivation, suggests that 'process' – how decisions are reached, what values and motivations are in play, how the argument is framed, and whether the process is fair and marked with respect or disregard – now appears to matter (ibid). As both rational and irrational are contingent terms, reason in decision-making must be viewed as composed of both.

### *Identity, hegemony and emotion*

In shifting the focus away from the positivist study of power politics as an expression of rational self help (or the maximization of preferences), and by association, away from the view of all actors as being alike, an understanding of relations among states can be framed in terms of identity, the canvas upon which norms and emotions assume meaning (Jepperson et al. 1999; Moravcsik 1997; Waltz 1979). Approaching the interaction between states as

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<sup>8</sup> Habermas' 'communicative action' which emphasises empathy, and moral discourse, was a significant departure from this view; for discussion see 'Forum on Habermas', especially Thomas Diez and Jill Steans (2005) 'A useful dialogue: Habermas and International Relations', *Review of International Studies* 31 (1), January, pp. 127-140.

processes of constituting collective meanings does not deny the concept of states as privileging the security of the self, or of states as egoistic entities, as in fact, it enables introduction of concepts such as narcissism and emotion into the discussion. Rather it denies the reification of the state as an entity defined by self-help, 'in the sense of treating it as something separate from the practices by which it is produced and sustained' (Wendt 1992:147).

Additionally, it orients the focus toward apprehending states as complex entities in a relational system, which enables a view of interstate relations as governed by endogenously constituted structures that vary with every relationship (Ibid:135). Relationships are transformative based on the meanings associated with the practices of the 'other' as much as on the meanings that figure the self. Jepperson, Wendt and Katzenstein label this the 'cultural environment' and observe: 'When states engage in egoistic foreign policies...more is going on than simply attempting to realize selfish goals. They are also instantiating and reproducing a particular conception of who they are'—and one might add, what they want, and who they interpret the other as being and wanting (1999:340-341). Thus relations of friendship or enmity are constituted through 'systems of meaningful practice that form the identities of subjects and objects', that is, through systems of discourse that express perception (Howarth et al. 2002:3-4; Wendt 1992).

Identity, rooted in the Latin, *idem*, meaning 'the same', but which in fact draws equally from *identidum*, meaning 'repeatedly', involves 'a repeated pointing at a thing or person to confirm that it remains the same through space and time. It is reassurance, but also, a constraint' (Mount 2007:21). Identity construction is a continuous productive process that is cognitive, though in drawing meanings from the actions of others and one's own responses to those actions, it is also behavioural (Wendt 1992:137).

Seen in this light, representational practices reveal themselves to be political acts that construct identity (in this case, the collective self, its motivations, aspirations, morals, in sum, its 'personality'), as well as empowering certain actors to articulate and manage that 'reality' (Fierke 2004: 484; Weldes et al. 1999:17-19). Within that 'reality', that which is not the self is foreign. The boundary around the self is the beginning of the other, and operates as a discursive field (Campbell 1992:8; Connolly 1991:201). How the self is perceived and the boundary represented, is as much governed by the self's subjugated meanings as by any actual moves by the other; thus 'national security depends on national identity' (Campbell 1992:253; quote in Kowert 1999:1; Wendt 1992:137). The process, however, is reflexive, as the language of identity is that of both perception and self-perception (Coole 2006:416). This

inter-subjectivity enables states to expect patterns of behaviour from others, whether in terms of friendship or strife (Bially Mattern 2005:51).

The attempt to maintain 'sameness', however, is a precarious undertaking: socialization requires internalizing new circumstances, adjusting interests and re-assessing the motivations and actions of 'others' as well as the 'self'. Identity becomes entwined with processing change as well as the language employed to represent it. Power resides in the ability to dominate discursive representations of 'sameness' in the context of change. This suggests a multi-level process of negating the external other as a threat to the contingent identity of the self (the state), while ignoring and/or disciplining internal differences which are perceived to constitute a risk to the collective ideation of legitimacy (Connolly 1991:201).

Establishing hegemony requires instantiating widely accepted meanings associated with the self (and other) that act 'persuasively', so the discourse can be adopted as 'true' (Lincoln 1989:8; Howarth et al. 2002:3-4). The tautology that characterizes the process of naturalization perpetuates the power of the discourse. 'The ordinary grammar employed in contemporary discourses, whether of national leader, journalists or social scientists, constitutes a forgetting of struggles, which, if they had ended in other ways, might have engendered other grammars and categories' (Shapiro 1988:92). Discourses of dominance thrive best on fixed meanings and presumptions that perpetuate the hegemonic narrative with a minimum of negotiation, emotion or alternative memory. Dominant discourses are not, therefore, easily responsive to change, and when faced with circumstances that de-couple accepted signifiers (and their associated truths) from previously 'fixed' meanings, will experience turbulence and agitation (Jervis 1976). Crises are moments of discomfort in which social bonds are threatened. These are moments of revelation: hegemonized signifiers are contested and denaturalized, and habits of meaning and practice are shed as emotion focuses cognition on learning new meanings and practices (Marcus 2003:218). Shifts in the discourse take place until new, collectively acceptable meanings emerge, forgetting takes place, and a new hegemonic discourse prevails.

Investigating these 'nodal points', when in effect the veil has been lifted from the tightly controlled visages of states, offers the international relations scholar a glimpse into the many alternative faces and expressions – the competing meanings and practices – at play in state behaviour. These then offer the opportunity to distill out the components of action and reaction, which are perpetuated during the periods in-between.

*Passion and representation*

As states are both actors on the international stage, and collectivities of individuals, the language of international relations frequently anthropomorphizes them as having individual-like characteristics. This has enabled scholars to represent imagined communities and national entities as responding in ways analogous to human actors in that they are seen to manifest identity and various of its characteristics, such as intentionality, agency, fear, and the ability to engage in 'special relationships' (Robin 2004; Wendt 1992:167, ff 21). For the purpose of this investigation, the agent/structure duality is less important than the fact that together they constitute the field in which discourses are articulated, beliefs are embedded, sentiment is felt and projected, habits of mind are established and institutionalized, and policy emerges (Selikar 2000:2-3).<sup>9</sup> It is immaterial to this investigation whether the state operates as a person; what is critical is that both agents and structures operate as conduits of political decisions and the processors of their outcomes (Coole 2005:136; Weldes 1999:17-19). A second debate regards how much policy at any given time is dependent on one person, or a small group of persons projecting and imposing norms and subjective motivations on the state, group of states or international order, and therefore, how individual action and its ideational and emotional components impact intersubjective analysis. Fierke contends: 'The emotions may remain disguised in individuals, but to be translated into political agency and identity, they must be put into words by leaders, who give meaning to the individual experience by situating it in a larger context of group identity' (2004: 484); this debate is closer to the questions raised in this investigation (Bisely 2004:63; Kissinger 1957:chapter 3).

What appears to be less a subject of debate is the nature of state agency as disembodied and rational regardless of the delimitations or allowances understood within its definition. Because discourse as a reflection and expression of agency is a relatively recent way to engage analysis of power politics, the nature of agentic representation, particularly over the long term, has been largely excluded from enquiry (Levy 2003:273; Mercer 2005). This stems partially from the need to situate the argument for a discursive approach in the same terms as used in positivist reasoning so as to ensure an even playing field – particularly in the North American academy where 'conventional' constructivism prevails (Frederking 2003:262). Wendt's caution in premising his case for constructivism in 'Anarchy is What

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<sup>9</sup> For discussion, see 'Forum on the state as a person' in *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 30 (2), April 2004, pp 255-316; specifically Iver Neumann (2004) 'Beware of Organicism: The narrative self of the state', *op.cit.*, pp. 259-268; and Alexander Wendt (2004) 'The State as Person in International Theory', *op.cit.*, pp. 289-316; and D. Coole (2005) 'Rethinking Agency: A phenomenological approach to embodiment and agentic capacities', *Political Studies*, vol. 53 (1), March; p. 135.

States Make of It' is such an attempt. His compellingly and painstakingly laid out argument that identities and meanings are produced and productive of ongoing relations between states - what he terms 'inter-subjective social relations', with 'subjective' used in its thinnest meaning as the self distinguished for rational reasons from others – is designed to staunch any doubt that identities are constructed through reasoned processes, and in fact, the entire edifice he builds is a 'positivist' argument for an alternative way of understanding state action and choice (Wendt 1992).

In fact, throughout the variations of constructivism, what is 'assume[d] are...communicatively *rational* agents constructing ...social rules through the performance of speech acts' (Checkel 2004:230; quote in Frederking 2003:363, emphasis mine). Within the modern tradition of privileging the 'rational actor' paradigm, the lexicon of international relations analysis, both rationalist and constructivist, has been largely sanitized of emotional contributors such as greed, cruelty, envy, revenge or affection to decision-making or norm-creation, due to the perception that they lack legitimacy within a rational dialectic, or worse, undermine it (Mercer 2005:92; cF Fierke 2004). 'The result is a politics without passions or principles, which is hardly the politics of the world in which we live,' (Finnemore and Sikkink 1989:916).

The general exception is fear, 'a symptom of pervasive conflict and political unhappiness', which is perceived as a 'rational' emotion in realism in that it is attributable to and productive of threat (Bleiker and Hutchison 2008:199; Crawford 2000:122-22; quote in Robin 2004:3; Ross 2006:3)<sup>10</sup>. Yet compared to its fiery philosophical antecedents expressed through the vim and vigour of Hobbes, Clausewitz, Hume, and others, fear has become mundane as an idea in the hands of rationalist literature. Having been denaturalized of its passion, fear represents the political fiction of emotional un-engagement by 'respectable society' (Arendt 1963:153; Robin 2004:3) Balzacq probes this dilemma in an interview with Robert Jervis in October 2004:

**B:** 'Fear can transform a gesture into a cheap signal and thereby elicits unexpected answers. However, many students of security dilemmas often overlook the emotional variable. In contrast, you have recognized that dynamics of misperception are also driven by emotions, yet devoted little time to the scrutiny of such pervasive factors. Why?'

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<sup>10</sup> Cf Corey Robin (2004), *Fear: The history of a political idea* (Oxford: Oxford University Press; Judith Shklar, (1989) 'The Liberalism of Fear' in Nancy L. Rosenblum (ed.), *Liberalism and the Moral Life* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press).

J: 'You are quite right. *Perception and Misperception* completely put aside emotions: indeed one chapter denies the importance of wishful thinking. This was a major blunder. ...Over a number of years I came to see the importance of emotions and what psychologists call 'motivated bias',....I would very much like to produce a study that shows how emotions and cognitions interact in politics, but at this point the challenge is simply too great.' (Balzacq 2004: 564-565).

### *Love and hate in relations between states*

Harold Lasswell argued compellingly that world politics were imbued with 'emotional insecurities' (1965:57), and indeed, history is littered with cases where 'interests' 'rationalized' emotionally driven actions – often promoting practices and meanings unballasted by objective gains or even consistent practice. Passionate constructions are inextricably enmeshed in discourses that made possible emotionalized decisions and action; one needs but name Suez, Watergate, Iran-Contra. The still largely unexamined presupposition in modern international relations study is the insistence on a Cartesian dualism that presupposes a separation of mind from body, 'rational' from subjective, anchoring the ontology of state decision-making to reason (Alford 1997:13; Coole 2005).

Diana Coole, in her work on the role of corporeality in political agency, argues that simultaneous with any rational register, a somatic, pre-cognitive dimension operates and informs intersubjective relationships (ibid: 128). Campbell, reflecting this outlook, though shirking the term 'emotion', constructs a 'mythology of evil' in which difference is apprehended in a variety of interpretations that are employed to 'discipline' the self in relation to the other and which can be understood to be emotional (Campbell 1998). Campbell amply illustrates that reason is contingent on the replay of historicist fears re-mythologized in discursive economies – that is, as passionate constructions.

Political emotion can be understood then as the shared, somatic, pre-cognitive response of the collective in socially constructing a national imaginary. Emotions, which impact the collective well-being of society, whatever their rationale, can be analyzed as motivators of intent and action, and thereby as having a politics of their own in that they inform the wielding of power, leadership encounters, the valuation of norms, and so forth. They can serve as both an instrument and an effect of social rule making. On the margins of the literature one notes that just as fear is an emotion that has been institutionalized within the framework of international relations analysis, 'trust', its opposite, has too. And if fear and trust are acknowledged, then why not kindness, guilt, anger, maliciousness – as these and

countless other emotions impact on representation and the discursive profiles of self and other. To apprehend an emotion such as fear as an institution of politics enables the naturalization of political 'fear' (evil) – and 'political goodness' (virtue) – with concepts of morality and reason. In effect, if reason (as objective fact) is linked to goodness (virtue), it is purportedly fastened to morality (Kennan, 'Long Telegram', 1946, in Buhite 1997: 31). However, morality, a constitutive norm perceived as so much more 'fixed' than an emotion (such as fear or love), is itself relative, as to some, 'morality and loyalty are one', to others morality is 'reduced to power' (Alford 1997:13,15). MacIntyre has argued 'there is no rationality independent of tradition, "no view from nowhere", and no set of rules or principles that will commend themselves to all, independent of their conception of the good' (Thomas 2003:31).

Political passion as the expression of a politics of morality can be seen, therefore, like morality, to have its 'good' and 'evil' sides – political love (a solidary relationship) and political alterity (a relationship of strife) as its Janus faces, and like Janus faces, they are linked. Political love, as much as political strife (hate, anger, fear), is instantiated around the perception of threat to the social bonds linking self to other. How the threat is defined, its nature and attributes, feeds into the moral design of its antidote (Robin 2004:16). Acting 'lovingly' becomes a tool to create political friends and influence their governments – an expression of morality if virtue be understood to fulfill the Puritan text that God helps those who help themselves - in Waltz's terms, the exercise of self-help. Thus Robin argues there is always a layer under the moral dimension, that of politics, since recognizing that which is moral is a product of historical perspective, presumption, reaction and practice, that is, of discourse.

As passion and reason are symbiotic, both are agentic resources in the instrumentalization of power. If in the discursive construction of self, the emotional content of identity prevails, the representation of truth that ensues is a politics of passion. Yet, how to distill out the passion from the reason? First, state behaviour cannot be clinically tracked like that of individuals, and group behaviour has its own characteristics; but it has been argued that 'by conducting an intensive analysis of individual cases that rest on clinical evidence rather than on common-sense impressions, psychoanalysis tells us something about the inner workings of society itself, in the very act of turning its back on society and immersing itself in the individual unconscious. Every society reproduces its culture—its norms, its underlying assumptions, its modes of organizing experiences—in the individual, in terms of personality' (Lasch 1968:34). Lakoff, working off this approach through analysis of language, sees the

state as having personality, its identity, its self-image being reproductions of its collective self (Lakeoff 2004). Second, Fierke argues that by using a levels of analysis approach, 'it is possible to go beyond...treating groups as if they were individuals' because the social construction of the political, expressed through language, is larger than the sum of its parts – it is not just 'the sum of individual experience in a context' but the impact and intermingling of the 'physical, psychological and political' in the language of politics (2004:483). This idea is picked up by Adorno, who, in analysing the German relationship with democracy wrote: 'The individual's narcissistic drives, for which a callous world promises less and less satisfaction, which nonetheless persist undiminished as long as civilization refuses them so much, find a substitute gratification in their "identification with the whole"' (quote in Hartmann, ed. 1987:121-122). This has two implications for the study of emotionalized policy within special relationships. It suggests, firstly, that the part-whole analysis of discourse enables examination of contextualized individual articulations as contributors, as well as responders, to political language creation in the construction of short and long-term policy; and secondly, it enables an understanding to emerge of the political context of special relationships, and the political personality special relationships have as articulations of the states that compose them.

The conscious creation of (or entering into) special relationships constructs the blurring of the self/other boundary as felicitous, as the security of each 'self' is identified as good for the security of both. This is a reflexive act, since as Lasch explains, 'the narcissist cannot identify with someone else without seeing the other as an extension of himself' (Lasch 1978:86). This shared approach to threat which in terms of policy is understood to be balanced through a closeness of other mutual 'goods', including trust, transparency, communication and goodwill, constitutes what I label 'political love' (Stephens 2006). Willing to overlook and rationalize indiscretions and inconsistencies for the sake of 'the larger *summum bonum* toward which all political agents should strive', political love can be understood as standing in opposition to political fear, in that they both contribute to the production of identity and vision of order (Dunn 1996:46). In Judith Shklar's 'Liberalism of Fear', it is fear, rather than love, that begins the process. It is 'a *summum malum*, which all of us know and would avoid if only we could. That evil is cruelty and the fear it inspires, and the very fear of fear itself, above all the fear of "a society of fearful people"' (ibid:47).<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> See also Arendt's discussion of fear, which takes its cue from the experiences of World War II (Hannah Arendt (1951, 1973) *Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich). p. 442.



If salutary fear, as argued by de Toqueville, 'makes men keep watch and ward for freedom', political love is equally a combatant against the manipulation of 'others', as the partnering with and securing those close to the 'self' protects against outside intervention. Political love is not to be confused with the temporal pursuit of pleasure or even desire, but like those pursuits, embodies the energy to take action in an anarchic world. Political love braces those states in need of protection and direction, while justifying their own commitment on moral grounds, as well as resting it on the broader shoulders of mutual interests and the exchange of gains. The authority of this love is productive of a relationship in which loyalty for the sake of the longer process celebrates the successes and rationalizes away the dysfunctions of the relationship. These special relationships become 'sticky' in that the ideological, as well as material, are intricately narcissistic, moulding reality to bolster their political love, narrowing the boundary between the selves into a faceted self, while staving off the normal fear and threat of the other.

The social bonds of comfort and security established in these special relationships manifests itself in decision-making that relies on successful behavioural habits and heuristics, and hence, requires less attention to detail and less maintenance, in the name of trust, than would a normal relationship. A sense of well-being therefore can lull states into a lower performance of their strategic tasks, enabling logical inconsistencies to go un-addressed (Crawford 2000:138; Marcus 2003:203). In contradiction to how it appears on the surface, therefore, taken to extremes, such relationships are not all good. Such social bonds require conformity of ideation and action, and a degree of trust in the other that negates the self. If the demands of loyalty make negotiation of each state's individual needs difficult, the bonds of mutual security are constantly threatened. Political love, therefore, can imply a damaging relationship, despite efforts by both states to paint it as positive and deny its risks – as much to themselves as to others. Scheff and Retzinger call such relationships 'engulfing', as they require a degree of de-selving to be maintained, and a constant denial that the social bonds are in fact, at risk of being out of attunement (1991:15).

Political love can be turned on its head when one or both states find the object of desire and friendship painful and alienating for reasons that, not unlike personal relationships, involve a perceived transgression of trust and respect and therefore, a widening gulf in shared norms. The fallout is often severe as expectations of conformity and loyalty persist, and it is in 'the narcissism of minor differences' that a mirroring hurt and rage evolves (Freud 1971). In place of overlapping imaginaries that privilege inclusivity, threat is represented as haunting all exchange, and the other is demonized in what becomes a hard-to-stop

relationship of isolation and politics of strife (Beeman 2003). Despite the presumption that no relationship exists, in fact it does, through the constant communication of anger focused on the other, the 'defensive myth' acting to closely link the two in a spiral of mutually constituted pain (Scheff and Retzinger 1991:15). Externalized sentiment is imposed on objective reality, which becomes a reflection of subjective impulse, which is translated into policy. This can be understood as irrationality, as it applies not reason to a problem, but conviction.

### **Narcissism and cognitive psychology: lenses on what drives political passion**

Love in the American therapy age of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, according to Lasch, had devolved, selfishly, from being a form of self-sacrifice or 'submission to a higher loyalty', to 'simply the fulfillment of the patient's emotional requirements' (1978:12). German psychologist Otto Kernberg describes the willing dependency characteristic of normal love relationships as replaced in the narcissistic case 'by self-righteous demandingness' (1984:145). It was this aspect of self orientation and outward demandingness across the American social and political landscape that led Lasch to argue a cultural shift toward narcissism was well begun in the US by the mid-1960s. This affected not only the domestic but the international: The inability to process a passion that is but intense need-fulfillment, means that the environment of the narcissist is constantly endangering. In Kernberg's observation: 'His devaluation of others, together with his lack of curiosity about them, impoverishes his personal life' and contributes to a lack of 'any real engagement with the world' (Kernberg 145; quote in Lasch 1978: 41). Only by divesting that world of its threatening characteristics can the narcissist survive and continue interacting (Johnson 1977:31).

It is not coincidental, perhaps, that the analysis of political and strategic decision-making in terms of cognitive psychology, and conducted primarily in the United States, attained significant influence in the understanding of foreign relations at about the same time as the appearance of Lasch's research – and that of others such as Johnson (1977), Kernberg (1974) and Stein (1977). Both sets of enquiry highlight disconcertingly similar characteristics, patterns and pathologies (Jervis 1976; Jervis 1970; Lebow 1981; Levy 2003). What Jervis terms 'motivational bias' can be seen to operationalize decision-making in patterns that echo those of narcissism. 'Whereas unmotivated biases generate perceptions based on expectations, motivated biases generate perceptions based on needs, desires and interests' (Levy 2003: 268). Motivated bias, according to this argument, can lead to 'wishful thinking', which promotes strategies that contribute to an 'illusion of control', discounts

information that questions existing perceptions, and exaggerates the likely success of preferred strategies. 'In this case, perceptions of threats serve to rationalize existing policy, rather than inform and shape policy' (ibid).

This mirrors Lasch's assessment of how narcissism affects decision-making: 'The remarkable absence of internal freedom to become interested in the personality of the other' means that internally generated images must replace knowledge about who the other is, and why and how he or she acts and reacts; adding to this process is the discomfort of acquiring self-knowledge that comes from curiosity. Devoid of context, 'narcissistic preoccupation specifically defends against surprise with a sense of forced (and forceful) certitude.' (Stein 1977:181).

In the psychological analysis of political decision-making, Lebow draws attention to the tendencies by leaders to reduce internal conflicts over policy adoption, particularly at times of stress, through practices of over-confidence in the favourable consequences that are expected, and in avoiding through misrepresentation, rationalization or denial, warnings, that it might fail (Lebow 1981:114). Cottam suggests that this is not confined just to decision-makers at the top, but informs bureaucratic structures as well. 'Indeed, a central ingredient of bureaucratic inertia,' he states, 'is the rigidification of perceptual assumptions' (Cottam 1977: 11).

In effect, extreme discomfort with change, which elicits the fear of being out of control, requires change to be reconceived as a scenario of continuity. For the constantly vigilant narcissist, this means unconsciously storyboarding the narrative in which he or she can function, so as to be able to construct a self-image of impervious hero. Constructivists, such as Doty and Campbell, write this as disciplining the discourse to protect the precarious self (Campbell 1998: esp. chapter 2; Doty 1996: chapter 1). In regards to close personal relationships, Kernberg argues, 'narcissistic patients evince an unconscious fear of the love object', that person (or thing) which can evoke vulnerability and hence, the possibility for pain. All special relationships carry this risk – the risk of allowing the interests of self and other to be confused, until that point when the other's independent actions take place in an environment of extreme vulnerability on the part of the self. Rational decision-making is designed to protect against this eventuality. But when a special relationship shifts, new information is left unprocessed, a situation of crisis arises, and defensive behaviour makes emotionalized decision-making more likely. In fact, 'defence mechanisms are most likely to break down when the policy-maker[s] are inescapably confronted with the reality [they] have repressed' (Lebow 1981:119) To overcome the agony this implies, motivational bias comes

to dominate the construction of policy, for it is the defense of the self. the precarious identity that must be secured against the threat of the other.

In this way, it becomes possible to tie in, systematically, the *psychological* into the study of the *social* construction of political identities. The discussion of motivated decision-making undertaken by Cottam, Hermann; Jervis, Lebow, and others, has primarily limited itself to the cognitive processes at play and how they relate to policy creation and policy change (Bleiker and Hutchison 2008:125, Crawford 2000: 118). Yet, as Levy suggests, 'the incorporation of psychological variables and their interaction effects into social and cultural explanations of identity [can] create a better balance between social structures and individual agency in constructivist research' (2003: 274). Likewise, Marcus, drawing on evidence from neuroscience, and Finnemore and Sikkink in discussing norm creation, suggest that research on the relationship between emotion (affect) and reason (cognition) in determining behaviours of change is long overdue. It is important to note that although Lasch wrote his treatise, *The Culture of Narcissism* in the late 1960s, narcissism became incorporated into a general discourse of American politics, and appropriated by the US press to describe American popular engagement with everything from materialism to immigration (Ignatieff 1997). The consistency in decision-making patterns and the conduct of narcissism, can therefore be used to understand American practices, and images of identity. That said, the parallelism in the practices and meanings of language use, dyadic labeling and the social constructions of threat by both the UK and Iran in this case study, and within the production of their special relationship, enables narcissistic practices to be traced as contributory to the conditioning of their identity creation as much as that of the US.

In sum, the complex relationship the narcissist has with emotional demands can be understood to have its parallel in state decision-making within special relationships of security, particularly at times of crisis; this is revealed in the following ways: a choice of love object that mirrors or represents an ideal of the self; a fear of the love object for its ability not only to exert pain but to see through the veneer of innocence; a horror of surprise as an affront to the self's credibility; a need to decontaminate the environment of threatening qualities (Post 1986:677-9). Unconsciously, in order to relate to the confusion of the environment, the process amounts to a winnowing away of the facts, contexts and knowledge that are most threatening. The narcissist's storyboard of events, and his/its own role and image within it, contains an inner coherence that is connected only at certain points with the actual facts, the perceptions and narrative framing constituting instead the reality (Johnson

1977:131). Bakhtin describes this as monologism, a key concept for this study, in that he frames it in terms of language and discourse:

‘With a monologic approach (in its extreme or pure form), another person remains wholly and merely an object of consciousness, and not another consciousness. Monologue is finalized and deaf to the other’s response, does not expect it, and does not acknowledge in it any decisive force’ (1984: 293).

Here Bakhtin achieves the critical link between the theory of narcissism and the theory of emotionalized decision-making, in that he observes that even in the perceived absence of the other, the dialogue with the other continues. The other is there even if only as a recipient of the monologue, and thus the decision-making, which varies according to the nature of the other, and depends on that other. This, as Guillaume points out, is essential for anchoring the monologic discourse into the theory of identity (Guillaume 2002:7). This takes place outside of narcissism as well. It is the degree, and the self-referentiality of the knowledge that relates narcissistic impulse to motivated decision-making.

### **Emotion, Method and Text**

A comprehensive examination of political emotionality and its impact on representational practices in international behaviour is beyond the scope of this study. Here I narrow my focus to those emotions that underpin conflict or solidarity in regards to special relationships. For this, I expand on the extraordinary path begun by Scheff and Retzinger, which bridges the sociological, historical, psychological and political in a synthetic (part-whole) approach focusing on the effect of emotions on social structure (see also Fierke 2004). First, they identify two families of social emotions that stand out as relational, those of shame and pride. Shame and pride arise only when another’s view is engaged, when self-worth is perceived through the eyes of another (Sartre 1956:347 ff). They are likewise emotions of reflexivity, since ‘self-monitoring from the viewpoint of others gives rise to self-regarding sentiments’ (Scheff and Retzinger 1991:8). Shame and pride are regarded as primary or ‘coarse’ emotions of attachment, in that they incorporate physiological, psychological and cultural components (ibid:27). Genetically inherited (thus, biological), they both only have meaning as self-conscious responses to the perceptions of others, and they are variously interpreted from one society to another (ibid:5). Shame and pride are core emotions that are expressed, particularly in modern societies which no longer commonly use the words ‘shame’ and ‘pride’, in linguistically rich variants. Shame, therefore is often articulated as embarrassment, humiliation, indignity, dishonour, disrespect, insecurity, anger, arrogance, superiority, self-

righteousness, guilt and smugness: pride is articulated as trust, solidarity, commonality, security, friendship and alliance. In studying how modern states build and break bridges, therefore, these 'code' words are more frequently apparent in the discourses used by statesmen and other elites. This is particularly important to recognize in the study of modern societies, in which the language itself conspires to deny the existence of pride and shame.

Second, Scheff and Retzinger suggest that repressed shame that is neither acknowledged nor resolved (on the part of either the self or the other), leads to violence. Thus, 'shame causes and is caused by alienation, pride causes and reflects solidarity' (p.3). Shame and pride therefore constitute key elements in the process of attunement, providing the emotional security (or insecurity) of a relationship's bonds. This does not mean that parties within a well-attuned relationship do not have disagreements or fights, but that they fight fairly, their communication of respect toward the other reflecting the secure bond of pride in the other, and by reflection, in themselves. Acknowledged, shame passes quickly, having acted as a signal that a bond was at risk and in need of repair. Thus, a conflict over interests does not per se lead to violence, for parties in attunement can acknowledge the other's needs sufficiently to find compromise – a disagreement in this situation often leads to a strengthening of the bridge binding states, and encourages further cooperation.

It is in those relationships where the other's legitimate needs are insulted, devalued, or ignored, that shame occurs. The denial of shame (repressing it through silence and guilt, or though the overt expression of anger) leads to further shaming of the other in the form of disrespect (to overcome pain or embarrassment, for example), begetting a perpetuated spiral that eventually leads to discourses of strife or outright violence. Bonds are maintained, but in a relationship of isolation in which the insecure linkages are perpetually chafed through suspicion, pain and anger. Shaming can only take place between states that are already linked, since if the other's perception is not important, their actions and responses are not interpreted as reflecting on the self. Thus, for example, relations between two states with little contact or commonality would not be characterized by social bonds that could be easily affected by either shame or pride. Establishing relations of pride, for example, would characterize the practices of states contemplating bridge-building for increased solidarity: shame would characterize states experiencing separation of close social bonds within an existing alliance. Scheff and Retzinger argue that shame occurs as a signal that bonds are already at risk and experiencing damage, a claim that suggests that shaming can be an ongoing process in a continuing relationship.

As shame and pride are communicated through discourse - the practices and meanings of language and action - tracking their expression in processes of attunement, or alienation offers a useful method to analyze relationships between states. This does not suggest that other factors are not at play, that leaders are not using sophisticated cognitive decision-making tools or that material interests or events are not exerting influence. Instead, it is my purpose here to distill out the reflexive and self-referential emotions of shame and pride to reveal how *they* contribute to the matrix of policy making and its perpetuation in the production of political love and political strife.

### *A proposed method*

Political passion can be traced as a five-step sequence: 1) *The initial cause (motivator) of identity insecurity* through the endangerment of fundamental norms (the shame perceived). This can come from a third party threatening both states within a relationship, or through the actions of one state within the relationship. The perceived threat can be interpreted as endangering universalist ideals, concepts of nationalism, sensitivities in collective memory, or sovereign integrity (including territorial). 2) *The passionate response (motivation to action)* to protect primary norms that constitute the nation, expressed as shame or pride, and often in a paralleling emotionalized framework as that perceived to have constituted the initial threat – that is, through acknowledgement or disrespect of the other. The primary norms can include honour, legitimacy, sovereignty and historical memory, norms which constitute identity and without which, survival (security) is deemed at risk and the passionate response can include trust/distrust, tolerance/intolerance, solidarity/ alienation. 3) *Behaviours inspired by shame or pride (the motivational bias)*, which emerge during crisis and can reflect impairments as well as refinements in decision-making processes (Crawford 2000:140; McDermott 2004; Ross 2006:4; Scheff and Retzinger 1991:29). The former may include a reduction in evaluative processing due to stress; reliance on overly simple heuristics and imagery of the other; the use of inadequate analogies and the avoidance of counterfactuals (Houghton 2001). The latter may contribute to the ability of leaders to decisively mobilize the public through national unity and information dominance, and to benefit from heightened attention, and learning. 4) *The emotionalized discourse* that privileges practices and meanings necessary for bridge-building or bridge-destruction, such as the kindling of existing emotional associations to promote certain policy choices and enlist public support, or implanting new emotional practices and meanings to address the changed environment. 5) *The policies that constitute political love or political strife* (Chart 1). In the

former, this involves re-confirming the emotionalized contingencies of the special relationship – elements of we-ness which include self-esteem, trust, comfort, and other emotions of genuine mutuality embraced in the term pride. If the relationship is engulfing, it includes a furtherance of policies that tolerate the other's 'bad' qualities or propensities (such as dictatorship, human rights abuses), and shield the other from outside criticism. If it is a relationship of isolation, that is, political strife, policies will project shame (anger, distrust, guilt, suspicion, vengeance).

Thereafter, political love or political strife (in the production of policies and their justifications) can be examined as longer-term processes of positive or negative bridge-maintenance (Chart 2). Political love involves over-coming conflicts of interest, maintaining good-will and transparency, and promoting exchange. Under circumstances of serious stress to the relationship, the bridges that have been built and maintained enable the effective use of representational force, as the normative and emotional commitments to the other implicate a willingness to re-assert a mutually beneficial relationship (Bially Mattern 2005). In political strife, the rhetorical continuity of an emotionalized special relationship infuses all actions on the part of the other with negative connotations and a willingness to see in the other aggressive or deceptive behaviour. In this political formation, the bridges are too frail for representational force to work as it is interpreted as simply one more signal of bad faith in a relationship of muscular alterity.

In the short term, emotionalized politics are justified in both cases on the bases of analogy, rational response, and the necessity of avoiding further risk. Over the long term, policy orientations become habits and predispositions that reflect emotional expectations, learning and experience gleaned from crisis. The emotional commitments serve as catalysts of norm adjustment and contribute to defining appropriate behaviours and policies, that is, their institutionalization. This contributes to the 'mood' of the government whenever interaction with the other is required; strategies are re-activated that were operationalized and found successful in the past, and a calming familiarity accompanies the use of heuristics, imagery and rhetorical style that were previously relied upon (Crawford 2000; Marcus 2003). Even in the production of political strife, the disposition to repeat patterns in policy is calming and a confirmation of appropriate behaviour, even if it simply reflects false pride. These policy approaches are stored in collective memory as necessary for the perpetuation of identity security. The mood, however, works against receptivity to change or arguments for adjustment. Change, therefore, is most likely to occur only under circumstances where new threats reveal the environment as no longer responding well to existing strategies. In that



situation, emotions come into play, refocusing the attention to develop alternatively appropriate responses, learning is energized, and dispositions ill-suited to the present, can adapt.

### *The texts*

To track these five steps in short-term policy construction, dislocations of hegemonic discourse (nodal points) are an important focus. It is at these moments that meanings are decanted, their lack of applicability and appropriateness within new contexts revealed, emotional confusion motivates the shedding of old habits, and new meaning creation is impelled to begin. Pride and shame will be highlighted in discourse as conceptual inducements to social connection or alienation, and followed from nodal point to policy reification over time. The texts used for this study are examined conceptually using a methodology consistent with Roxane Doty's (1996) representational practices, and David Campbell's (1998) constitutive differences. Tracking the actual as well as indirect usage of the words (shame and pride) and their euphemisms within text, the linkage between individual statements and long-term policy orientations will be instantiated, revealing the connection between the 'interpersonal and institutional' in micro-macro sequential investigation (Scheff and Retzinger 1991: 36).

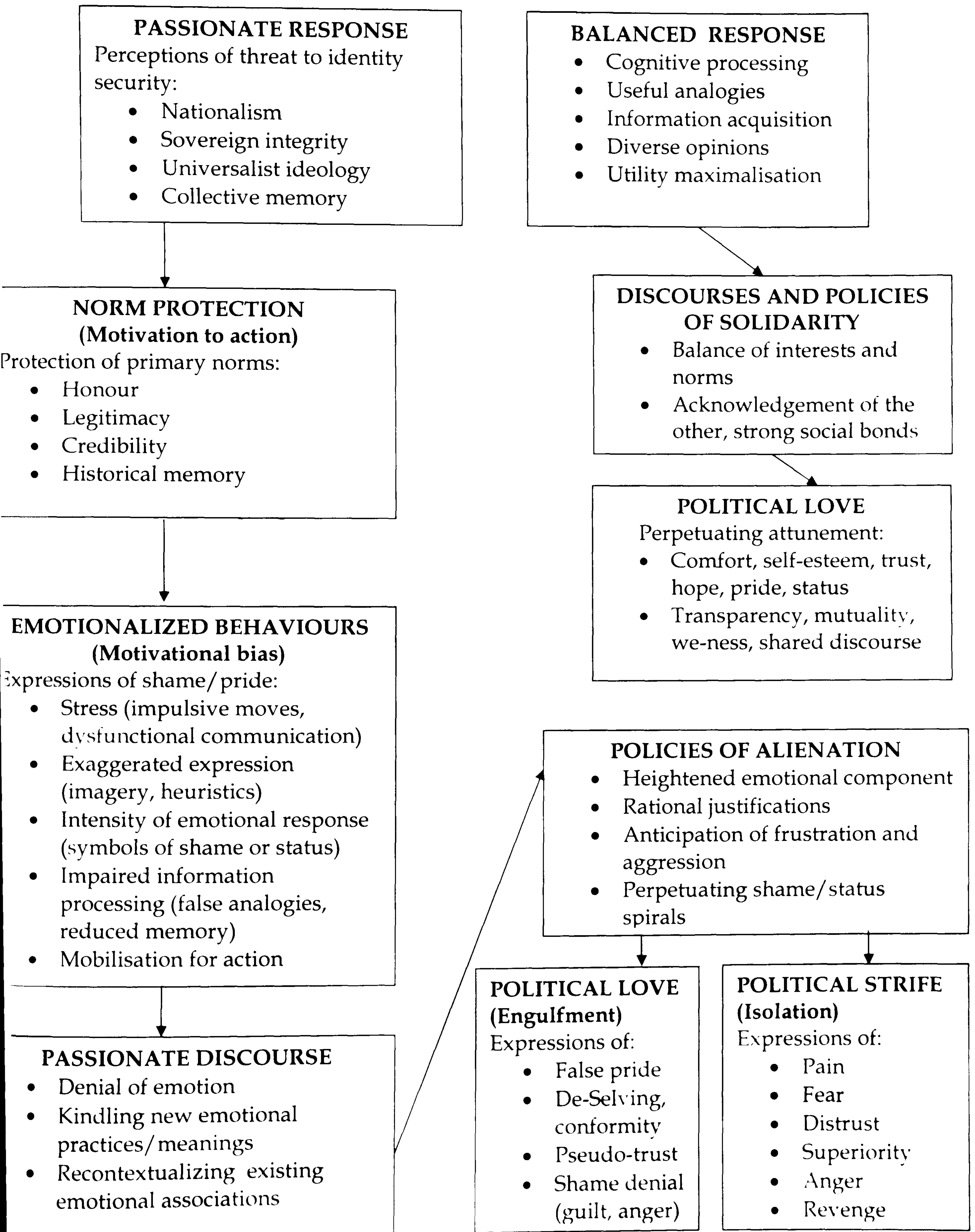
While not constrained to a specific order, this will include: a) examination of social antagonisms, that is, the limits to objective constitution, which give rise to emotions of shame and pride and the spirals of alienation or solidarity that impute meaning to shifting relations; b) subject position, what Barthes warns as the text endeavouring to 'make the reader no longer a consumer but a producer of the text', and which can be counterbalanced by encouraging the text to be understood as a political act intended to engage the reader's (or listener's) loyalty (Barthes 1974:4); c) the 'systematic play' between signifier and actual presence as articulated by Derrida, since the contradictory quality of democracy as policy and democracy as idealistic ideology is of particular significance in this study. In considering the inconsistencies between the proclaimed self-image within the Anglo-American discourse, and the behaviour of both states toward Iran, it is the combination of difference and deferral that plays a key role, and is a reflection of the power of emotion to move experience into misremembrance (Doty 1996:6).

Written text dominates the material being analyzed; yet also included are non-linguistic, that is, material practices, traditions and social rules, which are strong cultural components of discourse (Laclau and Mouffe 1985:82-83). Original texts constitute the

archival sources of this study. Secondary texts are used when they themselves can be understood as primary within the historical context of a discursive paradigm, and in the framework of this study, this is often the case, as it is in secondary texts that shame and pride often can be seen to perpetuate and reflect the mood and production of a politics of passion.

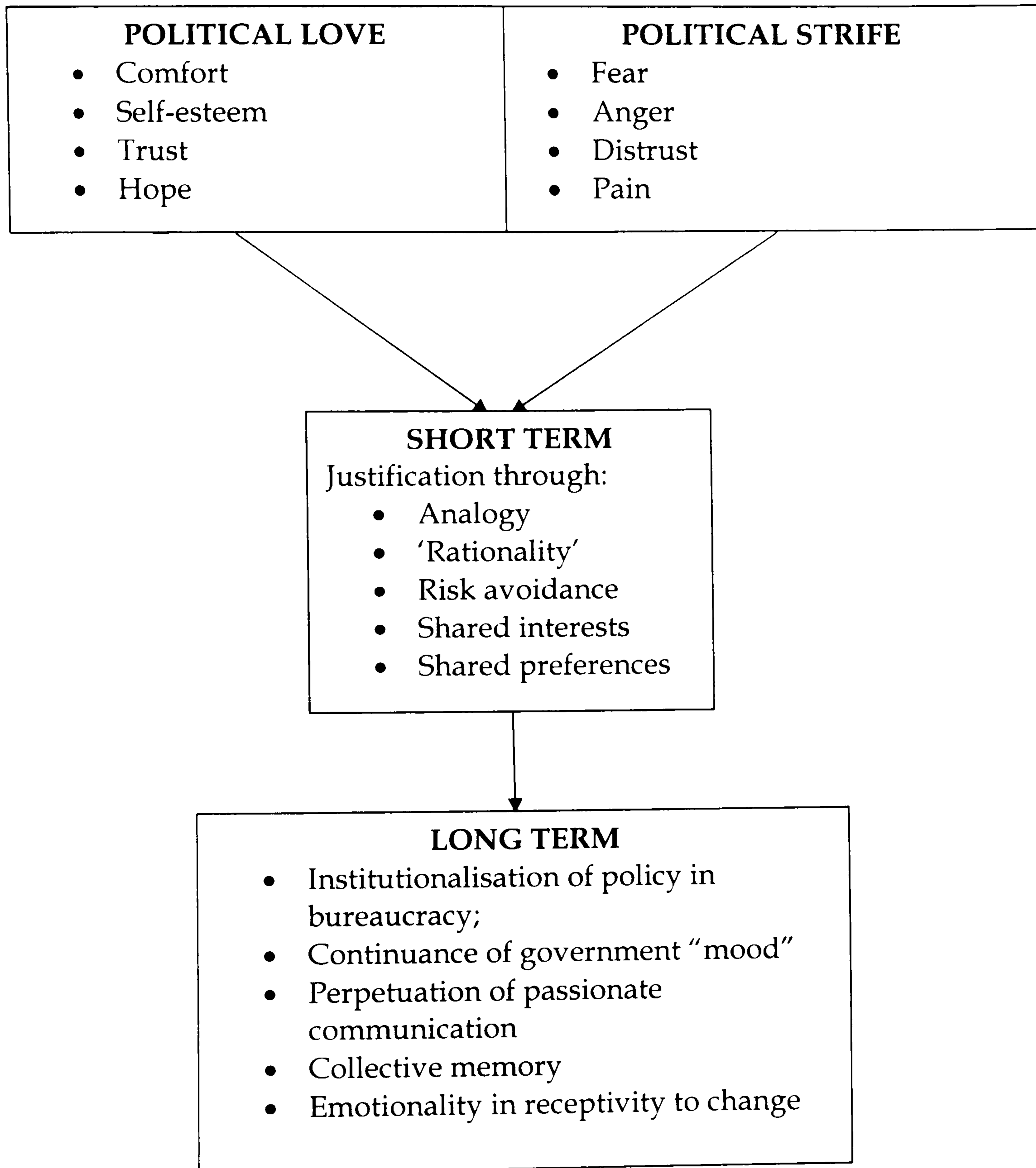
# EMOTION AND POLICY-MAKING

Chart 1



# THE POLITICS OF PASSION

Chart 2



## Chapter 3

### Lead-up to Revolution: The Play of Love

‘There being nothing simply and absolutely so; nor any common Rule of Good and Evil, to be taken from the nature of the objects themselves.’ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*<sup>1</sup>

The intensity of the Anglo-American special relationship with Iran under the Shah played a significant role in the nature of the schism that ensued once the Shah fell. The rapport, in material terms, was based on Iran’s role as military bulwark against communism and as an economic and political ally of the West. But the bond was more complex than that. The Shah was the ideal son. He was viewed as someone the West could trust, not only to resolve differences with his allies in a non-violent manner, but as a believer in, and promoter of Western norms within the process of modernizing and eventually democratizing his nation. In outlook, therefore, he represented the ideal third world leader, while the opportunities he offered to those in the West to manage and take advantage of the assets he controlled rendered him a seductive ally. Not only did he command extensive reserves of oil (and gas), but geostrategic position, and very importantly, a market – for arms, large-scale development in accordance with Western formulae, and regional influence. In the ‘60s but more so in the ‘70s, Iran was a country the West loved to love, and nowhere more so than in the Anglo-American discourse.

For the United States, in which good and evil are representations frequently used to distinguish friends from foes, the malignant from the pure, those who are good are constructed in both the domestic and international discourse as paralleling or emulating the values and aspirations of the US (Sheikh 2002). Good, in US, and larger Western terms, is constructed as rational, as Kennan pointed out in his Long Telegram right after the close of WWII. In this key document, he contrasted the American system to that prevailing in the ‘conspiracy within a conspiracy’ which was the new Soviet Union, since ‘for it, the vast fund of *objective* fact about human society is not, as with us, the measure against which outlook is constantly being tested and re-formed’ (Kennan 1946 in Buhite

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Tuck, ed. (1991) *Leviathan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 39

1997:31, emphasis mine).

For the leaders of the Anglo-Saxon worlds, the fund of objective fact was the basis of reasonable governance, which ensured individual liberty and the maximizing of whatever it took to encourage humanity to be most human. 'Objective fact', defined by Searle as established 'by human agreement' (in contrast to 'brute facts' which 'required no human institutions for their existence'), was nonetheless understood to be foundational, a synonym for truth, as well as morality (Searle 1995:1-2). This was the basis of Anglo-American 'universalism', both as doctrine and as mission. 'Good', in practices of democracy, was perceived to be absolute – unlike that claimed by Marxism or Islamism thereafter – since it was viewed as outside contextualisation or interpretation. In effect, democracy was perceived by great statesmen from Kennan to Carter and Churchill to Thatcher, as saved from the dogmatism that plagued all other political systems, its rationality based on truth, not just belief (Thatcher 1986:42).

The political good which the United States saw in its allies, and which was perceived as returned in kind, was not therefore, just a search for glory, but a moral commitment to a process—implicit in many cases to be a long one. For those allies being brought into the fold from beyond the trans-Atlantic alliance, liberal market democratisation was an expectation, but not a requirement. Their faults were seen as less important and more transient than their attributes if the latter were understood to relate directly to US interests and the strength of the free world (Harvey 2004:39). For those states falling within these constraints, commitment and affection figured strongly in the discursive economies that defined the relationship. For those special relationships in which shared security was deeply entrenched, as with the UK, Israel, South Korea, Japan, and in its day, Iran, the nature of the loyalty, and practices of mutuality can be described as political love.

That embrace, however, required each party to cede elements of their own needs and points of view in a precarious balance that continuously pushed against the egoism and sovereignty of each state, a compromise seen as necessary for the good of the universalism and security that inspired it. The aspiration was perfect 'attunement', which would ensure adequate negotiation between the parties within a framework of reciprocal respect and feedback promoting pride. The risk, however, was 'engulfment', in which the

member states' needs would be too 'fused' for effective negotiation, and instead, their interests and identities would be subsumed in 'pseudo-bonds' that demanded conformity to certain roles (Scheff and Retzinger 1991:17). In place of genuine we-ness, the bonds would provide only the semblance of community, being constantly threatened through repressed shame on the part of both parties. This shame could arise from both their own compromises, and from the lack of ratification as to the cost of those compromises by the other. Political love therefore perpetually contained the seeds of political strife, in that the shame of engulfment could not be acknowledged if the special relationship was to continue.

In the case of the West's relationship with Iran prior to the revolution, engulfment characterized the political love, which led to fundamental discontinuities between what the West understood to be the identity of Iran based on the discourse projected by the Shah, and the identity of the nation as projected in the unheeded discourses of various opposition groups. As this was not an alliance of expediency, unalloyed by the investment of morality and political love, but a relationship that entwined the identities and expectations of the US and the UK with those of the Shah, the fallout, when it came, was tumultuous. Not only were the hopes and resources committed to this model child to be written off, but more disturbingly, the child rejected the universalist ideals of the parent(s). Adding insult to injury, the child's reasoning remained oblique and misunderstood, leading to discursive figurations of Iran as first a 'lost' child (justifying practices of anger and discipline); then as a 'bad' child (toward which responses of fear and hate became thinkable and actionable), and finally as a 'terrorist' and 'rogue' (warranting practices of revenge).

In this chapter, I illustrate how a politics of passion regarding pre-revolutionary Iran was operationalized in the Anglo-American discourse to protect against the identity insecurity inspired first by the Soviet threat and second, by the need to control the oil spigot (and hence, modernization) then in the hands of the Shah and other Middle East rulers. This took the form of: a) the mobilization of a coup to replace the 'communist' Mossadeq, b) reduced historical memory in imbuing the oil-rich Shah with the attributes of a democratizing, Westernized security partner, c) exaggerated expressions of support in response to his demand for weapons to protect against the Soviets; d) impaired

information processing as a result of accepting unchallenged the Shah's discourse on Iran and the region. e) compulsive loyalty to the Shah as he fell. Their passionate responses, I argue, show how the Shah was vested with Western identity, how his representations of self and difference became those adopted within the Anglo-American discourse as part of the learning process of we-ness, and how the friendship fed into the West's self-esteem (albeit false pride, or hubris) in regards to the efficacy of its 'universalist' norms in exportable inscriptions of democracy, modernization and global security. I also address how the Anglo-American discourse was constructed to deny the shame of supporting a dictator who did not promote democracy and was frequently criticized for his abuse of human rights.

In the second section, I suggest that when circumstances revealed the shared dependency to be based on false assumptions about both themselves and the other, political love prompted efforts to re-fix the relationship. However, having shut out alternative discourses, the commitments of political love served to blind Britain and the US to actual circumstances in Iran. This led to anxiety and emotional withdrawal as discursive practices supporting the Shah lacked the grammar to perceive non-Shah leadership in Iran as anything but catastrophic. What is interesting is how quickly this took place, a reflection of the 'emotional' intensity at play.

### **The boundaries of the literature**

The revolution caught most scholars by surprise, with the result that revisionism characterizes much of the literature (Kramer 2001). Among the few to have anticipated the cataclysm were James Bill, in his 1978 article in *Foreign Affairs* ('The Crisis of '78', Winter), Homa Katouzian (1981) and Fred Halliday (1980). Bill's subsequent *The Eagle and the Lion: The tragedy of American-Iranian relations* is a tour de force (for contrary view, see Ganji 2006:3). An extended diplomatic history, it provides valuable insights on US and Iranian policy mistakes. Jim Hoagland, in a 1988 review in *The Guardian*, offers a striking example of how the discursive construction of identity bears upon the literature, however. Hoagland's critique exemplifies the mainstream investment in the 'tough conservative', pro-Shah discourse that remained well-entrenched ten years after the institution of the Islamic Republic. Hoagland takes the view that Bill lets Iran off too



lightly: 'Iran's own specific characteristics and shortcomings contributed mightily to this disaster and deserve much more attention in this account, which accepts with too much equanimity the Iranian genius for blame-shifting', Hoagland writes. Although Bill's work has since come to be regarded as among the most even handed, Hoagland denounces his views of US policy, which at the time were still quite shocking, attempting instead to fend off the shame they implied: '[Bill] cites only Khomeini's explanation, which is consistent with the general sense that pervades this book, that unending American arrogance, chicanery, and clumsiness bear the responsibility for the destruction of US-Iranian relations and the implacable hostility that Iranians show toward Americans and other foreigners today' (May 29, 1988: 20).

Two excellent primary sources are John Stempel's (1981) *Inside the Iranian Revolution*, and Gary Sick's (1985) *All Fall Down: America's tragic encounter with Iran*. Stempel, a first secretary in the US Embassy in Tehran, offers incisive eye-witness accounts of events, which he combines with an insider's view on the tenor and thinking taking place in the US government. Sick worked closely with Brzezinski on the National Security Advisory desk as an area expert, bringing invaluable insight on the nature of the information available, and the attitudes that prevailed in Washington during the last year of the Shah's reign through to the end of the hostage crisis. His surprisingly doctrinaire account provides mordant examples of the passionate politics being practiced at the time. Two other useful primary sources are the diaries of British Ambassador Anthony Parsons (1984), and American Ambassador William Sullivan (1981), which offer impassioned descriptions of Iran's upheavals, and their own often painful roles in transmitting the news to their respective capitals.

One critical primary source that offers a unique resource for the scholar is the American embassy documents found by the Students Following the Imam's Line (SFIL). Spanning a 15-year period from the latter part of the Shah's reign to the last day before the hostage crisis, it is an unparalleled archive even now, 27 years later.<sup>2</sup>

In the secondary literature, the lead-up to revolution has been analysed as

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<sup>2</sup> Sources for these documents vary. For this research, two editions were used: 1) *Asnad*, published by the Students Following the Imam's Line (SFIL) and 2) *Iran: The Making of US Policy, 1977-1980*, on microfiche, from the National Security Archive, George Washington University; which for this study, was accessed at the Liddel Hart Military Centre for Archives Library at Kings College, and referred to as US Embassy Documents, or USED.

culturally overbearing and uncritical on the part of the US (Altheide 1981; Bakhash 1985; Fischer 1981; Heikal 1981), unrestrained as an expression of US military policy in response to the Soviet threat (Cottam 1977, 1989; Ledeen and Lewis 1981), politically blind on the part of all parties (Halliday 1979; Rubin 1980), clientelist and uneven (Gasiorowski 1991; Keddie 1981; Hoogland 1989), and colonialist (Milani 1994:13). Several of these, including Katouzian 1981, take as their primary focus Iran's internal discourses and upheavals, particularly as they related to the political rise in Islamic activism as a tool against the Shah. Zonis in *Majestic Failure* (1991) approaches the subject through a psychological analysis of the Shah, and the US ability to play on his dependency and need for 'self-objects'. However, Zonis does not adequately interrogate how American psychology or emotion played into the policies that bolstered and secured the partnership, and blames the fall of the Shah on Iranian xenophobia. By ignoring American motivations, and the claustrophobia of both states in the engulfing discourse of false expectations, his otherwise fascinating treatment is seriously impoverished.

In the course of several publications examining the Iranian upheaval and its effect on Western relations with Islam, Halliday (1979, 1996, 1998, 2002) moves from a leftist view of the Shah's Iran as plagued by conspiracy and confusion, to one in which he balances Western rigidity and Iranian dogma as equally contributory to the misinterpretations in the mutual disenchantment of each others' system. Foucault (1979), interviewed in Tehran, where he travelled to personally witness the forces of revolution, adopts a critical view of the West's outrage and incomprehension, stating the Iranians 'were swimming in ambiguity' through 'various layers of language, expression and engagement' (p. 229). Nonetheless, his position has been passionately criticized as being pro-Khomeini and anti-Shah, and then later ignored (and forgotten) so as not to tarnish his reputation (Afary and Anderson 2005; Mirsepassi 2000:1). In the security arena, there is useful discussion on what the fall of the Shah meant to US perceptions of the regional geostrategic situation (Moller 2003; Rubin 1980; Ramazani 1990; Tehranian, ed. 2003; among others), although the actual strength of the Shah's military capabilities (and hence, role) is often over-stated (Cooley 1991; Huyser 1986; for an exception see Shah's obituary by Liz Thurgood, *The Guardian* 12/3/1980).

What remains inadequately addressed is why the US and Britain were so cavalier

in adopting, largely unadulterated, the Shah's discourse of Iran, and why they remained so wedded to it for so long. Beyond observing the catastrophic impact of the practice adopted by both states to restrict their own intelligence gathering in Iran and instead accept the Shah's, there is little discussion as to why they would have left themselves open to such vulnerability or so trusted another state (Parsons 1984:34-38; Sick 1985:32, 42; Brzezinski 1983:367). Further, once the die had been cast, analysis is thin on the normative reasons why the US and Britain were unable to re-establish engagement with the revolution's leadership in an expression of their own democratic discourse of freedom promotion. National security needs combined with state propensity toward self-help, following the realist paradigm, would suggest that to ensure a stable flow of oil, and to re-establish anti-Soviet security measures, both the US and Great Britain would have acted vigorously to activate a working relationship with the new government, regardless of its Islamic character or human-rights profile (Stempel 1981; Waltz 1979:118).

From a liberal, even English School perspective, with its theoretical emphasis on opportunities and capabilities, although the religious leadership that acceded to power in Iran adopted strong 'Neither East nor West' rhetoric (explainable as an outgrowth of the country's historical experience of invasion and foreign-imposed crisis [Adib-Moghaddam 2005:270]), the rapid moves towards elections for a constitutional congress, the drafting and adoption of a constitution, and the holding of general parliamentary elections could be argued to have offered compelling reasons to become more actively committed to Iran's tentative steps toward democracy—however illiberal and vulnerable they might initially have seemed—not only to shore up US and British influence in the country, but to legitimize their image as supporters *sin qua non* of popular democracy (Halliday 1990; Kowert 1989-9: *passim*; for contrary perspective see Harvey 2003). Instead, the US insisted on a policy of loyalty to a fallen, and in many ways already tarnished monarch. Why? Though a phenomenon able to be partially analyzed in normative terms, explanation for the tenacity of this loyalty remains unsatisfactory, as it reflects behaviour that is inconsistent with other US or British practices. Under circumstances of sudden change, 'national' interests and norms themselves become sites of passionate contestation, as do the agentic relationships to those interests. In such a period, when signifiers pegged to the previous regime are set afloat and yet, in response to emotionally

inspired figurations, remain privileged, policies are ill-explained by rational 'interests' or by cognitive or normative approaches, since none explain why the choices made were preferred over others.

Understanding emerges when viewing the discourse in terms of emotional linkages between memory, habit and experiences (Ross 2006:3). By unpicking the highly personalized liaison between the Shah and his Anglo-American partners, it becomes possible to clarify the coincidence of motives, yearnings, benefits and compromises that enabled relaxation of the normal conduct of foreign affairs during his reign (Schoenbaum 1979:16), and the passionate embrace that fulfilled the promise that 'love is blind'. Following this discourse through part-whole analysis reveals an interrelationship that went through an arc of mutual dependency and then disillusion, while highlighting the vulnerabilities that were at stake throughout, and which made the passionate constructions possible.

### **The passion of the special relationship**

'Only a few weeks ago the Shah was crowned – he had postponed the event until his aspirations and politics and programs for his people had produced substantial results. The verdict throughout the free world was that he had thoroughly earned his crown. Indeed, the story of modern Iran is one of the great success stories of our time. And the realization that in some small measure, we have been able to help Iran accomplish this success should give all of us in the United States satisfaction and joy.' US Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Tehran 29/11/1967 (in Alexander and Nanes 1980:370)

Rusk, making sure to spotlight his ability to speak for the 'free world', expresses here his verdict on the Shah's sterling performance and character. The substantial achievements Rusk refers to were the result of the White Revolution, which was undertaken four years earlier, and by the time of this speech, was already being regarded as seriously flawed, having inspired violent demonstrations, severe population dislocation (urban migration) and agricultural falls in production, all of which the embassy in Tehran had reported on and which Rusk knew (Ansari 2006:47-49; Katouzian 1981:223-227). For Rusk, however, the Shah's choices symbolized Western progress in action, while the content of that effort was remote and therefore less important than the 'strong emotional and ideological associations' it could muster (Edelman 1967:5). At the same time, Rusk's

discourse aligns US help with Iran's achievements, signifying success as contingent on them both, and therefore, a source of mutual self-esteem. What is denied in the discourse is the incongruity of the enthusiasm of a state (the US) promoting universalist values, for a figure crowning himself king whose personal 'aspirations, politics and programs (sic)' are produced as appropriate and sufficient for an entire nation. The abstraction of the Shah as good for his country is revealed as adequate, while the shame of betraying the American moral commitment to individual rights and responsibilities was repressed. The sense of inadequacy this implied translated seamlessly into another emotion, namely superiority over the backward Iranians, who required the authority of strong leadership to bring them modernization, as well as American help and guidance.

In American 'society, power likes to present itself in the guise of benevolence' (Lasch 1978: 81), or in the case of Britain, altruism (Colls and Dodd 1986). Yet, in both cases, relationships tend to reflect a less benign bent, such that 'even the most intimate encounters become a form of mutual exploitation' (Lasch 1978:63). From this perspective, the moral underpinning of 'help' in the Anglo-American foreign-policy discourse reflects as much, if not more, the motivation to secure the 'self' than interest in bolstering the 'other'. In Michael Ignatieff's view, this is not only an American, but a Western impetus, and an ongoing one:

'When policy was driven by moral motives, it was often driven by narcissism. We intervened not only to save others, but to save ourselves, or rather an image of ourselves as defenders of universal decencies. We wanted to show that the West "meant" something.' (1997:95).

Mutual exploitation includes security considerations, exchange of gains and ideological compatibility. In addition, within the Anglo-American construct, if a state is perceived as an exemplar of its own manifest destiny on a free-world course, especially a 'pioneer' in an unfriendly neighbourhood, such a state (Iran, Israel, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan) becomes 'special' (Stephens 2006:4). Driven by the American imaginary of the frontier, such states are produced as prodigies, the 'opening' of their lands to liberal market forces being implicated, in the struggle between the barbaric and the civilized, as 'good' and 'natural', and further, as mirroring the West's own modern political history, even though the representation of that past (le 'referent') is itself contingent (Doty 1996:7). As such, the United States, acting the charismatic leader of the free world, attracts and is attracted

to states it can construct as mirroring entities, a process that bolsters its own self-image, as well as justifying and formalizing its close impress upon theirs (Post 1986). For Britain, those to whom she chose to bequeath power while patroness of her empire were likewise those she recognized most closely – the monarchs, the elite tribes, and those who appropriated to themselves the Anglo-Saxon model (Bell 2007:256; Dodge 2003, chapter 1; Tidrick 1992:231-2). Approaching politics as a combination of romantic and parental love engaged in the flowering (and protection) of model wards can be understood therefore as a characteristic of Anglo-American leadership (Doty 1996).

The Shah's Iran fit with this profile perfectly. It was represented as fearlessly striding toward, in the Shah's phrase, the 'Great Civilization', and in Nixon's, as acting the 'bridge between East and West' ('Remarks', Washington 23/10/1969, in Alexander and Nanes 1980:372; Keddie 1981:181). Likewise, Iran's domestic and historical position as a regional power distinct from the Arab Sunni Middle East, contributed to the possibility for 'mutual exploitation' on a psychological level – as illustrated by the Shah's continued oil shipments to Israel during the 1973 Arab Oil embargo, on the one hand, while on the other, he collected unfettered both British and American military hardware ('News Conference, Secretary Kissinger and the Shah', Zurich, 18/2/1975, in Alexander and Nanes 1980: 423; Gasiorowski 1991; Zonis 1991: 261). And although structurally, Iran was little different from many other growing third world states, by the 1970s the Shah considered Iran had a 'rightful place on the world scene' (F. Pahlavi 1978:98). This fed and confirmed the West's ability to perceive him as a unique regional expert without whom policy construction would be the poorer ('White House Statement', Carter and the Shah, 15/11/1977 in Alexander and Nanes 1980: 448), as well as a steady monarch fully in control of his own country. The mutual exchange and adoption of discourses did important psychological and emotional work in underscoring the three nations' inter-textuality and constituted a deeply sentimentalised mythology of interdependency – a *summum bonum* – of political contentment. However, it hid as much as it revealed, being binding, but also blinding.

### **The Good Child**

The close association between the Shah and the US dated from 1953 when the CIA

helped regain the Shah his throne and a 10-year clientelist relationship ensued (Gasiorowski 1990, 1991). As the price of oil rose, the friendship grew from a peripheral to a central one for the US, enabling the Shah to assume an increasingly vital role as a key regional supplier, and as a pillar of the US-managed security community of Western democratic states that grew out of the Nixon Doctrine (Bill 1988:197-201; Milani 1994:13).

The special relationship was elaborated as a response to the threat by the Soviet Union against Western identity security, that is, the hegemony of its liberal ideals. The political love evolved from the Shah's ability to convincingly promote himself as more reliable than the populist Prime Minister Mossadeq in maintaining the strategic buffer zone between the USSR and the warm waters of the Persian Gulf. His argument for stockpiling arms played on American fears, and were seen as crucial for deterring the spread of communism ('Staff Report', Subcommittee on Foreign Assistance, US Senate: US Military Sales to Iran, July 1976, in Alexander and Nanes 1980:406). This situation continued under President Carter, who as late as October 31, 1978, at a birthday party for the Shah's son at the White House, stated, 'Our friendship and alliance with Iran is one of the important bases on which our entire foreign policy depends' (quote in Sick 1985:62). The perception in Washington, London and other key Western capitals, was that Iran shared crucial security concerns, as well as common interests, aspirations and values. This implied not only shared strengths, but also shared dependencies, that is, a relationship sufficiently close to reveal the inner 'other' – vulnerabilities against which mutual friendship could protect. Iran was understood to be part of the Western collective identity which gave meaning to its motivations and goals (Bially-Mattern 2001:353). That same evening, Carter summed up the well-being felt to reside in the relationship, '[The Shah's] progressive administration is very valuable. I think, to the *entire* Western world' (Sick *ibid*, emphasis mine).

Gushing enthusiasms for the Shah and the images of friendship that shored up each regime had produced for several years a discursive fiction of normative similarity at the state level, and a sense of mutual dependency at the elite level. As stated by the Shah during a visit to the Nixon White House in October 1967: 'We are defending the same principles, upholding the same moral values' (Pahlavi, 'Remarks', Washington, in

Alexander and Nanes 1980:372).

The nature of this collegial we-ness, however, was based on several misunderstandings and subjectivities that nonetheless were regularly supported by reasoned argument. These in turn coloured not only the events that rapidly severed Iran from the West two months after Carter's warmly worded toast, but contributed to the conditions of possibility for the vitriol and suspicion that has produced Iran ever since as a rogue state. The umbrella for these subjectivities, and the passions that contributed to them, was the discursive equivalency of the 'Shah-as-Iran'. This equivalency was promoted through the instrumentalization of development theories and North-South inscriptions in which the universalist applicability of the Western model of progress and modernity were privileged by the Shah and marketed as applicable in Iran. The pride this engendered in the public narrative conducted at the elite level in Tehran, London and Washington was not matched by broad popular well-being in Iran. Because occasional whiffs of this reality reached all three capitals, false pride was mutually shared, a glue that recursively held them together, but which chained to associative feelings of anxiety, frustration, embarrassment and distrust in the face of unfulfilled aspirations and expectations (Milani 1994:10; Mirsepassi 2000:11-13 and *passim*; Rouleau 1980). Of primary importance was maintaining the fictive image of the self-confident, supportive self in the eyes of the other – a relational necessity that put enormous strain on both the US and UK in regards to Iran, and visa versa.

Because the Shah represented himself and his rule as ideologically encompassing and promoting the West's 'universalist' values, they feature as constant contingencies in the production of political love within the Anglo-American discourse toward Iran. As such, they contributed to fixing the Shah's legitimacy to Western reason, enabling the relationship to be figured as a source of trust and comfort – even when it was not. The maintenance of Anglo-American identity security within the special relationship reveal a tolerance for failings such as corruption, authoritarianism, and human-rights abuse that seriously compromised the rationality of perceiving the Shah's performance in Western normative terms. The passionate commitment to do so, meanwhile, stood in stark contrast to the Anglo-American discourse toward other Third World states, such as the Philippines, Kenya, or Grenada, which could offer none of the 'special' assets such as



security positioning, oil, or weapons markets, that the Shah could provide (Beeson 2007; Doty 1996:53, 80, chapter 3 *passim*; Said 1979:154). Critically, figuring the Shah in terms that enframed Western reason enabled the Anglo-American discourse to reflect to a large – and eventually, damaging – degree the Shah’s own representations, not only of Iran, but of Islam.

### **The ‘Shah-as-Iran’**

The discourse of endearment surrounding the Shah emanated from the sense of comfort and safety that he evoked in Washington and London over a number of years and on a number of fronts. ‘For almost a decade,’ noted Sick, ‘the United States...viewed its relations with Iran almost exclusively as relations with the person of the Shah’ (1985:32).

The monarch in many respects was a creation of the US and British intelligence services who in repositioning him on the throne, overthrew Mossadeq and Iran’s first democratically elected government (Ansari 2006:36-37). Mossadeq, who had nationalized Iran’s oil, was figured in both the US and Britain as pro-communist and thus likely to allow Iran to drop into the Soviet sphere (Farmanfarmaian et al. 1997:243; Keddie 1981:135; Kinzer 2003:203; Roosevelt 1979). The rapid take-over by the US of what had been a primarily British operation responding to disruptions in long-standing Anglo-Iranian Oil relations, and the shift in emphasis from oil security to protection against communism, reflected the perception in Washington that US identity security was being threatened, necessitating a passionate response to protect its credibility as freedom’s leader. In this way, the hasty takeover by the CIA with Britain’s approval, was one of the first cases to reveal that the nature of acceptable democracy (particularly in the Third World) within the Anglo-American discourse was contingent (Armstrong 1992; Harvey 2003:9; Kinzer *ibid*:202; Roosevelt 1979: *passim*).

In place of the dramatic Mossadeq, the Shah was timid, yet he represented the image of a Westernised leader who enthusiastically espoused what in the Anglo-American discourse was perceived to be enlightened ideals of progress and development. He spoke fluent English and French, dressed as a Westerner, and seemed habituated to the modern ways he promised to bring to his nation. Equally important, he was a keen supporter of British and American foreign policies (such as Lyndon Johnson’s exploits in

Vietnam, and Britain's containment of Nasser), and reassuringly secular in his own policy proclivities, unflinchingly providing oil supplies to Israel and South Africa (Bill 1988:177; Joint Statement by Pres. Johnson and the Shah. Washington 23/8/1967 in Alexander and Nanes 1980:367; Ledeen and Lewis 1981:54). While building a personal relationship with each American president and British prime minister over the course of 37 years on the throne, he fostered an adept foreign media personality of a ruler dedicated to improving the lot of his people in accordance with a clear modernisation agenda (Brzezinski 1983:357). The personal communication he maintained constantly ratified the relationship and confirmed the emotional connection, offering an important balance against its normative inadequacies.

Over time, the Shah's personality cult was carefully nurtured, and his ability to clear the political field of opponents so shrewdly handled that by 1969, *US News and World Report* quoted him as saying, 'In this country, the word "king" is almost magic. The people accept almost anything from the "king" (quote in Bill 1988: 197). Importantly, it was not just the Shah who came to believe this, but increasingly, so did the US and Britain and their allies (Carter 1982; Kissinger 1976; Rusk 1967). The Anglo-American discourse toward 'Iran-as-Shah' grew increasingly enthusiastic: it became laden with assertions of common identity, goals, and commitments. It also came to reflect very closely the Shah's reading of history, his assessment of the political, religious, social, economic and security situations, and his perspective on the region. In an example of the emotionalized denial of official memory for the promotion of political love, US government communications (both public and secret) summarizing the Shah's decades-long reign, mirrored his 'relentless...erasing of Mossadeq from the official record of events', rarely if ever mentioning the period, or the level of popular democratic development achieved in the election of Mossadeq's several governments (quote in Ansari 2006: 38; USED 1965-1977 *passim*)<sup>3</sup>. For the US, this emotional commitment to overlook its own values for mutual 'interests' infuses the 'Shah-as-Iran' discourse, the secret shame of omission submerging the impulses not only of those authoring official

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<sup>3</sup> The British archives on this period remain unavailable. The American archives on the Mossadeq overthrow were made available in 1992 through the National Security Archive; see also, C.M. Woodhouse (1982) *Something Ventured: An Autobiography* (New York: Harper Collins); and James Risen (2000) 'The Secret History of the 1963 Coup', [www.nytimes.com/library/world/mideast/041600iran-cia-index.html](http://www.nytimes.com/library/world/mideast/041600iran-cia-index.html).

writing on Iran, but the readers' as well. As Scheff and Retzinger observe, 'Under these conditions, shame becomes recursive and self-perpetuating. Unacknowledged shame builds a wall between persons and between groups. A chain reaction occurs, shame building on shame' (p. 30). Conformity to the myth of mutuality ensured that attunement between the two states was never complete, but instead, that a constant, often subconscious sense of alienation within the engulfment of the relationship prevailed.

In similar vein, rarely was the Shah's weak character touched upon in official documents, though it frequently figured in reports written prior to the 1953 coup. By contrast, these documents, as well as speeches made by various US statesmen from Kissinger to Carter, were prone to emotional exaggeration and discursive imitation, citing, for example, the advantages of 25 centuries of kingship in Iran, a construct of the Shah's first enunciated during the Persepolis festivities of 1972 (Zonis 1991). An embassy report to the State Department penned February 1977, stated, 'His almost unchallenged domination of the political scene rests on 2,500 years of monarchical tradition and his own extraordinary skill in exercising his powers for the benefit of his nation' (USED 1149, 1977/02/28, v.7:88). Constructing the Shah in these terms enabled a politics of passion in which was embedded an ahistoricist narrative of tradition and legitimacy. Yet, this elided alternative perspectives on how the Shah's powers were viewed by his own populace, and the methods by which he was maintaining his monarchical hold.

Even subjugated views, such as those heard during Congressional debates in the later '70s, particularly on military sales to Iran, all stopped short of denying the mutually beneficial aspects of a relationship that, besides guaranteeing shared security and which now also included the protection of Gulf oil resources, involved a cosy alliance with a very 'Western', Eastern monarch. In fact, the intensity of the emotional commitment meant that to criticize the Shah became politically hazardous for much of the '70s in both Britain and the US. The domestication of meanings associated with him and his regime had become institutionalised and bureaucratised as normative – that is, they constituted 'appropriate' behaviour toward Iran (Sick 1985:18, 21). To question him or his programmes implied a lack of confidence in the way they were conducting *their* moral agenda (Parsons 1984: xi; 19; Sick 1985:41-2). Even to those who regarded the situation

in Iran with concern, the Shah was no longer a subject to be problematized, the dominating themes of the Anglo-American discourse serving to objectify Iran as an object of desire, a prize to be protected and show-cased: an object, in short, of political love.

The passionate construction of the Shah-as-Iran was elaborated in three sub-discourses: his key position inside the Western security community; his promotion of Western-style modernity and human rights through economic well-being; and his steady grip on power with implications not only for regional stability but world order. Each of these contributed to Anglo-American identity security, in that they perpetuated (falsely or otherwise) emotions of comfort, and enabled figurations of self as promoters of democracy and stability.

*The Shared Security Discourse: From pride to hubris*

The Nixon Doctrine of 1969, which codified the US decision to reduce its costly role of global gendarme by arming and supporting surrogate friends, identified Iran as its first, and as it turned out, its most spectacular proxy (Schoenbaum 1979; Taheri 1988: 57). In so doing, the two states (with Britain as usher and witness) established an international regime of cooperation to combat the threat of communism. This confirmed that they trusted each other to resolve disputes among themselves peacefully; and, would provide a concerted front of shared ideals and capabilities against a common enemy – fulfilling the requirements of a security community (Barnett 1996; Bially-Mattern 2001:353; Frederking 2003:368).

This was a win-win scenario – a commanding position for Iran, and low-cost way for the US to fulfil its national security interests. As a September 1976 Report of the Inspector General of the US Foreign Service stated: ‘US policy toward Iran has been effective in advancing US interests. Most policy objectives have been attained, and at a minimum cost in terms of US official resources’ (USED 01089:6). By 1976, the Shah’s role had come to include shoring up US identity security in the oil sector, a key aspect of Washington’s ability to maintain its role identity as moderniser and manager of global wealth (Harvey 2003, chapter 2, *passim*; O’Brien 2003:11). Premised on the commitment that ‘So long as Middle East petroleum remains vital to the West, Iranian friendship will

be of critical importance to the United States'; it was constructed as a 'special relationship' (USED *ibid* 1: quote on 6), in which the US could play a shielding, as well as a modelling and nurturing role on several fronts including military, strategic, and economic<sup>4</sup>. The gilded phrase 'special relationship' appears regularly in diplomatic and policy texts, being one the US 'considered unusually close, and a special relationship comparable in some respects and for much the same reasons to the US relationship with NATO and Israel' ('Annual Policy Resource Assessment for Iran: Part I', secret cable, US Embassy Teheran, USED 1977/04/05; 01159).

Parsons suggests that Britain apprehended the relationship similarly. 'For nearly a decade' he writes, 'the Shah had enjoyed an exceptional relationship with the administration in Washington,' He goes on:

'This enhanced status for the Shah in American eyes created an unique nexus of interdependence. The Shah adopted foreign and strategic policies which suited the United States (and Britain for that matter); in return, the cornucopia of American arms supplies and political support was opened wide.' (1984:46).

What Parsons fails to note is that the cornucopia of Britain's arms supplies was opened equally wide, with more Chieftain tanks sold to the Shah than to its own Ministry of Defence (Keddie 1981:176).

The role of parental guardians of a 'good' child enabled the US and Britain to imagine Iran an extension of self. On the one hand, the Shah's Iran was the West's bulwark against communism and Gendarme of the Gulf; on the other, the US and the Western Alliance were Iran's protectors against Soviet aggression, an identity merging that implicated the contingency of narcissism, and its subtle inscription of meanings of dominance and dependence (Kissinger 1979; and House of Representatives 'Hearings on the sale of Advanced Warning Aircraft Control Systems to Iran', July 29, 1977 in Alexander and Nanes 1980: 370). This identity merging was starkly revealed when Nixon and Kissinger signed an unprecedented strategic security agreement with the Shah in Tehran on May 31<sup>st</sup>, 1972, beginning the extraordinary arrangement of trust and support

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<sup>4</sup> Nixon used the phrase 'special relationship' at the time of the Shah's visit to Washington October 23, 1967 and it was used frequently after Nixon's election to the Presidency. Johnson used the phrase: 'our most valued and trusted friend' but stopped short of calling it a 'special relationship'. Thereafter it remained in the lexicon used by both parties until the Shah's fall; see Alexander and Nanes, eds. (1980) *The United States and Iran A Documentary History* (Frederick, MD: Aletheia Books): pp. 348-434 *passim*.

that blurred sovereign military lines between the two states. Significantly, Nixon, then vice president of the US, ended the meeting with the Shah saying humbly, 'Protect me' (quote in Sick 1985:14).

Just five weeks later, on July 5, in an impressive act of mobilization, Kissinger penned a directive to the Departments of State and Defense to provide whatever military equipment the Shah asked for short of nuclear weaponry. The Secret Memorandum states, 'in general, decisions on the acquisition of military equipment should be left primarily to the government of Iran. If the Government of Iran has decided to buy certain equipment, the purchase of US equipment should be encouraged tactfully where appropriate, and technical advice on the capabilities of the equipment in question should be provided' (Kissinger 'Memo', Department of State, 1972, National Security Archive). Nixon's and Kissinger's arrangement with the Shah was a response to the final withdrawal of British forces from the Gulf as well as a result of their close personal relationship with him, and there was an emotional sense of comfort that both depended and were dependent on the other – the Shah's provision of security against the Soviet Union, as well as importantly, his economic reliance on the US, making it a relationship in which attunement was possible, dependency being perceived as in some measure balanced.

This all changed with the oil windfalls of the '70s, which made it possible for the Shah to buy whatever he wished free of any US economic constraints. This catapulted Iran into becoming the Pentagon's biggest client, its billions enabling the US military to amortize the heavy research and development costs of such systems as the F-14s, IBEX surveillance network and Phoenix missiles (Alexander and Nanes 1980:376; Keddie 1981:176; Schoenbaum 1979:19). A similar situation prevailed in Britain, where the Shah's purchases offset the heavy outlays for oil, as well as for military research (Keddie *ibid*; Shulz 1989).

Faith in the Shah's support of the US and the West perpetuated an emotionalised discourse of such trust and goodwill that despite his new financial independence elicited no change in the arrangement. At the time, Iran's free hand in the US arsenal - a position no other country, not even Great Britain, enjoyed - was constructed not as a risk but as a boon. As Parsons notes: 'The relative tranquillity and pro-Western orientation of

Iran...was of cardinal importance' (p.140). The picture of the Shah as a dependable and admirable ally runs throughout the Anglo-American discourse, a heuristic that drew from the memory of distrust and discomfort associated with the independence of Mossadeq and the contrasting feeling of pride the US took in his replacement. That this extraordinary decision was emotionally driven can be attested to by the fact that it fit neither a normative nor rational paradigm, in the former case there being no rule of appropriateness toward other 'most favoured nations' with which it coincided, while in the latter, the exposure and vulnerability it created were incongruous with 'self-help'. Four years later, Kissinger confirmed the we-ness at a meeting of the United States-Iran Joint Commission: 'On all major international issues,' he declared, 'the policies of the United States and the policies of Iran have been parallel and therefore mutually reinforcing' (Kissinger, 'Statement upon the Conclusion of the US-Iran Joint Commission, 6/8/1976, in Alexander and Nanes 1980:403).

This discourse of affection, in Kissinger's view, was unique, in that the Shah 'was for us the rarest of leaders, an unconditional ally' (Kissinger 1979:1261). By then, however, incongruities and discrepancies in the human rights and development aspects of the Shah's rule were already rife; yet, the commitment by the US and Britain to the Shah was too great, and the habit of the relationship too engrained to allow for a fundamental reassessment of the alliance. Instead, attunement among the parties eroded as unspoken shame came to invest every aspect of the relationship: Anglo-American embarrassment at the Shah's iniquities and the growing need to discursively dismiss or justify them; the Shah's self-doubt at being perceived as not delivering his vaunted Great Civilization and being under-appreciated by his greatest allies. Guilt on the part of all three festered as all adopted the hubris of false pride in the other.

### *Democracy, Human Rights, and the Discourse of Denied Shame*

In his memoirs, British Ambassador Parsons remembers the enthusiasm with which he prepared for his mission to Iran:

'I had a keen intellectual interest in observing at first hand the prospects of one of the few Third World countries which was generally believed to be close to breaking through the barrier of underdevelopment'. (1984:4)

This view pervades official British and American documents and much of the media during the late '60s and most of the '70s, mythologizing Iran as not only an economic but a political miracle. The general acceptance, even in secret reports to Congress and the NSC, of the Shah's commitment to democratization suggests an erasure of resistances to even the most inconsistent of the Shah's claims regarding political liberalization. Presumptions that economic expansion would create political openings were tempered primarily by the concern that the Shah's modernization plans were too ambitious to be absorbed by a diffident population. Discussions in State Department and embassy reports of the Shah's intentions and ability to incorporate more representative government into society, or loosen media censorship, usually contained only one sentence justifying the lack of progress by noting that he considered Western forms of democracy inappropriate for Iran, a view that is rarely contested (Parsons 1984:18; USED 1975-6: *passim*). The imposition of a one-party system in 1975, for example, which the Shah touted as politically liberalizing, was reported with little comment, the lack of surrounding discussion, and hence, relational context, implying comfort with the idea – or at best, unexamined acquiescence.

‘Although the abolition of Iran's multi-party system has unnecessarily strengthened his foreign critics, we doubt that the Shah cares. He seems to see his own position and that of his nation made so strong by virtue of oil and by his own successful record of leadership that criticism of his internal policies will either be muffled or be of no consequence. In this he may be right’ (USED, Confidential Report, US embassy Tehran to Dept of State 10/7/75: 3).

This document evokes the tone of an indulgent parent putting a positive spin on a rather unimportant incident – thus acting as a ratification of a reciprocated bond. Equally telling, it demarcates the difference between American identity and that of the Shah's ‘foreign critics’ in a confirmation of the boundary between ‘them’ (the critics) and ‘us’ (the US and the Shah) through a logic of equivalence (Howarth et al: 2002). This was a response to perceived endangerment to the Shah's identity as a democratizing leader, which by association, reflected on the US as parental guide. There is no comment on the Shah's actual act of having abolished the multi-party system. The use of the word ‘unnecessary’ not only situates the American perception of the Shah's action as acceptable, but denies that any support for a multi-party system in Iran has validity. The



cable is silent regarding internal dissent, save to note it will be 'muffled' or dismissed: by not eliciting further discussion, these are revealed as tactics the US has not only come to expect, but to ignore. The last sentence, by giving the Shah the benefit of the doubt, in fact puts the US imprimatur on his choice to stifle political plurality. The failure to note in any way how contrary this is to US democratic norms, even in a confidential report, suggests meanings and practices in which shame has been subconsciously repressed. This implicates the US as emotionally entrenched in the Shah's discourse, and engulfed in a relationship in which its own ideals and discourses of liberal democracy are being transgressed through the embedded denial of responses (both emotionally, normatively and in policy). (For similar, though marginally more critical approaches in the British discourse, see Parsons 1984:16-17).

The discursive discipline of political love, in which the Shah's successes are endearingly figured as outshining any drawbacks, had serious implications for the United States' own universalist discourse of human rights. The following exchange at a Hearing of the House Subcommittee on International Organisations in August 1976 offers one example. The hearing took place in response to a 1976 Amnesty International report, also presented as evidence that day, which had found the abuses of the Shah's security and intelligence services, SAVAK, so serious, and the Iranian laws protecting civil rights so inadequate, that it had prompted the UN Commission on Human Rights to list Iran as a top violator requiring immediate action (Butler and Lavasseur White Paper 1976). This constituted a threat to both Iran's and its allies' identity security as practitioners of universalist values, especially under Carter's promotion of human rights. The normative rule of appropriateness would have necessitated signalling acknowledgement and pressing for changes; political emotionality, on the other hand, apprehended the need for immediate defence, and thus, unequivocal denial. In his statement, Assistant Secretary of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, Alfred Atherton testified:

'I believe that the advantages which have been made in improving the human rights of the broad majority of Iran's population under considerable adversity far outweigh such abuses as have occurred in an attempt to control the violent challenges to the government' (USED Doc. 01092, 'Human Rights in Iran', US Congress, House Committee on Foreign Relations, 9/8/1976:27).

Here Atherton reveals the US adoption of the Shah's claims that the general human rights situation was improving in Iran and that political repression was confined to the control of violence against the government. In the same hearing, William J. Butler of the International Commission of Jurists corroborated the Amnesty findings, offering evidence based on his own official investigations conducted in the Iranian prisons. Atherton, however, rejected this evidence with the extraordinary statement, 'We do not have what I should call primary evidence of torture' (Ibid:28).<sup>5</sup> Atherton's denial of Butler's findings, and his figuration of human rights abuse as a necessary sacrifice levied only at the violent few in the face of the larger good of the majority, implicates a subjective projection of a rosy, fictive image of Iran that jibed with the hegemonic regime of truth surrounding it in Washington, and which Atherton elected to believe in the face of the discomfiting facts produced by Butler. This 'belief' is instantiated without settling the meaning of 'improvement' in the area of human rights, save through the exclusionary practice of denying the importance of the abuses enunciated during the hearing. His false pride in the 'improvements' attained by the Shah's regime reflects unacknowledged, and hence, repressed shame at the UN Human Rights Commission's condemnation of Iran's 'gross violations'. As Scheff and Retzinger observe, denial of such feelings is often projected outward in a denial of the situation, a state of affairs that makes it difficult to acknowledge one's own responsibility or contribution, and therefore, the morality of one's actions. 'To the extent that shame becomes a part of one's character, it would seem to interfere with the functioning of conscience', a process breakdown clearly observable during these hearings (Scheff and Retzinger 1991:186; USED ibid).<sup>6</sup>

Such constructions within the Anglo-American discourse enabled the Shah's autocratic methods to be projected as commensurate with Western democratic values.

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<sup>5</sup> During the hearing, Butler felt it necessary, in light of Atherton's reference to broadened human rights, to remind the Congressmen that 'recently the Shah has eradicated the whole concept of the two party political system when he decreed in 1975 as follows, and I quote him: "A person who does not enter the new political party and does not believe in the three cardinal principles which I referred to, will only have two choices: He is either an individual who belongs to an illegal organization or is related to an outlaw of the party, or in other words, is a traitor"' (USED Doc. 01092 US Congress, House Committee on Foreign Relations, 9/8/1976: p. 6). Atherton rejoined by stating: 'the so-called single party within itself is a forum for expressing different points of view' (ibid: 28)

<sup>6</sup> This file contains Butler's report as well as the House testimony, and a report on an earlier meeting between the US representative and other members of the UN commission on Human Rights. The documents make clear that US pressure eventually led to a revision of the judgement.

Parsons reviews Whitehall's perceptions of Iran in a similar fashion of denial, noting, 'the human rights record of the Shah's regime was bad. But when had they not been so in Iran?' (Parsons 1984:3) In figuring present practices in terms of historical continuity, Parsons uses false analogy to implicate Iran as inferior – failures in the past justifying failures in the present – and therefore not necessitating similar human rights practices to those of the West. He then claims that ongoing contact with the West would prove felicitous in this regard, though only because, 'There was no doubt the continuation of the Shah's regime, and the achievement of his goals, were in our interest' (ibid: 3.18). This discourse, characterised by cognitive constraint, wrapped the Shah's goals in a regime of truth which only partially mirrored and permanently deferred the meanings and claims of the Anglo-American discourse. In this way, Britain and the US both instantiated the love object as well as their own selves in figurations of 'good' (even when the Shah's methods were 'necessarily' authoritarian or abusive), and that of any nay-sayers, whether UN inspectors or opponents to the Iranian government, as endangering.

Atherton testified several times over the years, as did Undersecretary of Political Affairs Philip Habib, Charles Naas of the State Department Iran Desk, Leslie Gelb of the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, Henry Precht of the State Department and many others, their statements contributing to the fund of hegemonic language in which words such as 'friendship', 'stability', 'lynchpin', 'progress' and 'mutual protection' appear as regular and consistent signifiers (USED 1975-77: *passim*). Meanwhile, references to human rights abuses, political liberties, freedom of expression, corruption and mismanagement are glossed over, or when addressed with candour, overshadowed by a subsequent flurry of positive rhetoric – both tactics revealing the embarrassment associated with overt mention, and the importance of submerging any hint of shame for the sake of continuity and solidarity (USED *ibid*, including especially Richard Helms, 'Decision-making in Iran' to USDOS, 01066, 1976/07/22:v.7:102-107; Alexander and Nanes 1980: 405-475).

This is not to say that certain aspects of the relationship, including Iran's human rights practices, were not at times hotly debated. Counter-arguments and protestations were loud in the Senate at the Shah's autocratic rule, human rights abuses, and self-aggrandizement. Secretary of the Treasury William Simon called him 'a nut', while Paul

Erdman's *The Crash of '79* was a thinly disguised critique of the risks implicated in the Shah's megalomania (Bill 1986:15-21; Erdman 1976; quote in Milani 1994:95).

'Sometimes I think it is a lot easier not to look at these problems squarely, but an awful lot of things can happen under this kind of non-recognition of harsh realities as they exist in society,' noted Donald Fraser, Chairman of the House of Representatives Hearing on Human Rights in Iran (USED Doc. 01092 9/8/1976: 31). Fraser's rare sounding of concern at the fragility of the boundary between protection and self-delusion, was as close as it could be to an acknowledgement of American practices toward the Shah's regime, in which shame was elided and hubris privileged. His observations, however, were interpreted as a call for greater American guardianship around the positive mythologies surrounding the Shah, and the status it incorporated (Campbell 1992:235). The power instantiated in the passionate evocation of American pride in the Shah, and fondness for him personally, was thereby strengthened, rather than lessened, by doubt. This was the case even though many individuals in government did not hold views that were all similarly pro-Shah, as Zbigniew Brzezinski realized during the Shah's last days on the throne. 'As the crisis unfolded,' he grumbled, 'it became evident to me that lower echelons at State, notably the head of the Iran Desk, Henry Precht, were motivated by doctrinal dislike of the Shah, and simply wanted him out of power altogether' (Brzezinski 1983:355). This revelation, however, only strengthened Brzezinski's own commitment to the Shah.

#### *Mythologies of invincibility and stability: Writing off the opposition*

In 1975, departing US Ambassador Richard Helms allowed himself to pen a small expression of alarm concerning the political situation in Iran, but then thought better of it. Writing in his end-of-mission summary that the educated elite was 'unable or unwilling to provide the conservative leadership from which peaceful change ideally would come,' he added, 'one cannot but fear that they are abdicating in favor of the radicals'. Though he acknowledged that 'radicals' existed – but not who they were, Helms, like his predecessors, and his British counterparts, chose to evade the issue, and figured the threat of opposition as too minimal to warrant further thought. Almost in relief he adds, 'On the other hand, the country's very successful economic performance probably lessens the

dangers of social upheaval (USED, Diplomatic Airgram, August 1975: 40). In this way, the economic discursively disciplined the political, such that the social stresses of modernization were seen as politically defrayable as the economic rewards cemented the Shah's position. Yet, the engulfing discourse of political love in fact failed Helms and Washington here too, for already there were clear indications that the Shah's Westernizing projects and methods were disastrously structured, and within a year of Helms' departure, the economic situation deteriorated dramatically.

The Anglo-American discourse of solidarity remained unassailable, however, because the Shah's stability, as Schoenbaum observes, was inherently 'taken to be a good thing', the fact being, that 'for most of official Washington, it was seductively easy to identify the Shah with Iran' (1979:18). The discourse played simultaneously on the Anglo-American fears of what political instability in Iran might mean (Gulf oil shortages, Soviet military adventurism), and on strong positive associations with the Shah's steadfast leadership. Activating (albeit obliquely) the historical memory of discomfort elicited during the Mossadeq era, Kissinger in August 1976, stated 'The stability of Iran, the commitment of Iran to its security, is a major factor for global peace and a major factor in the stability of the Middle East. There are at least some Americans who do not take it for granted because they remember that even in Iran things were not always that way, and that they do not always have to be that way, and that we owe something to the farsighted leadership of His Imperial Majesty, which has brought matters to this point' ('Statement on the Conclusion of the US-Iran Joint Commission', in Alexander and Nanes 1980:403). The constancy that was accorded the relationship was thus intimately bound up not only with the need to maintain the Shah's personal commitment to stability, but because the past was used to conjure up fears of a future without him.

Balancing this, the self-constructed image of the Shah as a monarch beloved by his people who were reaping the benefits of his reforms, was generally accepted in the discourses abroad. Not only was the policy of the State Department and Whitehall to look the other way when their embassies in Tehran were discouraged by SAVAK from making too many opposition contacts (Stempel 1981; Cooley 1991:18; Sick 1985; Sullivan 1981: chapter 3, *passim*), but they systematically reduced their political resources in favour of boosting their commercial and consular sections.

‘There would be no ‘spying on Iran’ in my embassy’ declared British Ambassador Parsons, equating the normal diplomatic practice of reporting on opposition voices as ‘spying’, and justifying his decision on the ‘rational’ argument of not wanting to insult the Shah through any hint of continuing Britain’s historical practices of intervention in Iranian affairs (1984:5). The same view pertained in Washington. ‘Opposition to the regime is more a state of mind than a readiness to act.’ noted a Dept of State Bureau of Intelligence and Research Secret Report in which the primary area of concern was enlargement of the Embassy commercial premises in Tehran (USED 01144. ‘The Future of Iran, Implications for the US’, January 1977). A State Department Briefing Paper drafted that same month stated, ‘The Shah, who has 35 years of experience on the throne, has the loyalty of the broad mass of the populace, particularly in the rural areas, and the full cooperation of the armed forces and the intelligence/security apparatus, as well as the support of an extremely able group of civilian technocrats’ (USED 01138, 3 March 1977:124-125). Although acknowledging that there were Iranian technocrats and intellectuals who were ‘passively resistant to the Shah’s authoritarian rule’ and various clergy who ‘do not accept the present monarchy or its reform projects’, these sectors of society are not analysed further, most probably – to judge from embassy documents and other archival sources – because no in-depth information was being collected.

This willingness to abrogate their own intelligence gathering responsibilities, and their blind comfort in the we-ness of the relationship, acts as a vivid example of how they had given up important aspects of themselves in order to maintain the bond. Although it appeared outwardly to be one of intense attachment, in fact, it signalled a relationship in which independence was interpreted as disloyalty, or even betrayal (Scheff and Retzinger 1991:25).

Signifying the opposition as simply ‘passive resistance’ enabled what was arguably the most serious misconception within the ‘Shah-as-Iran’ discourse: the Shah’s invincibility. Western academics and politicians, as well as the Shah, discursively figured Marxism as the problem child, and therefore, that opposition would spring from the intelligentsia and middle classes (Cottam 1989; Hermann 1989; Pahlavi 1981). Drawing on the shared US-Iran memory of Mossadeq’s ‘communist’ proclivities, the

Shah represented the Soviet-linked Tudeh party as Moscow's Trojan horse, and the small Marxist-inspired Mojaheddin and Fedayeen fringe groups as major terrorist threats – ensuring they were figured as serious enough that the government was justified in causing their violent suppression (Irfani 1982; Keddie 1981:236-239).<sup>7</sup>

Additionally, the moderate intellectual and middle classes, known to support political liberalisation and civil rights, were constituted as closet leftists, even though their discourses paralleled the Anglo-American narrative of democracy (Milani 1988:74). Represented by the Shah as threatening his vision of progress, they were systematically discredited (until, ironically, the Shah was overthrown and they became the 'moderates' that in the Anglo-American response to Khomeini, were represented as Iran's primary hope). In the meantime, the Shah's ability to deliver stability and business likewise enabled this group to be repressed through state violence, and for London and Washington to be lulled into acquiescence. 'I blame myself for not speaking to the Shah about this crass reaction' Parsons, in retrospect, notes. 'My staff pressed me hard to have this out with the Shah...They were right. But I did not.' (Parsons 1984: 53).

The clerical opposition was understood purely in terms of the Court's discourse. The ulama were represented as having been effectively co-opted by the Shah, and unlikely to play any significant political role in a society already experiencing the benefits of secularized modernization (Sullivan 1981; Hoogland 1989; Vilanilam 1989:97). As Prime Minister Jamshid Amouzegar, declared in August 1977, 'the reactionary mullahs are finished. Iran has moved beyond them' (quote in Stempel 1981:84). Sullivan reports that in his discussions with the Shah 'he often spoke of them as "ragheads" and told how corrupt and venal they were' (1981:90) Those clerics that did not succumb to royal constraint were jailed and/or banished, and, along with many bazaaris, painted as reactionary and anti-reform, in contrast to the Shah, who was painted as modernizing and bringing progress (Keddie 1981:157; Vilanilam 1989:131-2) In fact, the Shah's regime often equated the 'red' (communist) threat, and the 'black' (reactionary mullahs) in a false analogy in which all opposition was traitorous, and by necessity therefore, working in 'an unholy alliance' (Pahlavi 1980:153-6). This

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<sup>7</sup> The assassination by guerrillas of two Americans in the mid-'70s (as well as several members of SAVAK) made this argument more readily adoptable in the American discourse; see Keddie 1981:239).

symbolized all opposition forces as evil and faceless, such that the Islamic political philosophers whose thinking grounded much of the revolution's rhetoric (such as Mottahari, Taleghani, and Shariati), and who all spent time in SAVAK's jails, never warranted mention in any of the documents from this era, nor any main US or British newspapers vetted for the period (USED *passim*; National Security Archive Iran documents, *passim*; see also Ionnides 1984; Vilanilam 1989). Likewise, their lectures and writings on the nexus between Islam and modernity, if noticed at all, were dismissed as irrelevant – a critical oversight brought about by the Anglo-American buy-in of the Shah's discourse.

The British view of the clerics mirrored both the Americans' and the Shah's. 'We knew that the religious classes were implacably opposed to the Shah's vision of an Iran transformed into a modern, industrialized Western state,' Parson observed without further comment a year prior to the upheavals. Instead, he evoked the old Iran in Orientalist terms of Eastern lassitude, 'The slow, traditional courtesies of the Muslim world were being swamped by the onrush of the Great Civilization, but were not being replaced by the vitality and enthusiasm which might have been expected in a society in the process of rapid and fundamental change' (pp. 3,6). Parsons does not consider how an Eastern people would feel about becoming a Westernized state, the latter's virtues having become so naturalized as a good thing that he is disconcerted by the lack of enthusiasm in Iran, seeing in it an expression of the 'slow' torpor (as opposed to 'vitality') of the traditional Muslim world. Because the political love invested in Iran was constructed on Western norms and motives, and on Anglo-American practices and imaginaries, the Iranian interpretation of modernity designed the Shah's way was construed as rejection and backwardness. Parsons is correct in saying the clerical classes and traditional Muslim society were 'against the Shah's vision of modernity' – but failed to conclude that they might wish to develop their own vision of modernity in Iran.

The urban and rural lower classes, and the bazaar, though at times courted to balance what was perceived as a middle class duped by the attractions of Marxism, were constructed as politically malleable and not a significant factor (Milani 1988:65). 'Orientalist' labels such as uncivilized, backward, and benighted, fenced them off rhetorically as effectively as the slums in which they dwelled fenced them away



geographically (Parsons 1984:14). A position of superiority in constructions of and by the Shah vis-a-vis the Iranian populace was absorbed with little variation in the Anglo-American discourse, paralleling and fuelling the feeling of benevolence, upon which their own status rested in relation to Iran. Yet, as Parsons discovered, but only after being in Iran for two years, 'the propaganda machine went to Orwellian lengths to sustain the myth of the Shah's mystical union with his people and to disguise the reality of his remoteness' (p.23). Parsons fails to consider this important, writing it off as a quirky aspect of the Shah's rule, subsuming subconsciously the shame it inspired, which nonetheless is hinted at in his use of the word 'Orwellian'. This cognitive and affiliative constraint was operationalized equally strongly in the emotionalized American discourse, which ignored the Shah's intolerance for diversity of opinion, and looked the other way (in shame) when he made such statements as: 'The place of those who opposed the Constitution, the monarchical system and the People-Shah-Revolution is either in jail or outside Iran' (quote in *Kayhan International* 3/3/1975). It was never asked, therefore, what beyond 'The compulsion of total terror' was there in the Shah's reign to engage his population? (Milani 1988:70; quote in Robin 2004:100) The Shah is credited with propounding no ideology beyond massive modernization and monarchical grandiosity (Stempel 1981; USED 1973-77 *passim*). Besides a rising living standard, that was itself uneven and tended to favour the rich (this, too, is largely unexamined), there was little space given over to why the Shah would have been beloved by his people (Keddie 1981:180; Milani 1988:70).

The media adoption of the Shah's discourse was equally passionate and it was strikingly uninformative concerning the outlook of the urban or rural poor, the political activism taking place within the bazaar and mosque networks, or even the tenor of those in the oil fields (Vilanilam 1989: 19). 'Newsmen were just repeating what the architects of US foreign policy...had stated about Iran and the Shah', and what original coverage there was focused on the capital; considering Iran's importance to Western security and oil needs, it was extremely sparse (Adams 1981:12; quote in Vilanilam 1989:91). Seasoned reporters were careful what they investigated, and what they published (Cooley 1991:2-4), subsuming the shaming requirement to self-censor within the rational argument that to function at all in Tehran, they had to follow the rules. In this the media

contributed to the Anglo-American discourse of engulfment as good (rational) and proper (normatively appropriate), for the sake of Iran's stability, and the Anglo-American relationship with it. The fiction that a country moving toward progress could do so without a free press was elaborated in a discourse that only rarely referred to the Shah's tight control over the media; yet, even the 'freer' English language version of the Iranian papers offered little insight on the Shah's opposition (*Kayhan International* 1973-77: *passim*; *Tehran Journal* 1974-78: *passim*).

The construction of stability in the narrative surrounding the Shah was, in sum, a field filled only by the subjective truths emplaced by power and fear, and was passionately preserved as a primary plank in US and British foreign policy. The emotional claim on this 'knowledge' made possible meanings that immunised the 'stability' of the Shah from the effect of adverse developments for much longer than otherwise would have been possible. As Carter famously said on his visit to Iran exactly a year prior to the Shah's departure and one week before the first major demonstration of the revolution: 'Iran under the leadership of the Shah is an island of stability in one of the more troubled areas of the world. This is a great tribute to you, Your Majesty, and to your leadership, and to the respect, admiration and love which your people give you' (Carter 1982: 437; Pahlavi 1980: 152-153).<sup>8</sup>

### **Distortions – the hidden danger of political love**

Political love, which had flowered initially out of the security- and oil-based arrangements of mutual gain in the '60s, began, in the late '70s to exhibit strain in response to embedded and unacknowledged distortions. First, countervailing voices were ignored or reduced to quietism (Bill 1988; Milani 1988:95). Red flags that were being raised were squashed. One, by an American Embassy political officer in 1978, pointed to disturbing signs that Iran was not what the US was making it out to be. But, as the officer

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<sup>8</sup> Interestingly, Carter's speech replicated almost word for word a dispatch sent to London in 1961 by the British Resident in the Gulf, Sir William Luce, after 6,500 British troops and 45 warships were sent to Kuwait to dissuade Iraq from fulfilling a threat to invade. The operation was successful, and as Sir Luce wrote to the Foreign Office, 'The Persian Gulf, thanks to our presence, is an island of comparative stability surrounded by a sea of uncertainty.' See Faisal bin Salman al-Saud (2004) *Iran, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf: Power Politics in Transition* (London: IB Taurus), p. 7.

wrote in a telegram found by the hostage takers, 'we [Americans], with increasing stubbornness, insisted on ignoring them' (*Asnad*, 14 (5), March 1979:24).

Second, the importance of Tehran as the CIA's regional centre for gathering intelligence on the Soviet Union enabled perceptions of developing difference with the Shah to be damped down for the sake of privileging the discourse of communist containment and identity security.

Nonetheless, anxiety increased in response to a heightening degree of alienation in the relationship, suggesting that old strategies and habits were inadequately serving the current situation (Marcus 2003:203). The unalloyed warmth with which the Shah's Iran had been constructed in the Anglo-American discourse began to cool. The Shah's self-aggrandizement, which Zonis attributes to his compensating for the perpetual diminishment he felt as a result of Washington's and London's role in obtaining him his throne, led him to adopt an uncomfortably brash stance on oil pricing in OPEC (Zonis 1991:227). This was an indignity to its own status that grated on Western nerves (USED 01144:127), and contributed to rising US public outrage at his unrelenting expenditure on large-scale weapons and his failure to improve his human rights record. In response to Carter's human rights platform and commitment to arms control, public protest rejected the discipline of enframing these latter concerns as occasional corollaries to the process of modernizing a backward country. A particularly loud and recriminatory debate in the Senate at the time of the Shah's order for AWACS served to introduce serious strains into the relationship (Sullivan 1981: 116). More veiled, but equally irritating, to judge from secret State Department texts, were activities by SAVAK, which had begun tracking the Shah's opposition in the United States and Europe, and in so doing, was flouting the sovereignty of those states as well as international law (USED, 01138:130).

At the same time, a plaintive fear began to creep into official documents that the US had become too dependent on Iran, which offered the US unique strategic surveillance options for monitoring the USSR. This translated into expressions of paranoia that the United States had become unnervingly vulnerable to pressure by a power-hungry Shah, an acknowledgement that normative rifts were present in the relationship, though there is no suggestion that the US perceived itself as having in any way contributed to the situation. Embarrassment at the extreme behaviour of such a close

ally was transformed into anxiety for America's own identity security. This drove a wedge of overt distrust into the relationship. 'A significant change to this policy of forthcomingness would...entail definite risk that the Shah would counter with actions against our military and intelligence assets in Iran, and very probably on our economic and commercial interests as well', noted a secret State Department Briefing paper (USED, 01138,1977/01/03, v. 8: 122). The apprehension that the bond with the Shah was not secure, but instead, a source of fear in that it constituted a 'definite risk', reflected Washington's own unacknowledged intolerance for precocious behaviour on the part of the 'child', leading to suspected violence in relation to the precarious boundary between Iranian and American identity.

In weighing tactics to get the relationship back on track, however, no strategic change was contemplated. Instead, a variety of ways were considered to contain the situation and re-assert American control, revealing the US commitment not to alienate or put pressure on the object of its endearment for the sake of its own status in the arrangement. The bedrock of political love helped to mitigate the sense of incipient danger, despite the general sense that the relationship was in a 'precarious equilibrium' (ibid). Emotional imbrications in the political at multiple levels (fear and anxiety at the prospect of reduced status as a benevolent parent, of military pressure, of economic consequences) perpetuated the environment of we-ness (Katouzian 1981:323). Yet, in a relational configuration no longer as comfortable as the initial permutation of identity construction, security came to be seen more in terms of putting in place ways to maintain stasis rather than promoting expansion (Campbell 1992:232, f.34). This reduced the well-being in the relationship—leading to a narrowing in the range of possible courses of mutual action, and opening up a new range of possible misunderstandings.

The Shah, exceptionally sensitive about his foreign image, and always cognisant that his empowerment stemmed quite considerably from his special position with the US, responded to the unease by making several liberalisation moves, thereby acknowledging American calls for democracy. As a paeon to detractors, the Shah allowed criticism to be published in the Iranian media concerning allied states (Milani 1988:109). Yet, this small opening exposed those states as objects of popular derision, and helped to make them magnets of an increasingly widening Iranian discontent. 'By the summer of 1977, it was

clear to most Iranians, but not to Washington,...' wrote Stempel, 'that the US had become chained to the Shah in negative ways' (1981:80).

The close rapport between the United States and the Shah was therefore itself going through an awkward nodal point just before the revolution, in which signifiers were beginning to float free from their moorings, and a sense of disarray to cloud what had been a very clear regime of truth. This in part helps to explain why the revolution seemed to appear so suddenly, since a primary focus at the time was on the growing irritation in the American relationship with the Shah (while the Shah's relationship with the rest of Iran was understood as secondary and under control). Despite upheaval in the streets throughout Iran, and the rising death toll throughout 1978, by as late as October none of the tension that a crisis normally evokes had begun to seep into the discourse (Bill 1988). Instead, both sides stepped back from substantive engagement over military bargaining and oil pricing to a more social agenda as a means to re-knit and ratify the trust and camaraderie in the relationship. Two rapid-fire state visits in one year (the Pahlavis to Washington, November 1977, the Carters to Tehran, New Year's eve 1977-'78), helped to hide the withdrawal, even neglect, that characterised the political, as opposed to the booming economic exchanges at that time (Sick 1985:28). It was only once the crisis on the ground was apprehended in Washington as being serious, that the relationship bounded back to life, with a sense of ire and self-blame at having abandoned the Shah at a critical hour propelling the relationship once again forward (Carter 1977:435).

By then, a mass, but to the West, invisible, popular movement was beginning to take shape in Iran in response to a strongly articulated Islamic-based ideology. The fateful Rose Garden meeting between the Shah and President Carter and their wives in the fall of 1977, however, in which tear-gas was used to control the anti-Shah demonstrators beyond White House gates, made it suddenly obvious to anyone watching television news that day that a large opposition did in fact exist, at least in the US. The dismissal of any discourse that recognised this opposition, and the perpetuation of a narrative emphasis on unmitigated pride in the Shah, meant that when the opposition proved to be a reality, it registered as a shock to both the elites that had belittled it, as well as to Western publics unaware of the alternatives to the hegemony of the Shah

discourse.<sup>9</sup>

Iranian Ambassador to London, Parviz Radji makes no secret in his diaries that habits of thinking, and sentimental attachments to symbols and desires are not easily altered (McDermott 2004:chapter 10). Seven months after the Rose Garden incident, he writes of his amazement at what was happening in Iran, being conditioned to deny what was unfolding – and, more critically, unable to provide insight to Whitehall. On July 14, 1978, two days after dining with Mrs. Thatcher, in which ‘no potentially contentious issues are mentioned’, Radji notes, ‘Good heavens! What’s happening in Iran? How can the Shah have changed so much, so fast? I suspect that the recent power cuts may have acted as a catalyst for greater political tolerance’ (Radji 1983:91). And as Sick wrote in a briefing paper on the occasion of a Policy Review Committee at the White House on November 6, 1978, ‘the most fundamental problem at the moment is the astonishing lack of hard information we are getting about developments in Iran... This has been an intelligence disaster of the first order. Our information has been extremely meagre, our resources were not positioned to report accurately on the activities of the opposition forces’ (Sick 1985:90). Both statements reflect an ongoing inability to acknowledge the incongruity of their own judgements toward the Shah, scripting further alienation in the relationship with Iran. The surprise at the degree to which a widespread opposition had developed, therefore, and the inability to conceive of what an opposition against the Shah could consist of and meant, left both Washington and London (and, Sick points out, many other Western and allied states, including Israel) ill-equipped to understand ensuing events.

Yet, the work of political love did not stop there. False pride in the Shah, the conviction that he, and only, he, could guarantee a pro-Western stance and pre-conceptions perpetuated in his discourse that the religious leadership would be a disaster, continued to symbolize him as the only viable leader within the Anglo-American discourse. This meant that the Khomeini leadership came to represent the submerged shame, embarrassment and self-deception that had never been acknowledged on the part of the US and Britain toward the person of the Shah and the nature of his regime.

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<sup>9</sup> It was a shock that would be strangely paralleled two decades later when the collapse of the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan came to be understood in terms of Sunni jihad.

Bypassed shame not only deflected any conscious recognition of the Anglo-American contribution to the Shah's fall, but served, particularly in Washington, to focus anger on those toppling him. This enabled policies that proscribed any bonding with the new religious leadership so as to ensure the security of their own identities.

## Chapter 4

### From Political Love to the Politics of Strife: The making of a 'Bad' relationship

'Our problem in Iran is not internal developments there. Our problem in Iran is us.'

–Pentagon official<sup>1</sup>

'There is a Persian poem going like this: "Love has been created in the heart by time. It cannot be eliminated from the heart except by time." And this holds true for our present hostilities and misunderstandings with the United States.' --Ibrahim Yazdi, Foreign Minister, Islamic Republic<sup>2</sup>

'Why,' asked Ayatollah Khomeini of some Americans visiting his headquarters in Nauphle-le-Chateau a few days before he returned to Iran at the head of the revolution, '[does Carter back] a regime to which the Iranian people are unanimously opposed?' (quote in Rubin 1980:233). To Khomeini, whose understanding of American interests in Iran was at the time not constrained by the assumption that US identity was discursively wedded to the Shah, the US reputation as a power encouraging emancipatory movements, made it inconceivable that it would ignore a populist uprising. For the United States and Britain, however, the answer was obvious: an enlightened, Westernizing friend was at risk of being toppled by anti-modern forces bent on reversing what they understood as positive universalist trends, and hence, this could not be a popular revolution, but a civil war (Dorman and Farhang 1987:163).<sup>3</sup> With the Shah in trouble, the precariousness of their own identities in relation to him emerged, as did the imperative of demarcating the boundary between the 'Shah-as-us', and 'Iran-as-them' in a production of meanings to protect the self. Within the tight nexus of political love, the threat was represented as endangering both the Shah and the West. Having promoted the

<sup>1</sup> Quote in David Schoenbaum (1979) 'Passing the Buck(s)', *Foreign Policy*, No. 34, Spring, p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Quote in Christos Ioannides (1984), *America's Iran: Injury and catharsis* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America), p. 61

<sup>3</sup> A review of the US press by Dorman and Farhang showed that the term 'revolution' was not used for almost a year after the turmoil began, see William Dorman and Mansur Farhang (1987) *The US Press and Iran: Foreign policy and the journalism of deference* (Berkeley: University of California Press).



Shah's vision as heroic in relation to his benighted people, and linked to the promulgation of democracy and security, the self-worth of the US and the UK was tied to maintaining that picture of reality (Cottam 1977; Hermann 2003:293; Lasch 1978:84; Lebow: 1981:115).

The following section describes the revolution from both the Iranian and Anglo-American perspectives. This is then reprised to track the emotional contribution to the meanings associated with the rise of revolutionary fervor and the fall of the Shah. In the final sections, I analyze the role of political passion in the two discourses that split the Carter cabinet as Khomeini replaced the Shah in Iran, and their constructions of self and other in formulating policy toward the new moderates in government, the constitutional process, and the Shah's plea to enter the US.

### **Dispassionate Constructions of Revolution**

For Iranians, the events culminating in the fall of the Shah were incontrovertibly a revolution. The time frame was long; for Khomeini and his followers, over fifteen years. In 1963, and again in 1964, during the White Revolution, Khomeini gained prominence by speaking out against the Capitulations Agreement, which granted US citizens immunity from Iranian law. His public scorn of the Shah and the majles (parliament) for signing away what he considered Iran's sovereignty led to his arrest, imprisonment and expulsion (Bakhash 1985:34; Milani 1994:48-52, Farmanfarmaian et. al 1997:368). For Khomeini, the Shah's legitimacy was always tied to US imperialism and other forms of 'Westoxication' (Keddie 1981:203). Khomeini used his exile in Najaf to preach political sermons that were widely distributed through the Iranian mosque system on cassette. His ideology was politically current, reflecting ideas of Al-Ahmad and Shariati (Ansari 2006:76; Keddie 1981:205-208), and itself went through several evolutions, though it was his uncompromising criticism of the government and the Shah that made his voice, both figuratively and in practice, so widely recognized throughout the urban and rural backwaters of Iran (Bakhash 1985:38).

The causes of the revolution, from the Iranian view, included unequal distribution of financial and social goods, 'cultural colonization', wasted expenditure on arms, and widespread fear of the Shah's intelligence service, SAVAK. Together, these coalesced

into a single, driving cause: hatred of the ‘puppet’ Shah and his US, and to some extent, British masters (Milani 1988). The identity the revolution had to secure was that of Iran and Islam, which to many among Iran’s population, had dissipated into crisis through what was perceived as the Shah’s shameful sell-out of Iran’s sovereignty to US interests and his humiliating secularization of society (Ajami 1992; Keddie 1981:203, 207). In 1978, the poor, the clergy, the middle class, the students, the intelligentsia, and all the others that marched against the heavily equipped national army, no longer recognized themselves in the Shah’s discourse: meanings had been severed from their historical associations—living modes, male-female relations, codes of dress, business and community relationships, even the calendar—all were being contextually and relationally reformulated in ways that lacked adequate social grounding or acceptance. The revolution offered the promise of recouping Iranian identity through the only avenue still open to it, its Islamic dimension (Irfani 1983:160-161).

Many parties, including the National Front (underground since Mossadeq’s overthrow), and fringe movements at opposite ends of the political spectrum, took active part (ibid:170-173; *The Iranian, passim*). From the beginning, the clerics maintained control and momentum through a disciplined politico-religious programme of marches on holy days, and demonstrations of mourning in forty-day sequences according to Islamic ritual (Fischer 1981; Taleqani et al: 1993). Khomeini, having moved from Najaf to Paris, and in command of the media’s spotlight, unrelentingly demanded the Shah’s departure. On January 16, 1979, the Shah quietly left, first for Egypt, then Morocco. To most Iranians, it was a miracle. Khomeini returned to Iran two weeks later to massive popular celebration. On February 11, the Shah’s military barracks were over-run and his feared ‘Immortals’ routed. The revolution was proclaimed a success. The Shah’s Prime Minister Shapour Bakhtiar fled, to be replaced with Khomeini’s moderate cabinet-in-waiting headed by Prime Minister Mehdi Bazargan. At the same time, clerical heavyweights instrumental in planning and managing the revolution, such as Ayatollahs Beheshti, Mottahari, and Montazeri, formed a shadow instrument called the Revolutionary Council which assumed significant powers, including the conduct of draconian trials against SAVAK and other Pahlavi officials. In April, a nationwide Referendum paved the way for elections of a constitutional council, tasked to draft a new constitution for an Islamic

Republic over the course of the summer. This enabled Iran to affirm its identity as an Islamic nation carrying out steps toward the creation of consensual government (the notional equivalent of divinely inspired democracy).

Within the Anglo-American discourse, the events of 1978/79 were constructed as a civil war, until the overthrow of the regime (Carter 1982: quote 442; Vilanilam 1989:118). To allow that the turmoil was anything but social discontent rather than a fundamental rejection of the status quo and therefore a revolution, was unthinkable in a discourse that represented the Shah as Iran. The timeframe was short: 13 months (Parsons 1984:60; Sullivan 1981:142), beginning in January 1978 when riots in Qom erupted in response to an officially planted article in the Persian press that condemned Khomeini as a British agent and of immoral character (Ansari 2006:78; Parsons *ibid*). For London and Washington, the issue was how to continue economic and security arrangements in Iran. These were understood as best protected by a pro-Western government, preferably the Shah's, but otherwise, of his designated heirs, including the army (Carter 1982:443).

The identity that had to be secured was that of the US and Britain, guarantors of regional security, as well as of the universal norms that defined the free world. Within the Anglo-American discourse, the cause of the crisis was chocked up to the liberalization programme the Shah rushed into at the beginning of 1978, just as economic recession triggered social tension (Cottam 1989). This was seen to confirm de Toqueville's warning that 'the most serious moment for a bad government is when it seeks to mend its ways', a quote widely used, and appearing in among others, Parsons' memoirs (p.60), and Sullivan's (p.4). After the Shah's departure, the Anglo-American focus shifted to the 'moderates', the reform-minded intellectuals and lay branch of Khomeini insiders. Britain formally recognized the new government and the Islamic Republic, and made tentative steps toward direct communication with Khomeini; the US did not. As the summer of 1979 progressed, much of the free press that had flowered in the brief spring following the revolution was shut down, while there was growing repression of the ethnic peripheries – the clampdown on the Kurds turning into a low-level civil war that witnessed the establishment of a new military body, the Revolutionary Guards.

That summer was significant in two other ways. In the US, the presidential campaign began to heat up, sifting all international relations through a domestic narrative

of partisan politics. Meanwhile, the Shah discovered it increasingly difficult to find a permanent haven, even as his cancer became critical, and his requests for entry into the US gained urgency. For the US, identity security was achieved with his acceptance into America. Sacrificed in this process were important Anglo-American national interests, including influence over energy supplies, Soviet containment, and market exchanges.

### **The Bad (Evil) Child**

Early on, the Anglo-American media, as well as many policy-makers, viewed the undercurrent of Islamic revivalism – illustrated by the huge turnout at Friday prayers, and by women wearing chadors, as dangerous. This ‘disturbing trend’ indicated rejection not just of the monarchy, but of the reforms the Shah had brought to Iran (Parsons 1984:55). It is not surprising, therefore, that the first upheavals were discursively constructed as an anti-modernization blow-back by medievalist clerics, a mirroring of the Shah’s discourse which made them the easiest targets to write off and the most obvious for delimiting the boundary between self and difference, modern and passé. ‘The Shah has alienated a lot of powerful groups,’ Carter noted in his diary on October 25, 1978, ‘particularly the right-wing religious leaders who don’t want any changes made in the old ways of doing things’ (Carter 1982: 438). That Carter would have called any group outside the Court as ‘powerful’ indicated the first break with the signifiers of invincibility previously associated exclusively with the Shah. Yet, because shame in Washington’s association with the Shah had been ignored, there was no real sense of how Anglo-American policies had contributed to the situation. At this critical period, US support for the Shah was lukewarm and contested; however, as the uprisings rose in temper, and the Shah appeared increasingly vulnerable, concern at a loss of control in Iran infused policy construction with a discourse of American honour, which privileged backing him as a long-time friend. This produced a series of unclear policy choices, some strongly supportive, others less so, depending on how important ‘honour among friends’ or shame at having such an ally, was in the discourse of the official whose policy orientation prevailed at any given moment.

Carter’s description above of the Shah’s conundrum likewise reveals an emotionalized misreading of the clerical message for Iran, which did not reject ‘changes

to the old ways', but specifically, modernization the Shah's way. Apprehending the religious leaders as 'backward looking', enabled Carter to secure the West and its friend the Shah as 'forward-looking' while simultaneously clearing the field of alternatives, an interpretation that domesticated the concept of change. What is more, it did the further work of separating (and thus protecting) the Shah from Iran's apparent madness, as well as his own failures.

In contrast to the Gucci-suited Shah who skied and snorkeled, the opposition was 'dark-robed', 'turbaned', or veiled in black, the use of Islamic garb as a political statement being completely foreign and scary to Western eyes. The opposition's religious rhetoric and imagery evoked discomfort and distress in Washington and London, where "'no secularism, no democracy'" was something of a sacred equation', their own interweavings of faith and state construed as being significantly different (Hurd 1994; quote in Keane 2000:5). As the University of Virginia's Ramazani explains, 'Even those observers who do allow for the influence of factors other than 'fanaticism' on political behavior find the Iranian behavior incomprehensible—not to mention the purists of the "power politics" school of thought. If they fail to acknowledge, for example, the religious influence of the Calvinist cast of mind on Woodrow Wilson's concept of world order, how can they possibly understand Khomeini's concept of an Islamic world order?' (1986:19).

The Iranian revolution pitted the universalist values of Western progress against the Islamic ideal of religious-based community. From Khomeini's perspective, the Anglo-American world view was 'still backward...in creating a psychological and spiritual progress similar to the material progress. They are', he declared, 'still unable to solve their social problems because solving these problems and eliminating hardship requires an ideological and moral spirit' (Ishmael and Ishmael 1980:616). Turning the discursive tables on the Anglo-American rhetoric of democracy and justice, he claimed, 'the Shah and his government are in a state of armed rebellion against the justice-seeking peoples of Iran, against the constitution, and against the liberating decrees of Islam' (Bill 1988:239). This narrative reflects Khomeini's personal shame at Iran under the Shah, and the behaviours that ensue from such feeling: deep anger and the need to show disrespect toward the other in a rhetoric of hyper-excitability, and mobilization for action.

The Khomeini camp's rejection of Western, and particularly American, ideologies, shored up positive feelings in Washington toward the Shah (Milani 1988:82). 'We knew little about the forces contending against him,' noted Carter, 'but their anti-American slogans and statements were enough to strengthen our resolve to support the Shah' (1982:440). To him, the anti-Americanism was dangerous, because it reflected bias against the US for what it *was* (its values), rather than distrust for what it *did* (its policies), since in Carter's construction, the US was carrying out ethical policies, so the attitude against it could only be normative and existential (Katzenstein and Keohane 2007:10).<sup>4</sup> For the deeply religious Jimmy Carter, and many of his entourage (and all of his successors), Khomeini's rejection of the West's paradigm therefore was presented to the public as a rebuff by those who hated freedom and therefore hated America – and hence, was perceived as threatening US identity. This located Khomeini and his followers as evil, a subversion of the 'American way' that threatened the spiritual mythology of the US and questioned the basis of its very existence (Campbell 1998:153). Embedded in this 'apocalyptic mode' lay a visceral distrust and horror of the religiosity and cultural 'oddities' of an old man whose world view was incomprehensible, and therefore perceived in emotionalized terms as dangerously out-of-step with modern thinking. In declining to speak a Western language, in evoking Persian and Qoranic tradition, and in choosing to live with an asceticism distinctly foreign to Western ambition, his interpretation of such concepts as modernity and Western partnership was so unorthodox that his categorization as a 'bad child' within the parental construction of inter-state relations was rapid and easy. The modernity of the revolution's politics was only dimly understood and generally ignored as incongruous with other imagery of third world, dependent nations (Hermann 2003; Khomeini in Algar 1982:8; Ramazani 1986). His re-interpretation of non-alignment as a 'new system of values, independent of East and West' and truly outside either the US or Soviet blocs was construed as naive and a danger to existing international order (Brzezinski 1988:694)

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<sup>4</sup> Katzenstein and Keohane define anti-Americanism as 'a psychological tendency to hold negative views of the United States and of American society in general' (p. 12), and suggest it can have cognitive, emotional and normative components, although they confine the assessment of the emotional to 'intensity' only: see *Anti-Americanisms* (Ithica, NY: Cornell University Press; p. 13). It is of interest that they, like majority of scholarship on anti-Americanism, analyze it in terms of attitudes abroad, rather than in terms of reflexive responses to it in the US.

With Khomeini's first salvos associating US and Western actions with bad faith, and two-faced behaviour, self-righteous outrage at such disrespect entered the US discourse toward what was perceived as a militant cleric tempting Iran to shift from being a good to a bad child. This prompted responses of hyper-excitability in which Washington's own actions and commitments within the Iranian context drew on a historical memory from which the Mossadeq era had been whitewashed, and therefore, rendered meaningless Khomeini's references to criminal intervention and support of an illegitimate shah. Instead, the relationship was viewed as having been one of generosity toward Iran, and figured as 'innocent', in opposition to Khomeini's stance, which was 'extremist', 'vengeful', and very quickly, 'terrorist'. In this way, the barbs he inflicted on US identity were contained, and a framework elaborated for policies that could ignore and reject the Iranian voices accusing it of being a 'hypocritical' accomplice in the 'crimes' committed by a 'puppet' Shah that it had propped up (interview with Dr. Bohonar in Ioannides 1984:33-34).

A good example of Khomeini's 'evil' (as it was produced in this early emotionalized US discourse), was his strident condemnation of Washington and London as having systematically looted Iran through their support of the 'American' Shah. Responding to what he conceived as Anglo-American disrespect and insult, he continued the spiral of shame, provoking in them similar feelings of anger by branding their actions toward the Iranian people as a travesty of human rights:

'For the children who lost their fathers and the parents who lost their children I feel very sad. The Shah destroyed everything, and built big and beautiful cemeteries for us. Is it human rights—oh American President, who kept talking about human rights and issuing statements of unconditional support for the Shah—to say that when we want to name a government, we get a cemetery full of people?' (Quote in Ioannides 1982:35).

Such insults were received in the US with shock and passionately rejected, not only because they were felt to be unfair, but equally importantly, in order to deny the stain they placed on British and American honour. In this way, the cycle of shame was perpetuated. Indeed, Washington, attempting in turn to shame Khomeini, accused him of betraying British and American benevolence. Revealing its own shame through false pride, it protested that the Shah was a leader who had brought honour to Iran and its allies

by having brought economic prosperity to its people (Bill 1988:239; Hiro 1985:85).

‘Rarely would contemporary history’, wrote Jonathan Randal in *The Washington Post*, ‘appear to provide such an example of people’s ingratitude towards a leader who brought about an economic miracle of similar proportions [to Iran’s]’ (2/4/1978).

In choosing to see Iran’s fate as held in the hands of two men – Khomeini or the Shah – and in favouring the Shah as the visionary modernizer, the media fed a deep-seated popular confusion in Britain and the US over why the Iranian people would reject such a leader, or the Western-inspired ‘miracle’ he’d engineered. Further, there was little within the discourse of political love associated with the Shah’s Iran to cast light on why the Shah, not to mention the British or Americans, would be considered criminal or guilty of anything but good intentions and generosity.

Carter, writing in January 1979, reflects the egocentric constraint and a-historicity under which he, too, laboured: ‘The Ayatollah’s tape-recorded speeches sent into Iran were condemning the United States equally with the Shah for alleged crimes’ he states with wonderment (1982:483). The idea that the US had committed any crimes in Iran was preposterous to Carter. The perception that Khomeini’s condemnations were not only groundless but heartless, and therefore shameful, meant that a narrative of the US – and the West generally – as the ‘wronged’ party, insufficiently respected or acknowledged, and thus offended, became normalized well before the Shah’s departure or hostage crisis. This contributed to a play of difference charged with anger and derision in response to Khomeini’s, and which was ‘largely impervious to the characteristics and qualities of the other’ on both sides (Campbell 1998:156). The welding of the Shah to the image of Iran meant that once he was removed, or his plans over-ridden, those exercising the agency of overthrow became culprits, while US culpability could be deferred, and thus dismissed. In the process, the emotional work of fending off Khomeini’s accusations deflected the focus away from the content of earlier British and American actions in Iran, making any exposé or alternative interpretation of those actions unlikely.

The fictive image of Khomeini as evil and bloodthirsty was not a response consistent with existing subjective practices toward traditionalist Islamic leaders (as relations with the religiously flanked and be-robed Saudis and Gulf Emirs illustrated) nor with realist postures that accommodated unsavoury regimes such as in Pakistan or



Ethiopia for the sake of containing the primary threat which was perceived as Soviet expansionism (Cottam 1990:276). The emotional dimension must be sought elsewhere: in the degree of shock and disappointment by the Anglo-American decision-making elite at the realization that the Shah faced a substantive opposition; in the self-blame at having allowed themselves to arrive at this point knowing so little about that opposition; in their growing awareness that affection for the Shah had coloured their judgment concerning his performance; and in the discomfort felt by many whose significant and often personal business dealings depended on his power (Bill 1988:335-338).

The re-inscription of British and American identity security through a sanitized imagery of their own 'love' in contrast to the incoming Iranians' propensity to 'hate', situated Khomeini in a 'chain of difference' in which the meanings associated with him were relational, and understood in terms of each other (Campbell 1998:68, fn 69; Doty 1996:46; Lebow 1984:103). Thus, Sick's view of Khomeini 'as the most dangerous of all ideologues, ... a man riven with hate – hatred for the Shah, hatred for Carter and America, hatred for those who dared oppose his vision... and that hatred translated itself into the frenzied curses of the mobs' (Sick 1985:219-220), reveals the chaining, as well as Sick's own already formed hatred for Khomeini as a manifestation of reflexivity. The behaviour bespeaks the insecure bonds of alienation and pain, and an exaggeration clearly indicating that the words and actions of the other are being interpreted as an attack (Scheff and Retzinger 1991:69). The bonds of political love can be seen, therefore, to have been going through a dual process – compulsively damaging behaviour in relation to the social bonding with Khomeini and his followers as they assumed prominence, and a reaffirmation of the bonds with the Shah as he lost power.

### **The Lost Child**

Carter acknowledges in *Keeping Faith* that along with Khomeini's calls for 'bloodshed', he was also 'calling for... the establishment of an Iranian republic', a political ambition that was never acknowledged as more in keeping with Anglo-American democratic ideals than the Shah's authoritarian regime. Why would this be? For Carter, the emotionality embedded in the loss of the Shah focused the need to securitize American honour as a primary norm. This was because effective leadership depended first on being seen as an

honourable nation, a fundamental aspect of identity security. What was secondary was the US identity role as a supporter of freedom movements, particularly if that movement was contested. As American honour was intimately bonded to the welfare of the Shah, the US president, in an expression of mobilization to protect the status quo, 'insisted and instructed Cy [Secretary of State Cyrus Vance] to retain our relationships with the Shah and with the military – our only two ties to future sound relationships (*sic*) with Iran' (Carter 1982:445; Lebow 1984:110).

This view was echoed in the British and American media. Giving scant, but usually unfavourable coverage to Khomeini, and little background information on Islam, they dedicated large amounts of generally laudatory coverage to the Shah. This ensured pride of place for the hegemonic discourse supporting him, and by association, the reasons for Britain's and America's loyalties, and their own behaviour as staunch allies (Altheide 1981:140; Dorman and Omeed 1979:28). On the day of his departure from Iran (16/1/1979), the *New York Times* carried 31 items on the Shah, with several photos (Vilaniyam 1989:128-9). Khomeini's arrival in Tehran two weeks later to the largest mass demonstration ever recorded elicited only two articles in the *Times*; the one on the front page featured not his triumphal return to Iran, but his threat to arrest the Shah's caretaker Prime Minister (*ibid*:121). Although occasional letters were published by such authorities as Richard Falk and Mary Catherine Bateson, in which the Iranian upheaval was described as an emancipatory movement against a harsh dictator, much of the media presented the situation as a political and economic disaster for the West (*New York Times* 18/1/1979; Vilaniyam 1989:123-4). The articles on the Shah still represented a man with a grand plan for his country. They avoided words such as 'tyrannical', 'brutal' and 'despotic', which had crept in during the pre-revolution tensions in relations with the Shah, and instead, symbolized him as a 'good' and 'moral' ally. He was described without reservation as a leader dedicated to modernizing despite the obstructionism encountered at every step, and as being a religious man (this was implied by a picture featuring him praying at a mosque 18 years earlier in 1953!), and a victim of fanatics and communists (*New York Times* 17/1/1979). These images and reports pictured the forces against the Shah as mad, since otherwise, why would the mullahs expel a religious man, or the poor condemn someone bringing them prosperity, sanitation and education?

The Shah thus evolved into a tragic hero, a figure toward whom many in Washington sought to show just what solid American loyalty towards its friends could be, something viewed as key to American honour, and hence, to its interests (Weldes 1999). As tragic hero, the Shah came to represent the 'lost child', the chimera of hope and affection that remained discursively attached to a fictive Iran. In the hyper-excitability that surrounded his last days, the Shah came to represent what Iran could have been. His loss was the West's loss.

Thus, on November 2, 1978, when Ambassador Sullivan sent a telegram entitled 'Thinking the Unthinkable', in which he suggested that the Shah might abdicate, leaving Washington an Iran without him, he was first ignored, and then castigated for his presumption (Sullivan 1981:203-4). However, only within the Anglo-American discourse was this 'unthinkable,' since by then it had been a call shouted nightly from the rooftops in Iran for over six months. Carter's distrust for Sullivan led him to send an alternative officer, General Huyser, to Tehran to provide a second line of reports (Carter 1982:443; Huyser 1986). Sullivan then expressed the belief after the Shah's departure in January 1979 that Bakhtiar 'was a "quixotic" character, and that, as the tide bringing in Khomeini was rising, 'arranging some sort of accommodation ...with the leaders of the impending revolution' might be wise. This sounded the death knell on his career, as Carter reacted by angrily accusing Sullivan of having 'lost control of himself', and sidelined him (Carter 1982:446; Sullivan 1981:236). The perceived heresy of Sullivan's suggestion proved to be anathema to 'the brooding fear' that had already gripped the White House (Vance 1983:329).

Carter's rejection of a straight-forward diplomatic communication of fact reflected the unacknowledged pain of separation that he and his Cabinet were experiencing in regards to the Shah-as-Iran. This loss of an emotionalized attachment was denied through anger at the messenger, as much as at the 'new Iran'. Even after the Shah's departure, and the well-documented outpouring of celebrating Iranians, an Iran outside the personal ambit of the Shah was not yet an acceptable topic of discussion in the White House (Keddie 1981:257). This attempt to maintain a fixed hegemonic discourse at the very moment when the social bonds between the two states were being redefined, put a moratorium on alternative discourses concerning not only the 'new' Iran,

but the role of the Shah. As Iran was already being constructed around symbols of fear and pain, identifying areas of attunement was rendered difficult (Scheff and Retzinger 1991:65).

In fact, Brzezinski and Carter interpreted Sullivan's recommendation for accommodation with Khomeini as betrayal - of the Shah and of American honour. This points to the production of motivated bias, in that sentimentalized meanings impaired information processing, as only 'comfortable facts' were found acceptable (Lebow 1984:111-113.). Though Sullivan had urged Carter to establish contact with Khomeini in Paris, the president had rejected this outright 'because our forming any relationship with Khomeini would indicate a lack of support for the struggling [Bakhtiar] government in Iran, which the Ayatollah has sworn to destroy' (Carter 1982:446). Carter's passionate insistence on continuing constructions of 'Iran-as-Shah' therefore, suggests a desperate attempt to deny change; with the past appearing rosy, and the present seen as imposed in an involuntary encounter with anti-Americanism, disappointment served to repress new ideas and cognitive variants (Scheff and Retzinger 1991:67). Additionally, the grain of truth in Khomeini's scornful diatribes stimulated the need to negate him as a defense against further attack. At the time, important scholars, such as Richard Falk, Richard Cottam and John Cockroft, suggested the Shah's opposition was acting with cause, and thus acknowledged Iranian motivations (Falk 1980; Ledeen and Lewis 1981). The response to the Sullivan telegram at the highest reaches of government discredited this discourse as misguided (Vance 1983:325) This enabled a figuring of Khomeini as a disaster, and impossible to work with despite the already recognized moderation of his Prime Minister Mehdi Bazargan (Carter 1982:449).

Brzezinski, denying his own contempt and growing fear of the revolution, which he frames as something to be 'remedied', and unable to acknowledge any motivation in its leaders beyond murderous rage, commented,

'I simply had no faith in the quaint notion - favoured by American lawyers of liberal bent - that the remedy to a revolutionary situation is to paste together a coalition of the contending parties, who - unlike domestic American politicians - are not motivated by a spirit of compromise but (demonstrably in the Iranian case) by homicidal hatred' (1983:355).

Here Brzezinski lays bare his sense of US superiority, and by association, the Shah's, and his aversion for the goings on in Iran. The statement, no means unique in the annals, reveals that in Washington's discourse, Iran's new leaders had already been denied legitimacy even as they stepped to power with broad popular support. They were instead, discursive products of an emotionalized Shah-as-Iran discourse that made it thinkable to reject them, and reflect that in policy.

It was in this context, and well before the hostage crisis, that the term 'terror' was linked to Khomeini's entourage, and the Islamic nature of his politics. 'When the history of this period is written, you will see that Teheran was probably the first street battle fought by international terrorism', wrote Ledeen and Lewis in 1980 in *Debacle*, a book based on a series of articles published in the *Washington Quarterly* when Ledeen was one of its editors (along with terrorist expert, Walter Lacquer).<sup>5</sup> 'At the center,' the passage goes on, 'sat the ayatollah himself, with a vision of an entire Islamic world liberated from unbelievers of all sorts, totally under the theocratic control of Shi'ite visionaries' (1981:105).<sup>6</sup>

As the Shah's army, until the revolution, had been portrayed both in Iran and the West as 'invincible', terror was the only mechanism that seemed conceivably able to threaten it. The Shah himself had adopted the word to describe most expressions of opposition to his regime, and it came to be associated, in the discourse of weakness and political love, with outside (usually Soviet) financing and marginal domestic support

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<sup>5</sup> 'International terrorism', as employed by Michael Ledeen, and later, Secretary of State Alexander Haig, President Ronald Reagan, Israeli leader Benjamin Netanyahu and others, was more accurately referring to 'trans-national' terrorism, that is, a situation in which terrorists based in one country, affect citizens in another. This is different than the current understanding of the term 'international terrorism' of the al-Qaida ilk, a globally networked system of semi-independent nodes without a single state base, source of funding or even formal linkages, but sharing a similar, overarching doctrine of global re-ordering based on the Sunni idea of the caliphate. 'International terrorism' as employed in the '80s, therefore, can be understood to have been used more as a basket term to describe a motley collection of unrelated groups with different ideologies operating in various international theatres, usually for local goals. They included Iranian-inspired Shi'a militancy and its export to Lebanon in the form of Hezbollah, as well as the secular PLO, Tamil Tigers, and various cells operating in South America (Claire Sterling [1981] *The Terror Network: The secret war of international terrorism* [New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston]). Although Sterling argues these were linked and funded through a Soviet project she labeled a network, it differed substantially from the distributed al-Qaida system associated with the term today (ibid; see also Walter Lacquer [1999] 'Why the Shah Fell', *Commentary*, Vol. 67, March: pp. 47-55).

<sup>6</sup> James Bill attacked *Debacle* as ill-researched and biased, see James Bill (1988) *The Eagle and the Lion*, op cit, but it was important as one of the first books published on the revolution and was well received by members of the Reagan administration.

(Butler and Lavasseur, White Paper, 1976). When those same opposition figures rose to lead the masses, terror was already embedded as a discursive signifier. The *New York Times*, for example, referred to 'Khomeini guerrillas' and 'Khomeini gunmen' (February 1979 *passim*). As information on Khomeini and other religious and opposition leaders remained scanty in the Western intelligence rosters, linkage with other 'terrorist' activists was easily imputed within an emotionally fraught discursive economy which produced similar imagery for Islamic forces, oil saboteurs, and regional militancy such as that of the PLO (Dobson and Payne 1986:chapter 1; Vilanilam 1989:117; Wolf 1981: *passim*). Chaining 'terror' to 'hatred' and 'evil' was a natural sequence in the shame-anger spiral that was corroding the social bonds.

With the Shah's departure and Khomeini's arrival in Tehran, 'the loss of Iran' became the construction most commonly used in the Anglo-American discourse to sum up the situation. 'Loss', indicated that a rupture of the bonds between Iran and the US necessitated implanting new emotional practices and meanings, and yet 'loss' kindled emotionalized associations of a positive past, suggesting diminishment in the bonds that remained. Further, Iran was produced not as a 'gain' for a popular, emancipating movement, but as its opposite, a loss for the Anglo-American 'strategic pivot of a protected tier shielding the crucial oil-rich region of the Persian Gulf from possible Soviet intrusion' (Brzezinski 1983:356). Anglo-American policy support was thrown behind Bazargan's sitting 'moderate' government, its members labeled as the true 'inheritors of the revolution', their Islamic commitment for the moment dimmed within this heuristic (quote in Bill 1988:145; Sick 1985:55). Linking up with the moderates enabled the US and British to discipline their identities in two important ways. First, it made possible a smooth switch from the old regime to the new by representing them as the voices of reason that favoured Western universalist ideals – a move that was normatively consistent. Second, Washington and London could at the same time re-affirm their identities as loyal supporters of the Shah, even after he'd left Iran – a move that was emotionally consistent.

### **From engulfment to isolation**

The fact that a revolution had taken place, the speed and relative non-violence of the turnover, and, significantly, its theocratic aspect, combined to leave the Anglo-American discourse un-moored from its previous referents, and London and Washington incapable of putting together a coherent Iran policy (Hoogland 1989). This was exacerbated by Balkanization in the different arms of the US government as competing discourses were advanced, represented most prominently by Brzezinski and Vance, whose approaches to the period before the Shah's departure had varied considerably (Brzezinski 1983: chapter 10; Vance 1983:chapter 14).

In the face of a complex re-alignment in the social bonds between the United States and Iran, fear, anger, and exasperation combined to mobilize action. Intelligence for going forward, however, was minimal. In addition, the pressure to support the Shah, which permeated the State Department, NSC and Pentagon, rendered deviance or doubt concerning his continued rule tantamount to 'heresy' (Carter 1982:449-50; Sick 1985:77,153); this left those in positions of responsibility fearful of creative diplomatic plans once the Shah left, suspicious of the information coming in from Tehran (especially as Sullivan became discredited), and lacking a functioning discursive economy within which to situate the US relationship with the new Iran (Sick 1985:91). The disarray in the Carter administration's discourses scrambled the prioritization of such themes as national honour, credibility towards allies (particularly regional), support for democracy, and, perhaps most important at the time, US security and the USSR. The result was plays of positioning that contributed to decision-making hampered by affiliative constraint and which prioritized normative imperatives (Billig 1999). The intensity of the discursive struggle to establish a dominant narrative and legitimate US policy, reflected the degree to which the passions of loyalty, betrayal, affection, distrust and fear were attendant.

Indeed, the conflicts within the Carter cabinet, and the policy drift this enabled, reflected several larger debates in which plays of passion affected plays of meaning. The first related to which factors the US understood as having actually caused what events (e.g. what role had Carter's human rights policy played, what role the speed of the Shah's modernization programme) and what had really gone wrong in 'the loss of Iran'. There was little consensus on what actually constituted a revolution, since the Iranian version did not fit previously defined categories. The fact that the Khomeini regime did not

adopt an outright communist orientation was considered less threatening than if it had, though the suspicion that it might eventually lead in that direction contributed to distorted expectations in false analogies with Mossadeq's weakness (Brzezinski 1983:470).<sup>7</sup> Yet, the lack of a communist-directed ideology made conceptualizing Iran's upheaval problematic. A theocratic turn was understood, within the play of possibilities, as unlikely to contain either democratic or modern components. The Iranian anger unleashed by the revolution, and its apparent rejection of Western norms, were ill understood and in many instances, 'unthinkable', and in turn responded to in ways that 'were easily interpreted [by the Iranians] as downright hostile' (quote in Bill 1988:283; Shah 1992:42; Sick 1985:167; Vance 1983:347)..

Sick, in his recounting of this period, quotes Arendt's observation in *On Revolution*, 'that what we call revolution is precisely that transitory phase which brings about the birth of a new, secular realm' (Arendt 1963:36, quote in Sick 1985:164). This, he observes, summed up the Western view (and experience) of modern revolutions. '[T]he notion of a popular revolution leading to the establishment of a theocratic state seemed so unlikely as to be absurd', he writes. In fact, 'it was so unexpected, so alien to existing political traditions that it was...an embarrassment' (ibid). Sick's use of 'embarrassment' is revealing, as embarrassment, a euphemism for 'shame', implies ongoing we-ness<sup>8</sup>. Embarrassment suggests that what Iran did, and how that was perceived by others, remained to decision-makers in the US a reflection of their own actions. In contrast to 'embarrassment', 'absurd' projects derision as a form of attack. Neither word acts as a negation of social bonds but rather, act to distress them. Indeed, as realization dawned that the Iranian movement did not fit the Marxist paradigm, the meanings attached to it represented Iran's radical religious orientation as being as distortive of Western norms and interpretations of democracy and modernity as

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<sup>7</sup> This type of cognitive distortion, that is, insensitivity to, and denial of cues that challenge an already established image to which a policy is committed, has been analyzed by Lebow 1981: 112; for strategic scripts that accompany that imagery, see Hermann 2003: 298. What these analyses don't include is the emotional dimension, although they refer to it obliquely, particularly Hermann.

<sup>8</sup> Scheff argues that the link between shame and embarrassment appears early in ancient literature, as in the story of *Genesis*, in which Adam and Eve are expelled from Paradise, Eve covering her breasts in embarrassment under God's gaze, and Adam his eyes in shame; see Thomas J. Scheff (2000) *Bloody Revenge: Emotions, nationalism and war* (Lincoln, NE: iUniverse.com, Inc.), pp. 42,43.



communism had been, and therefore similarly threatening (ibid: 165). As such, the US understood Iran's increasingly powerful theocratically based discourse as constitutive of another 'other', its very existence an insult, and thus a clear danger. What is more, for the US, the violence implicated in the articulated intent to impress Islamic law upon a 'free' society constituted a threat that outside any specific practice, attached a meaning of 'fear' to Islamic political revival.

A State Department post-mortem on the revolution in July 1979, revealed the depth of confusion, almost despair, which Iran represented in terms of policy: 'The State Department has never understood Iran, culturally, religiously, or economically. It has only meager clues to the depth of the Iranian dissatisfaction....' (quote in Taheri 1988:110). This statement is a complete about-face from State Department briefs composed just a few months prior during the Shah's reign, in which Iran was not only represented as a culture, economy and society that the US understood, but as a nation the US discourse constructed as worthy of identifying with.

The second debate regarded Islamic political resurgence and its meaning for modernity. The perception that prior to the revolution the US had 'understood' Iran and Iranians included the idea that the conditions for emergent democratic norms were well established. Thus, political passion enabled the projection of Iran as a nation that had not only taken a radically unexpected, and 'embarrassing' turn, but that it did so having already achieved a level of development and education (that is, Westernization) which had made it comprehensible, and hence, a beloved friend (unlike Saudi Arabia, for example, understood as a friend, but never a comprehensible and thus beloved one). The heritage of political love amplified the perception that Iran's 'knowing' – and thence rejecting – Western democratic and modernist principles (not to mention the Western embrace) made it worse than a backward state that had never experienced Western progress. Its attempt to adopt an alternative, Islamic system that it expected to integrate into the larger global community was understood not as a discursive mediation to widen the norms and acculturation of modernity, but as an act of profanity against the rational achievements of liberal Western modernism. Betrayal signified disorder and dishonesty, instantiating Shia Iran, and Islamic resurgence, as blights that needed to be contained, and

purified so as to ensure the security of the 'free world'. In this way, perceived norm betrayal unleashed emotional responses to mobilize action for their protection.

Accordingly, this 'was a moment of intertextuality in which traditional modes of representation struggle to make sense of contemporary observations' (Campbell 1998:87). The moral image of 'them' as fanatic/violent was contrasted to 'us' as rational/peaceful. Since power was understood to be contingent on promulgating states of reason, the discursive economy of the political could be infused with a conception of the Shia Islamic 'other' as threatening the progress of reason. This meant that its claim to be a universalist doctrine and model of law, with the decreed purpose of spreading the Islamic *ummah* or globalized community, could be perceived as contributing to a 'war against all', and as a destabilizing force on the path toward anarchy (Alford 1997; Huntington 1996: *passim*).

A final debate concerned the representation of the Iranian 'people'. To allay fears that despite well-intentioned US patronage, and the 'naturalness' of its universalist principles, its ideals could be rejected through subversion, distinctions were constructed between what was represented as the extremist absolutism of the clerics and the universalist aspirations of the people. Thus was articulated, in various ways, a boundary which, within the generalized US discourse, divided Islamic radicalism from the Iranian populous, the latter being represented as still wedded to the precepts expounded through Western (as opposed to Islamic) democratic idealism. Although the boundary was accepted as flexible, the idea remained robust, softening the rejection, while serving as a discursive framework to enable policies of accommodation toward an Iran it still did not accept as entirely 'lost'.

The brassy condemnations from Tehran, by contrast, projected an image of a US which disdained those suffering from policies that failed to conform with its lofty ideals. Likewise, the intractability of the US (and generally Western) discourse was denounced, and contrasted with its un-failing efforts to change the discourse of others. The effect was to redraw the US likeness in a way reminiscent of Lasch's image of the American '70s, the prostitute who 'craves admiration but scorns those who provide it...[who] attempts to move others while remaining unmoved herself. She remains a lover, dependent on others

only as a hawk dependent on chickens' (Lasch 1978:124-125). This was a likeness the US discourse of self could not emotionally grasp, for it contained no grammar to do so.

As the months passed, an increasingly harsh dialogical interaction developed, constituted by the 'quality of being directed to' the other. (Guillaume 2002:6). The performance of this self-representation was conducted as a process of identity defence. The disconcerting mirroring in the respective use of destructive, intensely negative terms and symbols to define the other, and the easy inversion of the same Derridian binaries of power, such as democratic/tyrannical, rational/irrational, and honourable/dishonourable, suggest continuing practices of political bond-creation, but implicated the passion as painful and brutalizing, a pattern of exchange to assuage self-hurt and retaliate, rather than acknowledge and ratify – a process of political love molting into political strife. Each rejected the other as 'immoral' and 'illegitimate', a parallel animus that constituted recognition in the self of those elements most feared within the other (Campbell 1998: 235). The exaggerated assumption by each of the moral high-ground, towards which resistance constituted crime, reflected the repression of shame, its disguise externalized as superiority, a common narcissistic response (Lasch 1978:29; Scheff and Retzinger 1991:12). The narrative of the world as dangerous (inhabited by the Satanic/Extremist other and its expanding influence), to use Otto Kernberg's reasoning, 'turns the other into a threat object, against which the 'good' self-images are used defensively, and megalomaniac ideal self images are built up' (quote in Lasch 1978:39).

Through the confusion and mixed signals of those first months, the relationship stumbled on as mutually exploitable, though in place of a discourse of shared visions, each separately reflected what progressively was understood as the other's betrayal, while seeing themselves as innocent victims. In the process of (re)articulating their identities to protect against that betrayal, and its shame-anger variants of pain, frustration, distrust and anger, the relationship precipitously changed from one of *summum bonum* to *summum mallum*, and at last, to *horror alieni* (see Hurd 2005:25).

This process was revealed in several steps. First, each side's attempt to use what Bially-Mattern terms 'representational force': rhetorical expressions of power intended to impose stability on an identity relationship faced with crisis (2001:350). This tactic is coherent within the confines of a relationship in which social bonds have been

temporarily ruptured, but where common understandings and interests promote respect toward the other, and the desire to remain positively linked. In this case it failed because Khomeini interpreted past Anglo-American actions as sufficiently demeaning that he was uninterested in repairing the social bonds without clear US acknowledgement of its own abuses. Hence he encouraged, rather than feared their further damage, and representational force, served only to increase polarization.

The next step was the adoption of a rhetoric of entrenchment, in which each side attempted to define the borders around their own identities as un-negotiable, but which revealed themselves still vulnerable to the provocations of political love. The last such move was the meeting and handshake between Brzezinski and Bazargan in Algiers in November 1979, ten days after the Shah arrived in the US (Bakhash 1985:70). The ultimate fallout of political love occurred when each side made an irrevocable move to secure its own identity in opposition to the other. Inviting the Shah to come to the US without discussing it with the Iranian government can be understood in this light; so too can Iran's taking of American embassy personnel hostage on grounds of pre-emptive self-defense. The US refusal to accede to Iranian requests to countenance an investigation into the Shah's alleged 'crimes' by a third party such as the UN, and the Iranian refusal to release the hostages for over a year, accomplished for each side a confirmation of their respective moral positions.<sup>9</sup> At the same time, it provided an important period for each to implant new meanings and practices that became reified as 'emotionally appropriate' policy behaviour toward the other.

An important result was that US (and generally Western) perceptions of many of the major questions that emerged with the revolution were often considered only superficially in the midst of the passionate responses evoked by events in Iran. The CIA coup that toppled Mossadeq and which today is widely believed to 'have shaped all of Iran's subsequent history', for example, was dismissed in Washington as irrelevant (quote in Kinzer 2003:212; Houghton 2001:14, 60). Carter wrote it off as 'ancient history' (Carter 1982:454), an expression of historical denial on many fronts, not least in regards the unsavoury image it brought up of the US as an imperialist power. Equally

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<sup>9</sup> A similar request by Chile was honoured by British judges many years later in the case of Chilean dictator Alfonso Pinochet. See Marc Weller (1999) 'On the Hazards of Foreign Travel for Dictators and Other International Criminals', *International Affairs*, Vol. 75 (3), 599-617.

telling, the idea of US intervention in the internal affairs of another state for purely political reasons was perceived within the Carter administration's post-Viet Nam discourse of human rights, as 'irrational', which meant the Iranian fear that such a move could be repeated was viewed as more typical of the Iranian propensity for 'conspiracy theories', than anything else (Houghton 2001:57; Rubin 1981:298).

Yet, these issues remained important, since how significant Iran's fear was represented to be, and how American perceptions of its ability to influence and stay engaged with Iran, defined the tension around which legitimating discourses contested for dominance within the sphere of policy-making. At stake was American self-perception as a leader, and critically, its representation of how power was to be exercised not only in Iran but in the region. Differing interpretations of whether the narrative should privilege honour within a geo-strategic security context (the pro-Shah Brzezinski perspective) or promulgate democracy as an ideal of American leadership (the pragmatist Vance perspective), emerged from different emotionalized motivations and competed in the production of American policy. Yet in both cases, primary norm protection was the goal.

### **Honour versus Democracy: Competing policy motivations**

The pragmatists discourse, which interpreted the shame of Iran's loss as a frustrating and embarrassing setback for American democratic leadership, was motivated by the desire to protect American honour by projecting democracy as a universalist value. Promoted by Vance, Precht of the State Department's Iran Desk, UN Ambassador Andrew Young, academics such as Cottam and Bill, and many of the diplomats in the American embassy in Tehran, including Stempel and Naas, it privileged the need to find accommodation with the new Iranian regime; not to do so was represented as positioning the US as contributing to instability and anarchy both in Iran and regionally. Credibility was understood as linked to US flexibility in being able to develop new conditions for democratic development in the face of change.<sup>10</sup>

The pro-Shah discourse, a continuation of meanings and practices from the pre-revolution period, interpreted the shame of losing Iran as affecting American – and

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<sup>10</sup> This discourse roughly coincides with the 'balancing' theory of international relations; see S. Walt (1987) *The Origins of Alliances* (London: Cornell Univ. Press), p.4. and chapter 1 *passim*.

Western – credibility by unfairly tarnishing their image as guarantors of allied security (Brzezinski 1983:354-5). This discourse gave primacy to honour and loyalty toward allies and emphasized force use to ensure geo-strategic legitimacy. Promoted by Brzezinski, as well as many influential Iranians who had moved to the US after the revolution, Ronald Reagan on the campaign trail, and in Britain, Margaret Thatcher, fear that events in Iran would prompt allies to distrust the US and Western alliance least credence to using military responses – to support the Shah, and later, to save the hostages, and to bolster Iraq against Iran.<sup>11</sup> In Brzezinski's words:

'[F]rom the international standpoint, American interests dictated supporting the Shah strongly. Other rulers in the region, friendly to the United States, were watching us closely. How we responded to the crisis was a guide to them how we might react if they were threatened' (1983:394).

Understood within this discourse was the knowledge that the Soviet leadership was watching. Yet, though Brzezinski's focus is on America's friends, his distrust of the bonds tying those rulers to the US indicates repressed humiliation that American strength had failed the Shah (and therefore might lose them as well). It likewise revealed disinclination to risk developing new bonds with Iran that might have had diplomatic rewards, and, in Laingen's words, 'help reduce some of the chip on the shoulder, "damn you for our gas lines", American attitudes toward Iran' (quote in Bill 1988:282).

Brzezinski argued passionately for military support and if necessary, a coup to sustain American control and contain the Soviets, and spurned all initiatives at contact with Khomeini, viewing him in the darkest light, and seeing engagement with him as implying American softness – an emotionally untenable position. Elaborating an image of real fear, Brzezinski penned a memo to Carter two days after the Shah's departure, warning that Iran under Khomeini would

'likely shift piecemeal to an orientation similar to that of Libya, or into anarchy, with the result our position in the Gulf would be undermined, that our standing throughout the Arab world would decline, that the Israelis would become more

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<sup>11</sup> Walt, describes this phenomenon as 'bandwagoning' and notes, 'Because U.S. statesmen have believed that allies are attracted by displays of strength and will, they have sought to preserve an image of credibility and military superiority despite the obvious costs'; Walt, *ibid* p. 4. See also: F.B. Weinstein (1969) 'The Concept of Commitment in International Relations', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 13 (1); For a discussion of costs, see M. Beeson (2007) 'The Declining Theoretical and Practical Utility of "Bandwagoning": American Hegemony in the Age of Terror', *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, Vol. 9 (4), November; p 622.

security-oriented and hence less willing to compromise. that the Soviet influence in southwestern Asia would grow, that our allies would see us as impotent. that the price of oil would increase....' (1983: 385-386).

Brzezinski's exaggerated idioms, his sexual reference, and tone of excitability in describing this devastating scenario, shows him using every emotionalized tack at his disposal to exert affiliative constraint and sway the decision-making his way. This discourse perpetuated on-going political love toward the Shah, as it perceived the nature of that relationship, despite the Shah's fall, as still carrying political punch, its implications still powerful for what it could say about US constancy toward allied statesmen. Loyalty to the relationship with the Shah was represented as needing no apology, and as having equal, if not greater, meaning for American international credibility than building a new relationship with the 'fanatic' Khomeini. Despite the increasingly wide-spread rejection of the Shah's pleas for quarter by other allies, this discourse passionately represented his welcome as necessary for US credibility, and in keeping with an American tradition of offering asylum to those in need.

In fact, admitting fallen dictators was not an American tradition and a false analogy despite its frequent use in the pro-Shah discourse to justify the Shah's acceptance. As noted at the time by international lawyer Francis R. Boyle of Duke University: 'The United States has no conceivable national security interest in granting political asylum to or becoming a "safe haven" for deposed dictators who have allegedly committed "grave breaches" of the Fourth Geneva Convention<sup>12</sup> or have engaged in a consistent pattern of gross violations of the fundamental human rights of their own citizens. A rudimentary knowledge of international human rights law,...would have clearly indicated that the Carter administration not admit the Shah into this country for any reason except to prosecute him or return him to Iran' (1985:190). The discourse of honour that passionately insisted asylum offers were a tradition and a duty, is revealing for what it says about the necessity at that moment for securing American identity. The

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<sup>12</sup> Fourth Geneva Convention (Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War), 1949, article 146 and 147. Boyle argues that by analogy to Article 146, 'the US government would have an affirmative obligation to bring the Shah before its own courts or else hand him over for trial to another High Contracting Party for the commission of "grave breaches" (e.g. willful killing, torture or inhuman treatment, or willfully causing great suffering or serious injury to bodily health) as defined by Article 147 during the course of an article 3 non-international armed conflict'. see Boyle, page 189.

emotional vesting that re-historicized the American asylum record as embracing fallen dictators, was productive of American power as not only good but as unfettered. Khomeini's insistence that evil had come with this unfettered exercise of power had rendered precarious the moral boundary of US identity that demarcated good from evil, necessitating an even greater exercise of power to protect that identity as good. This authorized it to ignore a narrative more in keeping with the US past as a caring but careful refugee haven.

The rejection of Western norms, including the rule of law, by the radical clerical and lay cadres, exemplified by the summary trials taking place in Iran, was condemned by both US discourses as barbarous and contributing to anarchy within, and regional weakness without (*The Iranian* 27/6/1979:10; *Newsweek* 12/2/1979:47). Iran's 'bad child' posture, according to the pro-Shah discourse, required a policy that rejected all contact with the sordid, bloodthirsty Khomeini and his adherents, while castigating Iran for its abrogation of human rights (which in the last months of the Shah's reign had been downplayed).

The pragmatists constructed the Iranian public as wanting a more legitimate democracy than the Shah had delivered, with 'Western-style' guarantees of civil liberty and the rule of law. This desire was perceived as needing encouragement and support in the face of the growing control of the clerics. Avoiding contact with Khomeini was seen as hampering the promotion of human rights, while accommodating the Shah's hope for asylum in the US was inscribed as endangering American security (particularly embassy personnel), as well as its standing and relationship with those elements represented as positive inside Iran. Constructing a strong relationship with the moderate forces in Iran was further understood to send a message to the Soviets that American interests were being secured through a mechanism that could transfer association from the Shah to new leadership in keeping with American goals of building strong, loyal democracies in the region. To the pragmatists, it was reasonable to adopt a posture of 'parental' tolerance toward the 'inflamed' emotions in Iran` (Vance 1983:342).

The period following the Shah's departure and over the following nine months, the contest between the pragmatist and pro-Shah discourses was complicated by Carter. Variouslly adopting or entertaining aspects of both discourses in projecting his own



subjectivities, he contributed to the inability of either Vance or Brzezinski to fix a hegemony of meanings, and thereby instantiate power to a particular construction of knowledge. 'In his frustration and anger, President Carter at times lost his cool and berated a number of his own officials,' Bill writes. 'He constantly received conflicting advice and therefore wavered back and forth in his policy decisions' (1988:260; Carter 1982:449-50). The result was to muddy American representations of its own position, and reduce its ability to understand the Iranian 'other'. Affiliative and egocentric constraints emotionalized both the delivery and the bargaining among Cabinet members. In Brzezinski's estimation of the situation in early 1979:

'[I] focused on the central importance of Iran to the safeguarding of the American and more generally Western interest in the oil region of the Persian Gulf. Secretary Vance or Deputy Secretary Christopher...while certainly not inclined to reject that view, were much more preoccupied with the goal of promoting the democratization of Iran and feared actions—US or Iranian—that might have the opposite effect...The President was thus clearly pulled in opposite directions by his advisers and perhaps even by a conflict between his reason and his emotions'. (1983:354-356).

While Brzezinski remains purposefully vague as to which view appealed to Carter's reason and which his emotions, the text makes clear there was little middle ground in the atmosphere of finger-pointing and self-justification that took place once the Shah had fallen (Bill 1988:276; Sick 1985:187). Anger at 'losing' the contest to keep him in place (and outrage that Iran had 'won'), meant a scramble for positioning inside the Cabinet to determine how to respond to the confusing signs emanating from Iran (Bill *ibid*). This resulted in less attention than might have been paid in less competitive and emotionalized circumstances to the discourses accompanying those signs, suggesting that 'oversight is rarely innocent' (Coole 2005:423).

Where the discourses did overlap, was in the attempt to achieve the 'modernist requirement of order and stability' (Campbell 1998:87). Shared goals included: 1) Strong support of the moderates as the most pro-Western and rational faction in Iran; however disagreement remained on how to accommodate Khomeini and the radical Islamic populism he espoused; 2) Maintaining official representation in Iran to ensure America's position of influence, though sharp differences of opinion continued regarding the risk of hostage-taking (Laingen interview, *The First War on Terror*, Release Pictures, 2006).

For both discourses, however, the most important driver of policy was the American discursive legacy of political love for the Shah, which was perceived officially as much more real than any realist paradigm of compelling interests:

‘In a world of total *Realpolitik*, where nations have no friends but only interests, and where alliances are made and broken according to an iron law of tactical advantage, a case can be made that the United States should have leaped aboard the revolutionary juggernaut in a frantic effort to preserve some measure of influence with the new regime. But in the real world, where the United States carried with it the heavy weight of more than three decades of historical association, there was never any practical possibility that such a cynical reversal of roles would or could have been sustained by a US president (Sick 1985:185).

By using the word ‘cynical’, Sick acknowledges that US policy orientations were informed by deep emotional entanglement with the Shah, and that adopting a *realpolitik* approach would be angrily construed not as a rational act of statecraft but as political disloyalty, even betrayal, of America’s basic values. His report of a meeting between Vance and moderate Iranian Foreign Minister Ibrahim Yazdi at the UN in October, ‘the first high level discussion between the two countries since the departure of the Shah’ in January, characterizes the atmosphere as marked by ‘deep animosities on both sides’, wording that indicates the social bonds for each, even at the level of encounter between ‘moderate’ and ‘pragmatist’ were damaged and insecure. (1985:188)

### **Writing off democracy**

Relinquishing the project of promoting democracy in Iran was not a point rhetorically conceded prior to the hostage crisis, as to do so would have been an obvious mark of shame to the American self-image. Yet, a close look at how the constitutional process in Iran was discursively strategized reveals that even within the pragmatist construction, it had, by early spring of 1979, already become secondary to the perceived necessity to secure the safety of the embassy diplomats as the symbol of American honour. Despite the Carter administration’s commitment to promoting human rights as a pillar of American identity and policy, the complete lack of involvement and interest in the constitutional process taking place in Iran suggests that the ‘bad child’ had already been written off. Although the US International Cooperation Administration did conduct some small-scale programmes encouraging cultural exchanges, and, at the request of the

Constitutional Assembly. provided copies of the American Constitution translated into Persian, there was no official or agreed upon blue-print by which the US government communicated its democratic experience or praxis to those devising a new constitution for the post-Shah Iran (Graves, Confidential Report to Curran. *Asnad* 1-6: 299).

Most tellingly, this was reflected by the senior proponent of the pragmatist discourse, Secretary of State Vance, whose memoirs do not mention even once the constitutional process that dominated the Iranian scene for eight months (Bakhash 1985:71-91). This is an oversight that cannot be deemed ‘innocent’. as putting in place human-rights guarantees (through democratic nation-building and the establishment and codification of the rule of law ) was a primary, if not *the* primary foreign policy goal of the Carter administration—and historically, ‘the burden’ of US foreign policy generally. Other memoirs are equally barren, or mention it only in passing – including Brzezinski’s, Carter’s, Jordan’s, Turner’s, Powell’s, and even Sick’s. The same gap is apparent in early analyses of US-Iranian relations at the time, including Ledeen and Lewis’, Rubin’s and even Bill’s. None indicate that American efforts were expended to offer input or meet with drafters or advisors to encourage, support or influence the codification of the laws that would protect social justice, civic freedoms, elections, or other democratic practices. Scrutiny of the archives reveals no American or British statesman (or woman) publicly acknowledged that a constitutional process was taking place in Iran and that the Iranian people were attempting to obtain the democracy they deserved. The media, which did focus on it, chose to emphasize the inconsistencies and conflicts with which the elections to the constitutional Congress were fraught, as well as its lopsided character, there being only one woman who was elected, clothed in a chador (*The Iranian* 7/11/1979). In those examples of Anglo-American discourse in which it was included, the constitutional process was disgraced as theatre, not politics. Sick is unrelentingly negative, seeing it as a product of Khomeini having ‘systematically set about silencing the opposition’ (Sick 1985:262).

The conclusion therefore, must be that the constitutional process, its intricacies, sources, compromises, and debates were not something the US in fact could allow itself to become involved with. Regarding Iran as would a jilted lover or despairing parent, the US turned its back on what it construed as a faithless and defiant ward and ignored the

critical process that could have given it the patina of involving itself in others' democratic efforts, or even, introduced aspects of its own 'universalist' norms and sensitivities into the discussion. The choice to ignore, as stark within the pragmatist as the pro-Shah discourse, wrote off Iran and the 'anti-democratic' doctrines of Islam as irretrievably irrational – an act of alienation that was a far cry from the solidarity offered the prodigal son a short year before.

The United States' own passionate vesting in those elements of democracy that defined what it was to be American, therefore, rendered it an all or nothing project. Comparison with its own history, through deferral and forgetting, a process Derrida terms 'différance', opened an unbridgeable divide between the US and Iranian aspirations for representative governance (Doty 1996:6; Huntington 1993; B. Lewis 2001: *passim*; Mirsepassi 2000:40-47). The sedimented idealization of America's own democracy made it unthinkable for the US to meet Iran at the frontier of a new democratic inscription. The laic discursive economy, which symbolized as inferior any ritualizing of religious social power within the political, secured US pride by figuring the 'loss of Iran' as having happened not because American universalist values weren't appropriate or natural, but because of what was sentimentalized as a culturally impoverished society to be pitied, but which was simply unable to respond to the attractions of democracy (Hurd 2005:23; Rosenfeld, *The Washington Post* 5/1/1979).

In June, an important shift in perspective took place in the embassy, when the Chargé, Charles Naas, was replaced by Bruce Laingen, who reflected a more pro-Shah narrative than his fellow diplomats who had witnessed the revolution. Laingen saw American legitimacy and security as the primary determinants of policy, a monologic approach that drew its power from domestic perspectives on foreign policy practice, rather than dialogic engagement with foreign, in this case Iranian, sensibilities (Guillaume 2002: 4-5).

Specifically, Laingen, finding himself surrounded by Iranians suspicious of embassy actions and angry at America, developed an emotionalized view of Iranians as irrational and untrustworthy. As revealed in his reports to the State Department, his growing fear and horror of a people who had rejected US ideals provided the pro-Shah discourse the necessary ammunition to inscribe US identity as more credible outside any

accommodation with Iran, since its people, and the religion of Islam made it unfit for any viable alliance. His assessment of the Persian character sounded the death knell on the pragmatists' accommodationist argument. Rather, it furthered the argument for the US to be patronizing and belittling toward a population that had so shamefully rejected it. This helped to remove Iran as a player in regional security practices, leading the way for direct American covert action in Afghanistan, and for putting in place the Carter Doctrine (Brzezinski 1983:443,454). A cable Laingen wrote to Vance in August 1979, and which was made public on February 3, 1981 reveals barbed anger, the production of superiority and a compulsion to scorn and mock:

'Perhaps the single dominant aspect of the Persian psyche is an overriding egoism. The practical effect of it is an almost total Persian preoccupation with self and leaves little room for understanding points of view other than one's own.... This approach underlies the so-called 'bazaar mentality' so common among Persians, a mind-set that often ignores longer term interests in favor of immediately obtainable advantages and countenances practices that are regarded as unethical by other norms. Coupled with these psychological limitations is a general incomprehension of causality. Islam, with its emphasis on the omnipotence of God, appears to account at least in major part for this phenomenon.... This same quality also helps explain Persian aversion to accepting responsibility for one's own actions.... Given the Persian negotiator's cultural and psychological limitations, he is going to resist the very concept of a rational (from the Western point of view) negotiating process. ('Message from Iran': Aug. 13, 1979', *IHT*, 2/3/1981)

The telegram outlines six lessons for those 'who would negotiate with Persians', several times underscoring that 'forcefulness' and 'insistence' were the only means to achieve success, a discourse more akin to that of imperialist mentalities than a state espousing the promotion of human rights and universal freedoms. The text's own resistances highlight a radical turnaround in official US sensibility since the Shah's time concerning the nature of the Iranian character and in fact, what was tolerated as acceptable diplomatic language in regard to Iran. In its character assassination of Iranians and Islam alike, and in its exaggerated rendering of them as exhibiting childlike qualities, Laingen's discourse embeds a US disdain in which is implicated a need to avenge American honour by being tough toward Iranians, a move to exert pressure on bonds that far from being severed, were active and vulnerable. As McDermott observes, 'high levels of perceived threat represent emotional responses, rather than logical or rational ones' (2004:185-6).

Laingen's presupposition that all Iranians were alike – and Islam had the same effect on all – and by extension, anyone else who might believe in it, granted primacy to conviction, rather than reason. In this way, Laingen's cable fulfills several tests of identity discipline for establishing alienation in a relationship of isolation: it classifies Iranians as subjects that are 'unethical' and 'egotistic' and hence 'psychologically limited'; it positions them as incapable of comprehending causality, and hence less civilized than those who can understand 'points of view other than one's own'; and it re-naturalises these 'resistances' within recognized formulae of Orientalist 'irrationality'. When this telegram was leaked to the press to coincide with the release of the hostages, it was heralded as a brilliant and prescient work of diplomatic insight, and was seen as anticipating – rather than contributing to – the breakdown in relations.

Denying trust made possible American practices of exclusion in which the failure of democracy in 'the other' confirmed the democratic and idealized democracy of the self. Further, this disciplining of identity confirmed the US as a power able to bring, as well as hold back, democratization, justifying the mothballing of the project in Iran without any loss of face for the US. By this example, it is possible to see how emotionalized constructions become reified and institutionalized into passionate systems of policy. It is not insignificant that Laingen's text anticipates the texture of the language used consistently in Anglo-American discourse toward Iran after the hostage crisis and which it has featured ever since.

#### **Admitting the Shah: Shame as arrogance**

From the moment the Shah left Iran, his admission into the US, and the safety of US diplomats in Iran, were understood to be connected. How this was perceived delineated the pragmatist and pro-Shah discourses from each other, while at the same time, it posed for Carter the greatest area of risk. Being wedded to neither discourse, it proved to be a region in which discursive discipline failed him, and passion became policy. Much ink has been spilled analyzing his decision. McDermott argues within prospect theory, for example, that Carter saw advantages to allowing in the Shah, seeing it as an act of Good Samaritanism (of a certain sort) that would play well within a campaign that was not doing well (1998:104). How the US constructed its identity so that Good Samaritanism,

and honour toward fallen allies were emotionally privileged and became productive of decisions that were taken regardless of perceived risk is the subject of this section.

Within the pragmatist discourse, the critical issue had become the protection of US citizen safety in a climate of rising anti-Americanism in Iran. Two previous incidents of hostage taking, one at the embassy and the other at the Kapkan Surveillance site on the Russian border, both in February 1979, though brief, had raised the specter of future hostage taking (Stempel 1981:186). Both times this had rekindled a sense of moral transgression and alienation, and although in both cases the Bazargan government had responded with solidarity, the experience was a humiliating one for the US (Stempel 1981:185-8).

The pro-Shah discourse by contrast was motivated by the desire to show the US as credible and powerful despite the wounds inflicted on it by Iran, which in this case meant acting honourably by offering a haven to one of its friends if it chose to do so, regardless of how others (that is, the new Iranian leadership, or the pragmatists) might perceive the situation. In March 1978, when the Shah requested entry into the US, Brzezinski derisively noted in his memoirs that officials in the State Department (including Vance, and Under-Secretaries of State Christopher and Newsom) regarded it negatively because 'it could pose a threat to Americans in Iran' (1983:472). In the pro-Shah discourse, any constraint on US policy out of fear or deference to the Iranians was figured in freighted language as 'blackmail', and a threat to the exercise of US sovereignty. On April 9, during a meeting with Carter to lobby for the Shah's admission, David Rockefeller implied that threats to the American embassy in Tehran were putting US honour at stake. 'I said it seemed to me that a great power such as ours should not submit to blackmail,' he later reported to *The New York Times* (Smith 1981:158). Brzezinski supported this sentiment on principles that were 'integral to our political tradition':

To compromise those principles would be to pay an extraordinarily high price not only in terms of self-esteem but in our standing among allies, and for very uncertain benefits....Moreover, I felt that, tactically, we could not be blackmailed if we made it clear that what we were doing was central to our system of values' (1983:472).

Brzezinski acknowledges that self-esteem was imbricated in the choice to offer a haven to the Shah, and that not to do so would betray American values; this reveals the ongoing political love that operated in relation to the Shah, and how, in this discourse, it was perceived as appropriate, and offering more certain benefits than denying him asylum. Likewise, Brzezinski makes clear that to him, the moral imperative of American values would be so convincing that even the Iranians would back down from 'blackmail'.

By July, during one of the many reviews of the Shah's status, Carter commented he 'did not wish to see the Shah to be here playing tennis while Americans were being kidnapped or even killed' in Iran (Brzezinski 1983:282). Nonetheless, the discourse privileging admission of the Shah gained momentum throughout the summer, and in so doing, undercut whatever feeble efforts the Administration was making to establish a rapport with Tehran. The discourse was framed in moral terms, which turned the debate into a test of American character, and ultimately, the capacity for compassion on the part of the president. Yet the concept of compassion was not generalized. It was not directed at the embassy personnel in need of protection, nor, by this point, was it conceivable that it would be directed toward the Iranian people for the human rights abuses they claimed to have suffered under the Shah. Compassion as an expression of American identity security had only the one target: the Shah.

In an emotional address at Harvard Business School, for example, Kissinger declared that 'a man that for 37 years was a friend of the United States should not be treated like a Flying Dutchman looking for a port of call' (often quoted, but most fully in Bill 1988: 335). Ten days later, conservative columnist George Will praised the Shah as a great friend and then lashed out at Carter saying, 'It is sad that an administration that knows so much about morality has so little dignity' (*The Washington Post* 19/4/1979).

What is significant is the discursive representation of the Shah as a 'friend', and the denial of the faults he'd been labeled with in the US Congress and the media in the year prior to his fall. What is more, the entrenchment of his image as a friend was placed in ever starker opposition to the Iranian, particularly clerical, discourse, which represented him as a criminal, fuelling among both decision-makers and in the population a self-righteous anger against Iran for its bloodthirsty pursuit of a fallen sovereign. In reducing the situation to one of good versus evil, friend versus foe, the narrative drew out



the last vestiges of political love still associated with the Shah. Brzezinski even told Carter ‘we must show our strength and loyalty to an old friend, even if it means personal danger to a group of very vulnerable Americans’! (Carter 1982:452-453) As Lasch observes, ‘men have never perceived their interests with perfect clarity, and have therefore tended throughout history to project irrational aspects of themselves into the political realm’ (1978:29). Meanwhile, Khomeini’s calls for the Shah’s return for trial as early as April were discounted in both discourses as empty signaling – talk that was understood to carry weight domestically but without value internationally (Jervis 1976).

Nevertheless, because American identity was implicated in those calls, ignoring them served to strengthen the boundary that defined the civilized US, in opposition to the barbarianism of Iran. To have done otherwise would have implied the validity of the clerical accusations, and the shameful recognition of a less-than-virtuous American self. This was effectively avoided through the monologism of using the ‘intellect in the service of evasion rather than self-discovery’ (quote in Lasch 1978:40; Lebow 1981:119).

Meanwhile, on the presidential campaign trail, Carter and his entourage were acutely concerned over negative press about Washington’s handling of the Shah, and (as his illness progressed), the prospects of his death – factors that eventually tipped the scale toward ‘compassion’. Hamilton Jordan in his role as campaign manager gave the following advice: ‘I mentioned the political consequences [of not admitting the Shah].’ Then, he said: ‘Mr. President, if the Shah dies in Mexico, can you imagine the field day Kissinger will have with that? He’ll say that first you caused the Shah’s downfall, and now you’ve killed him’ (1982:31). Terence Smith of the *New York Times*, in ‘Why Carter Admitted the Shah’, notes, ‘Certainly Ronald Reagan...would have pounced. Carter conceded that the possibility of such a reaction was on his mind. “I can’t deny that that may have been a factor,” he said. “It probably was.”’ (Smith 1981:160). Carter, a president already complicit in allowing decision-making to be subjectively constructed, was particularly vulnerable to two emotional pressures: fear that a miss-step a propos the Shah could finish Carter’s chances for re-election (and the shame that would imply for a sitting president), and self-righteousness that doing the Christian thing and acting the Good Samaritan would not only be a source of personal pride, but play well to the voter.

The combination of domestic exigency and the unwillingness to acknowledge the negative aspects of the Shah's performance furthered to extremis commitment to the Shah's welfare. In this way, 'vital US interests' (containing the Soviet flank, controlling oil prices through friendship with Iran) can be seen as having been less important than protecting US identity security by assuaging unacknowledged guilt at America's less than democratic behaviour in Iran, and ensuring Iran would not succeed in pointing this out on the international stage. The result: the discourse of 'compassion' toward the shah came to dominate at the expense of policies of engagement with Iran, or even effective policies to protect the US embassy there (Ioannides 1984:81).

A telegram penned by State Department Iran Desk Director Daniel Precht to Laingen, entitled 'Planning for the Shah to come to the United States' offers a good example. (This was apprehended by a mole, code-named Hafez, in the US embassy and passed onto the clerically dominated Revolutionary Council; copy in author's possession).<sup>13</sup> The cable establishes the US government's commitment to admit the Shah as 'an inevitable step...by January 1980'. However, Precht suggests it would be advisable first 'if the Shah were to renounce his family's claim to the throne. Should the Shah refuse...[w]e should make it quite clear publicly that we consider any claim to the throne by his family rendered invalid by the Iranian constitutional process'. Even so, he states: '[T]he danger of hostages being taken in Iran will persist'. Precht suggests several ways to protect the premises as a precaution. Save for strengthening the doors, none of the recommendations were heeded.

To withhold sanctuary until the Shah had publicly abdicated the throne was not interpreted as consonant with 'compassion'. In the face of the Shah's illness, it was deemed indelicate and shaming if the US insisted – an act of false pride toward 'a used-up Middle Eastern potentate and dictator who was – and is – one of "ours"' (*Washington Post* 9/11/1979).

In July 1979, First Secretary John Stempel wrote a cable in which he noted that '[a] turn for the worse in US-Iran relations' was resulting from 'continuing charges that

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<sup>13</sup> That these documents might have been faked was never at issue. The language, coding, paper and seals were consistent, and implied they were genuine and not the work of a good forger. The collection of documents released by the Students Following the Imam's Line included the selection of documents allegedly copied by 'Hafez'; it must be noted that the US has never officially acknowledged these documents, although it has likewise never denied them, and they have been widely used for scholarship.

US and CIA are meddling in Iran' (USED 5925, 7/6/1979, in author's possession<sup>14</sup>). Stempel, despite his ability to speak Persian and the length of his posting, did not recognize the seriousness of the CIA charge, and certainly, neither did Washington. For Khomeini, and many of the other leaders of the revolution, including Ayatollahs Montazeri (Tehran's Friday Prayer leader), Mahdavi Kani (Secretary General of the Fedayeen Islam – a clerical political party dating from the time of the Shah), Dr. Bohonar (later to be Prime Minister), Rafsanjani (later to be President), Khamenei (later to be president, and eventually, *faghi*), Khoenia (leader of the SFIL), and Beheshti (founder of the Islamic Republican Party), SAVAK was indistinguishable from the CIA, the latter having conducted the training and equipping of the former Shah's intelligence force (Bill 1988:210-11). All had spent time in prison and been tortured by SAVAK, their perceived 'martyrdom' at its hands carrying deep psychological and emotional implications for their understanding of the CIA, and the shame of its role in Iran (Saikal 2003). Discovering what they interpreted as further covert actions to bring the Shah to the US, and perhaps, back to the throne, was rendered doubly shaming by what they felt was the hollow public discourse of American democracy and liberty, and, more specifically, the embassy's denial in the face of the hard evidence being passed on by Hafez (Ioannides 1984:48-50).

Within the American discourse, accepting the Shah into the US had no covert overtones. Because of the US disinclination to approach Khomeini or his clerical advisors directly, however, there was no viable communication between the US and Iran at this point, and this critical contingency was not shared with anyone beyond the moderates. By then, however, the moderates had been sidelined, something Washington had missed, and if anything, contributed to through what Bill calls 'its crushing embrace' (1988:288). By the same token, what was ill-understood in Washington because of its own political love for the Shah, was that any association with the him implied to the Khomeinists that a relationship of strategic support continued—and therefore, so did the threat of re-imposing him or his son on the throne (Milani 1994:163). As the Shah never issued a formal abdication, nor a statement severing his family's claim to the throne, and as the

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<sup>14</sup> This and several other embassy documents were acquired by the author in Tehran during the hostage crisis as the SFIL published them in loose-leaf and made them generally available to the public prior to their collation and publication as the *Asnad* series.

US never officially stated that it no longer recognized the Pahlavis, nor even that it explicitly recognized the Islamic Republic, fear and suspicion infused the clerical discourse when the two were seen to be closing ranks.

Although Carter states in his memoirs that the lobbying to admit the Shah irritated him as he considered the question closed, the number of references to the issue in his own, and others' recollections (including Vance, Jordan, Brzezinski, and numerous cables in the USED archive) belies that claim, and discussion continued throughout 1979, a reflection of the stress and fervor the subject elicited. It was information obtained on October 18 that the Shah was suffering from acute cancer that finally convinced Carter (Smith 1981:6). The news was couched in emergency terms, and the decision was made almost impetuously, without consulting with the Iranian government. The manner in which this decision was made and later communicated to Tehran, the timing, as well as the expectations that went with the decision, provide a key example of how emotionality (mis)informed the government's choices, and how subsequent relations unraveled as a consequence.

First, in the blush of triumph and pride at finally 'winning', the pro-Shah discourse capitalized on its success to reaffirm the US as the 'parent' state – an act of hyper-excitability that led Washington to adopt bullying rather than diplomatic behaviour. Justifying itself as a Good Samaritan made it possible to ignore a variety of Iranian requests regarding the Shah, including having him assessed by an Iranian doctor and arranging for a formal renouncement of politics by his family. At the same time, Iranian warnings that such a move implied to them an ulterior motive were dismissed. In the pro-Shah discourse, great power was produced as being free from restraint. Thus, Brzezinski suggested, and Carter agreed, that 'it was inappropriate for the US to ask the Iranians for approval' and therefore, the Iranian government *not* be solicited for its opinion, but 'simply informed' of the Shah's entry by Precht and Laingen. These latter would also 'demand' guarantees for the embassy's protection (Brzezinski 1983:475; quote in Carter 1982:454). These several actions clearly communicated lack of respect for Iranian fears and needs. In failing to acknowledge its requests and its sensibilities, the US fueled a sense of dishonour and disgrace within the Iranian leadership, which elicited

further shame, alienation and a need to 'save face'. perpetuating the cycle of isolation and political strife.

Second, the patronizing brusqueness with which the Carter administration dictated the terms to the Bazargan government can be interpreted as an act of representational force. Instrumentalized through the pro-Shah discourse, it was meant to quell the Iranians (the love object) into submission within the relational framework that the US, as parent, still imagined was operational.<sup>15</sup> In fact, until the hostage-taking, Washington harboured the hope that Khomeini might withdraw into a 'Ghandi'-like position, and 'the loss of Iran' could be rescued through the shreds of its previous inscription of shared obligations and interests (Halliday 1989:249; Saunders, 'The Situation in Iran and its Implications', Statement to the Committee on Europe and the Middle East, House Committee on International Relations 1/17/1979, in Alexander and Nanes 1980:471). To this end, the United States still entertained the self-image of being able to exert representational force to re-fasten the identities of the US and Iran together (Bially-Mattern 2002:360; Vance 1983:343, 362).

Third, despite all that had occurred, Washington had not fundamentally reassessed the relationship, but simply downgraded its importance, particularly within the pro-Shah discourse, which apprehended Iran as 'third-rate regime' too disordered to be capable of real threat to the US (Brzezinski 1983:474). At the same time, as Doty points out, 'US policies themselves could not be defined as a source of instability' (1996:91). Thus, although it was anticipated that hostage-taking could follow acceptance of the Shah, the US discounted the impact of its actions through wishful thinking that Iran could not seriously hurt it. This enabled the warnings by Yazdi and Bazargan, as well as Precht, to be ignored. Carter, with whom the final decision ultimately rested, was also pressured by the consensus that at last characterized his entire Cabinet (including Vance, who had come on-side in response to the Shah's illness), on the basis of shared principles. Yet, as

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<sup>15</sup> Doty argues that the parent will at times overlook indiscretions of the 'problem child' for the purpose of maintaining that child within the fold, as harsh measures could encourage the child to form alliances elsewhere. However, she points out that various acts, that can be understood as disciplinary, and which often take the shape of intervention within the internal affairs of the child, can and do mark the development of such a relationship. These disciplinary moments can be understood to fit Bially-Mattern's concept of representational force. See Roxanne Doty (1996) *Imperial Encounters* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), p.89; Janice Bially-Mattern (2001) 'The Power Politics of Identity', *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 7 (3), pp. 349-397.

Elster says, 'norms are sustained by emotions', and this was unquestionably a highly emotionalized situation, which at last, forced Carter to make his choice on grounds of 'appropriateness' under affiliative constraint (ibid; Crawford 2000:140, quote on 154; McDermott 1988:104).

Thus, not only was a critical decision taken on the basis of motivated bias, but equally importantly, how that decision was carried out – by 'simply informing' the Iranian government, 'demanding' protection, and taking no steps to de-politicize the image of the Shah - implicates passion as a driver in the decision-making and assertion of American identity security defining this key event. As Foreign Minister Ibrahim Yazdi said in complete frustration when he closed the meeting with US envoys Laingen and Precht, 'You are opening a Pandora's Box with this' (quote in Smith 1981:163).

**Chapter 5****The Hostage Crisis: Victimization and Innocence as Figurations of Political Strife**

‘This American blunder has left and will have a deep impact and effect on US foreign policy for a long time. Such an impact can only be compared with one or two events in the past, among them the Vietnam War. But the effect and impact of the current one is far more important and powerful than the other ones.’ –Ibrahim Yazdi, Foreign Minister, Islamic Republic<sup>1</sup>

‘Although Khomeini was acting insanely, we always behaved as though we were dealing with a rational person.’ – Jimmy Carter, US President<sup>2</sup>

The hostage crisis which began on November 4, 1979 and dragged on for over a year was a landmark in the construction of US identity as it approached the end of the Cold War. To American eyes, an anachronistic third world revolution was suddenly transformed into a serious security threat materially endangering US citizens as well as Western conceptions of diplomacy and world order. This had multiple effects.

First, it enabled a passionate construction of the US as the victim of uncivilized and unwarranted aggression (Altheide 1981:134; Houghton 2001:53). This elicited deep shame at being caught unawares by a state it already perceived as unethical, and toward which it denied its own responsibility for the rift that was proving so damaging. The narrative of American innocence de-historicized its previous policies toward Iran (and the Shah) as immaterial to the current grievance. In projecting wrong-doing solely on Iran, the government and media in the US focused on the private suffering of the hostage families, which became the metaphor for the whole nation’s sense of social violation. The figuration of Iran as the malevolent source of this pain and humiliation deepened and perpetuated the shared shame-anger sequence, retaining both Iran and the US in a relationship of political strife.

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<sup>1</sup> Speech delivered in Tabriz, December 3, 1979; quote in C. Ioannides (1984), *op.cit.*, p. 139.

<sup>2</sup> Jimmy Carter (1982) *Keeping Faith, Memoirs of a President* (London: Collins), p. 459

Second, the mutualized anger crystallized the Islamic other in opposition to American conceptions of self and democracy, imbuing it with mythologies of social violence.

Third, it privileged a 'tough conservative' post-Shah discourse, which constituted credible American power and leadership as grounded in the willingness to use force against perceived and actual threats. Within this post-Shah discourse, another Iran was to be avoided at all costs. The way the United States perceived itself in relation to the crisis contributed to a growing American militancy in its construction of self and other in the practice of international relations. The structuring of this identity is examined through the prism of political passion, which, in the course of the hostage crisis, settled firmly into political anguish, a process that produced a monologic sequence deaf to representations by the 'other', and reliant on its own representations of the 'other' (Guillaume 2002:6). Rage, a protective mechanism employed to insulate against shame, motivated American policy responses both during and after the crisis, and justified vengeance against Iran as normatively appropriate (Scheff and Retzinger 1991:66).

The liberal *New Republic* asserted the need for a visceral component in future US dealings with Tehran in an editorial January 3, 1981: 'Any appropriate policy toward Iran must begin with this feeling of revulsion' (p.7), it declared. The link with Islam was clearly stated in an April 30<sup>th</sup> 1980 editorial in the *Christian Science Monitor*: 'The Iranians bear a heavy responsibility for the image the world will hold of the Islamic faith and its capacity to effect righteousness and noble behavior' (p.24). The continuing justification for this emotionally contingent American foreign policy, states Pollack, rests with the hazard of domestic political blow-back. 'Indeed, one reason subsequent American administrations have been reticent to pursue a rapprochement with Tehran,' he observes, 'is that this latent anger is so volatile and can be so easily brought back to the surface by a political opponent that few have been willing to take the risk' (Pollack 2004:173). Pollack's use of the emotive terms 'anger', and 'volatile' pinpoints the salience of passion in political constructions of both the US and Iran, and the constraints on rapprochement this has exerted over time.



### **Framing the Crisis**

The hostage crisis began much like the US embassy seizure the previous February, which was resolved in a matter of hours through the intervention of then Foreign Minister Ibrahim Yazdi. Yet this one soon differed in several important ways. First, the hostage-takers immediately broadcast demands for the Shah's extradition; second, the seizure gained the official backing of the clerically dominated Revolutionary Council and of Khomeini himself; third, Chargé d'Affaires Bruce Laingen and two other US embassy officers who were at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that day, were also taken hostage. The captors, calling themselves the Students Following the Imam's Line (SFIL) immediately engaged with the international press through their spokesperson, Massoumeh Ebtekar (who came to be dubbed 'Mary' and, having lived several years in the US, spoke American-accented English). The SFIL rapidly established a position independent of the Bazargan government, which finding itself powerless within the circumstances, fell 48 hours later. By the end of November, the SFIL released a group of black and women hostages 'not suspected of espionage' (Sick 1985:264). It likewise began to release documents from the embassy, many of which had been shredded and which the students pieced together for publication. The American response was swift, and over the ensuing month it froze American-based Iranian assets, cut-off oil imports (accounting for 700,000 barrels a day), and imposed sanctions (Christopher and Kreisberg, eds. 1985: *passim*).

For the SFIL, seizing the hostages was a security move to protect against a reprise of 1953, when Kermit Roosevelt and other agents operating in the US embassy basement had worked to re-instate the Shah, who had fled from Mossadeq to Rome (Ebtekar 2001; Kinzer 2003). Honour was to be maintained by refusing to back down on their demands for the Shah's extradition. For the US, honour necessitated the release of the hostages before any Iranian grievances could be acknowledged. This led to a stalemate in negotiations. The US brought the case to the Security Council and the World Court, while several different groups and individuals, including UN Secretary General Kurt Waldheim, attempted mediation. None succeeded. In April, the US mounted a secret rescue mission, which ended in disaster. By the end of 1980, the Islamic Republic's constitution had been ratified and a new parliament (majles) seated. That same year the

Shah died and Ronald Reagan was elected US president. Although the Shah's demise did not immediately resolve the impasse, negotiations being mediated at the time by the Algerian government at last gained traction. The hostages were released 444 days after their seizure, the very morning Ronald Reagan took the oath of presidential office.

For the United States, the hostage crisis became a symbol of the vulnerability of democracy to newly perceived forces of evil beyond the communist threat, and revealed the precariousness of US identity poised between the commitment to universalist values, and the actions required to protect its vision of those values (Weisman 1981:247; for previous incarnations of this tension in the Philippines, see Doty 1996:82-86). The evolution from the hostage crisis to the first War on Terrorism is critical to understanding the discourse that emerged and how this impacted American concepts of hegemony, modernity and security.

The fallout of political love, it will be argued, narrowed the scope of possible policy choices, disinclining the American administration to consider a range of actions 'honourable' that under other circumstances, could have been tried, and in other cases have been – as in the case of Pinochet (Boyle 1985:195). The fact that in other situations, alternative interpretations were exercised, suggests other possibilities were open within America's own discursive traditions. Taking its cue from the interpretation of political Islam as a rising threat rather than from practices of past Iran-American policy, decision-making necessitated a framing of the issue so as to preserve American righteousness in the face of 'illegitimate' acts by its errant ward (Altheide 1981:138). This led to motivated behaviours to preserve identity security but risked important national interests, such as oil access and US relations with its European allies (Weisman 1981:229) The cost of ignoring these interests was elided through the passionate representation of American prestige as paramount (Bowden 2006; McDermott 1998; Pollack 2004). The process protected what Slaughter describes as the 'empire of norms' by re-instantiating a fear of others' democracy into Western discourse<sup>3</sup> (2004: Chapt. 1 *passim*). In effect, the hostage crisis was structured around normative infringements, but responded to in emotionalized

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<sup>3</sup> A similar play of practice took place in the US approach to Nicaragua, see J. Dumbrell (1993) *American Foreign Policy: Carter to Clinton* (Basingstoke: Macmillan): pp. 158-160, 172-173.

terms of 'delusional self-righteousness'. marking the next stage in the destructive course of political passion (Boyle 1985:194).

The crisis wound down as both parties emerged from the bruising 14-month ordeal claiming to be victorious. The negotiated terms assured that neither had to apologize to the other, admit to committing crimes, or pay damages (Christopher 1985; Pollack 2004 for the American view; Bani-Sadr 1982:150 for the Iranian view). In this way, each was able to secure its identity in opposition to what was domestically construed as the failure and perfidy of the other. Yet, the settlement itself was 'a peace to end all peace' in that it allowed the silence of shame to infuse all future dealings between the two states, as it forced neither to acknowledge the legitimacy of the other's grievances, nor to take responsibility for their own damaging roles in the affair. As there was no catharsis, the US and Iran remained linked through deeply wounded emotional bonds. Several hostages, after their release, felt troubled by the evasion and superficiality that marked the Congressional post-crisis hearings. '*No one* spoke to any of the Persian-speaking political officers among the hostages to find out what happened...' reported ex-hostage John Limbert (quote in Bill 1986:300, emphasis in original). The collective effort to forget and repress, however, accomplished only the opposite, so that as Cottam observed nine years later, Iran remained for the State Department '*a*, if not *the*, preeminent negative target of the US' (1990:285, emphasis in original).

### **An Emotionalized Literature**

The hostage crisis, like other moments of intensive international adjustment, has been the subject of a plethora of analysis. The confusion that surrounded the events, motives and responses (official and personal) spawned accounts by scholars and commentators such as Bakhash 1985, Heikal 1981, Hiro 1985, and most recently Bowden 2006; members of the media including Ioannides 1984; Rouleau 1980; Salinger 1981 and a special publication by *The New York Times* edited by McFadden, Treaster and Carroll (1981); US government actors such as Jordan 1982 and Powell 1984; and Iranian actors such as Bani-Sadr 1982; Hojat-oleslam Bahonar (interviewed at length in Ioannides 1985); and SFIL spokeswoman Ebtekar 2000. Many of these are primary sources intended to rationalize their own actions as well as contribute to the semi-official record.

Assistant Secretary of State Warren Christopher's volume edited with Paul Kreisberg (1985), containing contributions by Saunders, Sick, and Ribicoff among other Washington insiders, sets out to fix the hegemony of the US discourse on various sticky issues that arose during and after the crisis, including why were there such 'a number of embassy documents that ultimately fell into Iranian hands', and 'Why did we let the Shah come?' (Saunders 1985:85).

With rare exceptions, the assumptions prevailing across the majority of the literature on American policy positioning adopts the received wisdom that the legacy of relations with the Shah had little bearing on the choices faced by the US in the new revolutionary Islamic setting and that it was Islam's radical recidivism that was the root of the crisis (Brzezinski 1983; Carter 1982, Christopher 1985; Hiro 1985; Pollack 2004; Rubin 1981; Sick 1985b; Taheri 1988; Vance 1983, Zabih 1982). Unexamined in these accounts, are the facts as presented. These include condemning Iran as having acted without legitimate claims against the US (Schachter 1985: 325-373); that the taking of hostages was only tenuously linked to the Shah's arrival in the US (Saunders 1985:59); and the 'kidnapping' of embassy personnel was a criminal 'terrorist' act of such egregious proportions that any culpability of the United States was rendered irrelevant, a discourse represented as having been shared by the world community (Sick 1985b:168; Turner 1991). This literature reflects normalized perceptions of danger that promoted comparisons between restrained, democratic and civilized American behaviour, and the 'irrational', violent and terrorist character of a people 'shackled by religion' and incapable of democratic aspirations (Dorman and Farhang 1987:180).

The passionate language in these accounts suggests a seeming imperviousness to understanding the reasons for or historical motivations of Iranian actions or their Islamic underpinnings, and adopts stereotypes and heuristics for the US and 'the other' that reprise configurations used in previous moments of crisis and articulations of danger (Campbell 1998:157; Doty 1986: 82-86; Scott 2000). Scott, for examples, observes that the experience of the hostage crisis played out in a recreation of the captivity narrative (the plight of the Puritans at the hands of the American Indians) which historically situates American collective memory of personalized threat in an emotional pairing with the idealism of pursuing its unique historical mission (p.177). This mood, taken up in

myriad subsequent articles and books on Iran, from Pipes (1983), to Little (2003) and Bernard Lewis' *What Went Wrong?* (2002), describes the American self grappling with the angst of anticipating and defining an Islamic threat that is growing outside any US contribution save for the latter's propensity to be too benevolent towards Middle Eastern backwardness.

Perhaps the most unexpected, within a literature otherwise notable for its consistency, is Boyle's (1985) legal analysis (for less elaborate, but similar arguments, see R. Falk 1980; Wallis 1980). Referring to international legal norms, regimes and conventions, he offers an alternative interpretation of the hostage seizure as being consistent with the international rule of pre-emptive self-defense. He reproaches the US decision-making elite for its hostile reception toward complaints made by the Iranians prior to and after the hostage taking, and condemns Washington for acting irrationally in a situation that proved not only disastrous for American national interests, but which he states revealed a 'self-induced delusion' that 'doomed any prospects for a negotiated settlement of the crisis from the start' (p.193).

Likewise, standing in contrast to the bulk of the political analyses, are the media analyses, which largely describe the reporting of the crisis as a-historicist, biased, narrowly focused, agenda-based, and politically driven (Adams 1981; Altheide 1981; Dorman and Farhang 1987; Larson 1988; Mowlana 1984,1995; Vilanilam 1987). This starkly contrary perspective, added to by Said's *Covering Islam* (1997), suggests the hostage story was packaged as a fundamental quarrel between Islam and the Judeo-Christian West, a drama that was backed by little expository coverage of Islam or of goings on beyond the embassy perimeter. This category of analysis provides insight on the emotionalized menu of political information being transmitted to the public, and the rise in domestic commitment to a dynamic American patriotism and Christian morality to combat the evils of Iran and Islam. Without this popular component, the conditions of possibility for political passion to so thoroughly permeate elite decision-making would have been lessened.

A number of analyses use the hostage crisis and the rescue mission as case studies to illustrate aspects of theoretical modeling (Ganji 2006; Houghton 2001; Hollis and Smith 1986; Hurd 2005; McDermott 1998; Mirsepassi 2000; Scott 2000; Smith 1984-5).

Houghton's adept utilization of the rescue mission to illustrate analogical reasoning in decision-making, establishes that policy-makers drew on precedent while ignoring key facts that distinguished this hostage crisis from previous ones. His study reveals how passion over rationality ultimately informed the political decisions that were made.

Avoiding the pitfalls of reflecting 'accepted' American event framing, even when using a selection of primary materials, is not a given in these studies however.

McDermott, using the same case study, explores prospect theory to explain decision-making motivations. However, her inability to comprehend the normative resistances in which the truths established by the US discourse made certain constructions thinkable and actionable, corrupts her analysis of this particular case. By accepting unquestioningly the dominant construction of meanings and practices, McDermott buys into the passionate contingency of US innocence, and thus fails to accurately assess the domain of losses, and the nature of the risk that Carter was willing to take. In effect, McDermott, rather than ensuring she was 'no longer a consumer but a producer of the text', as Barthes so neatly describes it, became a captive to the discourse, providing an interesting example by default of how motivated bias plays a key role in risk-taking and decision-making (1974: quote on 5).

Linking diverse perspectives on Iranian practice is a generally shared position that the hostage crisis was paralleled internally by a 'Second Revolution', in which the clergy centralized power while simultaneously crushing the presence of the United States, and the threat it represented (Bakhash 1985, Daniel 2001; Ehteshami 1995). Unfortunately, there is little theory offered on how different identity groups contributed to the play of power between those 'in' and those 'out', save for several analyses of the Mojaheddin (Irfani 1983; Pedde 2005). By contrast, analyses of Iran's intentions for revolutionary export (Abrahamian 1993; Adib- Moghaddam 2005; Cole and Keddie 1986; Halliday 1986; Mirsepassi 2000; Ramazani 1986) reveal an effort to discover a paradigm for understanding the severity of this third world reaction to the imposition of Westernization and its normative interpretation of progress.

This chapter builds on several of these works to propose that the hostage crisis, in which was paralleled the centralization of control by the Khomeini camp, constituted a critical juncture in which American identity security became so threatened that all other

interests in relation to Iran had to be sacrificed. In so doing, the engulfing relationship of political love shifted into an isolating politics of strife. The complete rejection of the 'other' by each party established the conditions of possibility for the United States to adapt its ideological language of democracy in terms of ethnocentric superiority, inculcating emotionalized practices and meanings that made acceptable the idea that 'another people do not have the *capacity* for 'civilized' or modern political accomplishment' (Dorman and Farhang 1987:180, emphasis in original).

### **The Hostage Discourse, the Media and Political Passion**

To understand how the hostage crisis contributed to the writing of American identity, it is worth re-iterating the premise of the enquiry: whatever the reality, it is how the event was perceived, presented and represented that provides insight on why it was understood to be the identity danger it was, and how responses to it emerged. This is not to claim that there was not a diversity of views expressed in regard to the crisis, nor that the embassy seizure was not an event of import. It is to claim that the threat of the hostage taking, and its implications for the perceived danger of political Islam, cannot be purely explained 'by reference to the objective threat said to reside' in Iran (Campbell 1998:157). In fact, the legerdemain with which many facts of the hostage taking were interpreted reflects the particular manner in which emotions were channeled into mediating the threat and normalizing its narrative. 'Common sense simply withdrew when 'Islam' was discussed,' Said observes, and he could well have said the same thing of Iran (1987:85).

Of particular importance to the process of image-creation and response for each state, was the mediation of a large portion of the exchange between the two countries by television. Larson argues that 'The hostage seizure on Nov. 4, 1979 thrust US television into uncharted territory by greatly expanding its role as participant and potential catalyst in the foreign policy process' (1987:123). In fact, television's expanded post-Vietnam capacity to transmit imagery in real-time, put perpetual strain on both governments to control the manner in which the story was presented. As the goals and purpose of television reporters (and companies) differed from those of government, the construction of the story as they presented it – theatric, domestically grounded, and rigidly time-tabled – served to influence the images and emotions evoked, the key texts exchanged, the

dangers perceived by the public, and the dramatic mantra that it perpetuated in mediating the painful social bonding that linked them in a relationship of televised and rhetorical violence for over a year (Altheide 1981; Larson 1986; Serfaty 1990)<sup>4</sup>.

Media as both the messenger and the message constructed the story as one of heroes and villains, bringing into every household a configuration of American identity in which US victimization and the articulation of danger was personified in the faces of the hostage takers, the blindfolded hostages themselves, and the ranting of Khomeini and his demonstrating supporters outside the US embassy. As Saunders relates, ‘Nowhere was the gulf between the Iranian and American worlds more angrily felt than in the American living room, with fanatical Iranian faces daily screaming hatred from TV screens. Immediately Americans were torn between two feelings—the normal humane concern for the hostages, and a natural desire to “show these people they can’t do this to the United States.”’ (1985:47) Thus, shame, anger, frustration and fear were constructed and reconstructed on a daily basis (and nightly with Walter Cronkite’s famous count-down on CBS) in a mediated humiliation the likes of which no country had ever experienced so publicly.

The perceived egregiousness of the move welded for a brief moment the pro-Shah and pragmatist discourses together, and despite differences in how this should play out in policy, formed a bedrock of common perceptions concerning the identity security of the US. ‘The Carter administration never recognized the validity of the Iranian position to any extent’ explains Boyle. ‘Instead, it engaged in manipulation of domestic and international opinion to show that the US was completely in the right, and Iran completely in the wrong’ (1985: 191). In Pollack’s analysis, which exemplifies both early and later official commentary (Houghton 2001:53; cf: Zabih 1982:44), the Khomeini regime would have found a reason to take such action regardless of any American move linked to the Shah, and thus had no right to have its grievances aired. His view is that its actual motivations were to avenge the coup of 1953, centralize power and get the attention of the American people, ‘a key motive of the students’ (Pollack 2004:55-165, quote 160; cf Christopher 1985).

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<sup>4</sup> British media was equally influential and likewise emotionalised, and although *The Times* was on strike for a good portion of the hostage crisis, *The Telegraph*, BBC Radio, and *The Financial Times* were critical to establishing similar views not only in London, but in contributing to the US media outlook from Tehran.



The sensitivity of the United States media and administration to Iran's act of hostage-taking was considerably greater than in previous incidents of similar kind, such as the *Pueblo* Affair during the Johnson administration, or the Ward incident in 1949<sup>5</sup> (Houghton 2001: 92-8). I argue that the reason this case differed so substantially from the others, and became such an emotionalized trauma for the US, was that the real subject of the discourse was the relationship of political passion between the US and an Iran that had ousted its Shah and rejected American ideals (Zonis 1996). It was not, as in previous cases, one in which a resolution could be reached based on the exercise of diplomatic options between states with sparse formal relations. At play in every negotiation between the two was, on the one hand, the unrequited anger of Iran that the human rights violations it had endured under the Shah were never acknowledged, and on the other, the unspoken but strongly felt hurt and subjugated shame with which the US viewed its status as spurned parent and its role as regional security provider. Both likewise suffered from the profound disrespect with which they felt treated by the other.

This is not to say that important voices were not being raised in Iran that accepted the Shah's actions were not all US directed, or in the US, that accepted the Shah was much worse a dictator than had been previously acknowledged (Weisman 1985). As Wallis complained, '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' (1980:153). But, these were not voices that carried weight among the policy-makers in either Washington or Tehran.

Instead, the US Administration was concerned with damage control. The responses chosen suggest the motivations of the love-sick: a rapid rewriting of the fallout to create guilt only on the part of the 'other'; mobilization to bring allies on-side; exaggerated and intense rhetoric to rally public focus on present and personal suffering

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<sup>5</sup> In the *Pueblo* affair, 86 US hostages were seized from an American spy ship by North Korea in 1967 and held for 11 months by the government. In the Ward incident, Mr. Angus Ward, US Consul in Mukden, Manchuria, was taken hostage, along with his wife and entire staff in 1949, on charges of conducting espionage activities; they were held by government authorities for almost exactly a year during a political upheaval in some ways similar to the Iranian revolution.; see also Cyrus Vance (1983) *Hard Choices: Critical years in America's foreign policy* (New York: Simon and Schuster), pp 408-9.

while denying the importance of past state practices: and engagement with Iran that projected American superiority and power.

### **Crisis and Passion**

In her analysis of the Cuban Missile Crisis, Weldes notes that crises are instrumentalized by government decision-makers who are authorized to recognize and respond to emergencies in appropriate ways (Weldes 1999:6 fn.7). '[A] crisis is a creation of language used to depict it...a political act, not a recognition of a fact or of a rare situation' (Edelman 1988:31). As with the lead-up to the revolution, the US management of the hostage situation was understood through two competing, often hostile discourses (the pragmatist and pro-Shah), yet both viewed the seizure in similar terms: as a crisis, a barbaric kidnapping, and a humiliation. In the rhetoric that both developed, victimization and innocence came to constitute primary signifiers of passion. The meanings drew from constructions of strength and leadership around which American identity had previously been produced, while incorporating an emotionalized discourse of self in response to perceived norm endangerment (Doty 1996:30; Scott 2001; Weldes 1999:42).

Victimization and innocence did not imply vulnerability and naiveté. Rather, they enframed the mythology of America as heroic, privileging tough morality, the maturity of patience, the willingness to suffer for its principles. This was the side of the American self encrypted in the captivity narrative played out first in the Puritan period, in which the promotion of American idealism required at times the forbearance of pain (Scott 2001). In so representing itself, the US cloaked itself in the persona of the civilized nation – injured by uncivilized practices – and willing to be judged and redeemed by its civilized peers in the court of international law ('Exit Bazargan', *IHT*, 7/11/1979).

This signification, solidly located in Carter's human rights discourse and promoted by the pragmatists, interpreted the honour of the US to be vested in negotiation for the sake of preserving the lives of the hostages, and thereby combined strength and restraint as moral imperatives (Dumbrell 1993:171). 'We must continue to exhibit such constraint despite the intensity of our emotions,' Carter stated in his White House announcement on November 12, acknowledging from the outset that this was a crisis that would be a play of emotions against principles. 'The lives of our people in Iran are at

stake.... Our response will measure our character and our courage' (*New York Times*, 'Transcript of Carter's Statement' 13/11/1979). However, this discourse carried certain risks, most obviously, that the White House would be seen as weak, indecisive, and insufficiently muscular to command the respect that the US deserved.

The alternative, 'tough conservative' discourse, interpreted strength and credibility as resting on the presumption that the US would never shirk from exercising its will, and that it was against just this type of threat that America, in fighting for liberty and freedom for all, had to make a show of force. 'Restraint need not be paralysis' William Safire warned in the *International Herald Tribune* a few days after the hostage-taking. 'The job of creative diplomacy is neither to admire our own restraint nor to get ready to thump our chests; instead, we should be planning to react to this act of war....' ('Re-Stabilizing Iran', *IHT*, 16/11/1979). The 'tough conservative' view, an outgrowth of the pro-Shah discourse, saw waiting for negotiations to work as a humiliation, 'an institutional denial of nerve' (ibid). This led to a rising clamour for the use of force and, as Safire wrote, for 'a soldier who has the judgment to tell the President that the national honor (sic) cannot always be defended without casualties' ('The Calling Card' *IHT*, 15/4/1980). The proposition that the hostage taking was an act of war or a crime was of importance within this discourse, as both required strong measures of retaliation and containment.

Until the rescue mission, victimization and innocence were representations (signifieds) shared by both discourses. The division between the pragmatists and the tough conservatives came to a head over the choice to adopt a change in tactics from negotiation to the use of military means to engineer a rescue. The decision to go ahead prompted Vance's resignation, and in effect, sealed the fate of Carter's bid for re-election. Despite the failure of that mission, the perception that Carter had betrayed his very public commitment to use only peaceful means for the sake of preserving the hostages lives, eroded the public trust he'd heretofore enjoyed, and contributed to the hegemony of the tough conservative discourse, which was perceived as more consistent, and better positioned to protect American credibility (Dumbrell 1993:171; Sick 1985:171). This included a national swing to the political right, and support for the use of

force, both of which reflected the exasperation and impatience of the public and policy makers alike with the emotional guardedness that had come with the exercise of restraint.

### *Victimization*

Although retaliation by the Iranian ‘mob’ had been expected upon the Shah’s admission, when none came for almost a week, there was growing relief in Washington that there might not, after all, be a price to pay, corroborating projections that the plan would not endanger the US and instead, would turn out a success. In the face of the apparent calm, the administration even gave the go-ahead to Chargé d`Affaires Bruce Laingen to hold a Halloween party on November 3 at the embassy, as long as the music was kept low and the curtains drawn.<sup>6</sup>

When news reached Washington on November 4 that hostages had been seized, the administration moved rapidly to establish information dominance. Carter and other members of the government repeatedly stated that the Bazargan government had given assurances that it would protect the embassy, an assurance the US had demanded for the very reason that take-overs had over the past year been frequent, and, as Carter said in a news conference on November 28, ‘No embassy on Earth is a fortress that can withstand constant attacks by a mob unless a host government comes to the rescue of the people within the Embassy’ (in Alexander and Nanes 1980:483). This mobilization of US public sentiment was largely successful, as was the way the government presented the diplomats as being just ordinary American civilians that had done nothing to deserve such treatment (McAlistair 2005:206, 209). From the beginning, therefore, the US appropriated the hostage story as a drama that started not with the acceptance of the Shah into the US, and therefore, linked to American action, but with an un-provoked and spontaneous act of fanatical Muslim militants in a pattern of mob violence (Boyle 1985: Jordan 1982:38: Taheri 1988; among others). Whatever hint of surprise there might have been was incorporated into a larger story of America as the object of an ongoing, incomprehensible and undeserved Iranian rage (Hurd 2005). This innocence of responsibility was not just a cold calculation but the articulation by the leadership of the emotional experience of national trauma (Fierke 2004:484). Carter’s words gave public meaning to emotions

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<sup>6</sup> Author interview with Bruce Laingen, Nov. 2, 1979.

borne of a situation that appeared unimaginable, enabling him to mobilize and give them agency. This immediately established the hostages in a news storyboard that reflected a national identification with their plight, divesting them of their individual character and reinvesting them as American symbols, and thus, symbolically of America itself. *e pluribus unum* (McAlister 2005: 207; Weisman 1981:230).

Passionately constructed, American victimization was experienced in three different guises: first, as being at the hands of an incompetent clerical leadership with which it had to negotiate for the hostages' release; second in terms of the hostages own experience; and third, domestically as a nation besieged by 'an enemy within' – the Iranian immigrant community who were represented as supporting Khomeini and infusing American society with danger.

Ignored in the construction of victimization were the hostages' own warnings prior to the crisis that American policy had been ill-conceived and humiliating and that consequences would ensue. As ex-hostage Barry Rosen explained his view of the way Washington shamed Iran:

'Having failed so often to recognize the power of symbols to the Iranians – and the significance in particular of the Shah as the symbol of evil – to do so again would announce that we understood nothing about the revolution. Those who bruited the possibility probably didn't understand that admission would be a seemingly calculated insult to almost an entire nation.' (1982:101-2)

**The Clerical Leadership** The initial description of the embassy takeover as a sit-in (that turned into a siege), worked to showcase the US as having survived honourably such violations in the past through adequate site protection and by working with the Iranian government to obtain resolution (Pollack 2004). The sit-in image stuck for several weeks (and in fact, was the title of the *New York Times Magazine* article that appeared three months after the hostages were released (Kifner: 17/5/1981: 54-73). As a result, a lingering ambiguity continued in official and unofficial analyses as to whether the takeover had been pre-planned, the inconclusiveness within the discussion enabling the issue of whether US policies had contributed to it to remain blurred through active forgetting (see McDermott 1998:46; reports at the time that suggested otherwise include Mather, 'Holy War against the Great Satan', *The Observer*, 11/11/1979; Ioannides 1984). This ensured that the US position as victim would become part of the historical record as

institutional memory—and that emergence from the hostage nightmare could be framed as redemption. (Laffey and Weldes 2004:355; Scott 2001:182)

Although specific demands were broadcast over Tehran radio within the first hour of the embassy compound being seized, a theme that runs through most of the memoirs, including Carter's, Brzezinski's and Vance's, was that there was no agenda, and that the event would resolve itself within the day, or a few days at most (Carter 1982:458; McManus 1981:18). 'It was not at all clear what the militants wanted' Carter states in *Keeping Faith* (p.457). 'My impression was that originally they had not intended to hold the Americans captive beyond a few hours' (p.458). This statement seems extraordinary in light of the students' having issued 'Communiqué Number 1' through a loudspeaker strung from the embassy gates, in which they stated they were responding to Khomeini's 'heavenly anger' against the United States, and 'The American diplomats are hostage and will be released only if the criminal and deposed Shah is extradited' to Iran to face punishment (quotes in Mather, *The Observer*, 11/11/1979; and in Ioannides 1984:127). This message was relayed from Tehran Radio several times that first day, and monitored by US intelligence in Turkey and Cyprus. Additionally, the Revolutionary Council confirmed its support that same day (also broadcast by radio), in which it too stated the hostages' release would be secured only if the Shah 'was handed over to the Revolutionary Court' (quote in Ioannides 1984:128).

The lack of comprehension, verging on deafness, on the part of US decision-makers stemmed from two emotionalized effects. First, the immediate danger and sense of déjà vu galvanized those officially responsible into a state of hyper-excitability, itself a disrupter of equilibrium and contributor to increased feelings of threat (Houghton 2001; McDermott 2004:173). This activated existing strategies of response, such as demanding that the moderate sitting government obtain immediate resolution. The Carter administration's various public statements that pointed to the Bazargan government as Washington's partner, was however, a posture that was itself confused and sentimentalized (Carter 1982:457-8). The disregard Washington had shown that same government by refusing to consult with it on the Shah's admittance into the US, or to recognize Yazdi's and Bazargan's repeated warnings that they could not promise full security because their own power was constrained, reflected a lack of understanding—

perhaps more accurately, a 'remarkable absence' of interest—concerning how Iranians would receive the imperiousness with which Washington delivered the news to accept the Shah (Boyle 1986). This 'absence of interest' extended to the timing of the Shah's admission, which coincided with the holiest Shia ritual of Moharram, the mourning of the fourth Shia Imam Hossein's martyrdom, a fact ignored by the Cabinet (Fischer 1981), but which had seriously compromised Bazargan's position. Washington was likewise oblivious to the fact it occurred on the same date as the anniversary of Bloody Friday, which drew large crowds to commemorate the death of dozens of students at the hands of the Shah's army the year before. Carter simply described Khomeini's speech on that day, which called on seminary students to take action against the partnership of the Shah and the US, as 'unhelpful' ('News conference on Iran' 28/11/1979 in Alexander and Nanes 1980: 483). In this way, presumptive superiority was projected in discourses surrounding American discretionary power in opposition to the inferiority of Islamic practices.

In fact, the pro-Shah discourse that rejected contact with Khomeini, contributed to the tenaciousness with which the political clout of the radical religious wing was ignored at this critical juncture, suggesting the narcissistic phenomenon in which 'internal representations of the outside world are fractionated into partial representations as a reaction either to tenuous or threatening experiences with external objects' (Johnson 1977:131). Splitting the 'other' into partial representations enabled the administration to figure America as victimized by the clergy, while remaining engaged with Bazargan.

Second, when the situation did not resolve itself in the first few hours, or days, and the Bazargan government unexpectedly fell, the sense of threat rose. The 'unprecedented' support offered the 'kidnappers' by Khomeini and the Revolutionary Council, led Washington to perceive it was being victimized by a state of 'crazy people' (Carter, quote in Jordan 1982:39) and that when Bazargan fell, Iran was perceived as rudderless. As a White House Briefing made clear: 'The most difficult part of the Iranian question is that there's (*sic*) no government entity with whom we can communicate or negotiate or register a complaint or a request' ('White House Briefing for Members of Congress', in Alexander and Nanes 1980:495). This reflected an emotionalized heuristic that framed able political leadership in laic terms, and which therefore contributed to the widely held suspicion that Khomeini, despite having dominated the revolution, not to

mention the other clerical figures composing the Revolutionary Council, was incapable of representing a viable government entity, and incompetent to deal with the complex negotiations demanded by the crisis at hand (Taheri 1988:115). The formal import of religion into the public sphere, which occurred with Bazargan's resignation, problematized the nature of democratic power in that it showed up the contingency of the laic presumption within the American settlement (Hurd 2005:19). The claims of the students and their clerical supporters to be representatives of the people, and acting for the public good, constructed the state and its purpose in a way that threw into question the sustainability of the secular impress on governance. The actions of the SFIL, and its official support, undeniably represented Iranian popular will, even though it was shocking to US sensibilities. As 'Mary' described it:

'The response was overwhelming. Day after day, the people poured through the streets in waves. The students made a habit of coming down to the main gate to greet them and spend some time talking to them, completely astounded at what they had released' (Ebtekar 2001:75)

Rendering previously stable understandings of the political uncomfortably perplexing, this activated anxiety and disbelief in Washington. 'How could we deal with people like this?' asked Saunders (1985:47). Yet not until Bazargan resigned did the US administration have to face the fact that the only ones left to negotiate with were the clerics (ibid:32), and that the promises of protection, however weak, had been made by a government now out of power. This elicited panic. As Jordan stated, 'We had no embassy left, and now there was no government. *Who in the hell are we going to deal with?*' (ibid: 25, emphasis in original).

Victimization was seen, therefore, as being exacerbated by the loss of anyone to communicate with in clerically dominated Iran, which situated the crisis in an opposition between the disorder and vengeance of the Iranian nation and the ordered and reasoned conduct of the US. This enabled assistant secretary of state Warren Christopher to state: 'The hostage crisis, in short was not in Iranian eyes an episode in Iran's international relations' (Christopher 1985:6). By insisting that the US was the object and not the instigator of the grievance, shame was bypassed and silenced, not only by ignoring the other's complaints but in policy choices that served to aggravate the standoff. At this stage, emotional stress, according to Scheff and Retzinger, typically leads to a loss of moral



direction, and the urgent need to act and show power (1991:29). CIA Director Stansfield Turner's wording is instructive:

'I...felt this instance of hostage taking was so heinous that it had to be solved before we could discuss Iran's perceived grievances. Because we were both *the* aggrieved party and a very powerful nation, we assumed we could find a way to apply the necessary amount of pressure to the Iranians. We did not want to wait for them to come to their senses; we wanted to act.' (1991:59, emphasis mine).

Turner's insistence that the US was 'the' aggrieved party, while in the same sentence allowing that Iran wished to discuss its 'perceived' grievances, suggests impaired information processing through denial of the other's right to have a point of view. Scheff and Retzinger observe: 'Although behaviour is fluent, it [is] slightly off-key. ... Although behaviour caused by bypassed shame is goal-oriented...it is obsessive and compulsive' (p. 29). Indeed, Turner speaks of the compulsion to act, because the Iranians, in his view, were out of their senses. Earlier in his recollections, he admits that 'the team was not working well together', suggesting considerable cognitive constraints: 'At our SCC meetings the discussion often could not stay on track...Stress accounted for some of this, but overactive egos played a bigger part than they should have' (ibid).

This emotionalized context of hyper-excitability at the hostage seizure on the one hand and panic in the face of a rudderless government on the other accounted for the Administration's failure to recognize the SFIL's demands. This was compounded by the fact that in the discursive economy of US identity, the image of the Shah as 'criminal' had already been dismissed within the play of political love. What is more, to return the Shah was understood as condemning him to the same treatment his ministers had received in Iran's revolutionary tribunals, which Congress had already derided as being show trials and contrary to all human rights practices. Fear and anger impaired cognition, reducing the creative ability to find alternative solutions, which meant that from the beginning, there was no dialogic interaction, no recognition of meaning in the language used by the other, and therefore, no basis for negotiation (Boyle 1986). Says McDermott, 'the more threatened people feel, the more likely their policy choices will intensify the conflict' (2004:173-4). Thus, as in a rhetorical duel, State Department Spokesman Hodding Carter rebutted Khomeini's accusations against the Shah, by accusing *him* of incitement:

‘The flagrant and conscientious lies of the Ayatollah Khomeini contribute to creating an atmosphere in which such incidents become possible.’ (M. Tatu, ‘Washington: L’imam Khomeiny, ennemi numéro un’, *le Monde*, 23/11/1979, trans. International News Service).

Jody Powell, White House spokesperson, likewise went on the offensive:

‘These scandalous allegations are totally false and, without a doubt, were made in full realization that they were so’ (Ibid).

In turn, Foreign Minister Bani-Sadr stated that ‘the hostages liberation depends on the United States’, warning that ‘no Iranian will unilaterally be able to take such a measure’ (quote in J. Randal, ‘United Hate’ *Washington Post*, 12/11/1979). This was monologism at its most extreme: pain on both sides that required the other’s recognition in order to achieve relief, and the narcissist’s inability to accommodate an ‘other’ beyond the self. Both experienced victimization, though the sense of injustice stemmed as much (if not more) from the other’s intractability in acknowledging the pain at the source, as from the actual hostage taking, which in effect, was symptomatic of the humiliation. It is revealing that Bani-Sadr, later in that long year, described Iran ‘as having become hostage to America’, suggesting that acknowledgement instead of denial on either part, could have lifted what had become an albatross around both countries’ necks (1982:146)

For the US, forced to deal with religious leaders who operated on a normative/emotionalized basis outside of American understanding or power, the hostage crisis represented a destabilizing rupture, but also an opportunity for re-inscribing US identity. The sense of superiority laced with frustration is palpable in State Department spokesman Hodding Carter’s famous outburst: ‘How could a little country of Muslims and people who ran around in robes and looked funny...do all this to us and we couldn’t do anything about it?’ (quote in Dumbrell 1993:169). But Adorno captures in theoretical terms the process in which the self-doubt and pain expressed by Carter regarding the whole country’s suffering, translated into institutionalized amnesia through the domestication of the images and symbols of victimization, so that restoration and redemption could occur, and identity be maintained:

‘From the viewpoint of social psychology,’ he writes, ‘it would also be expected that this damaged group-narcissism is lying in wait to be repaired and grasps at everything in consciousness that might immediately bring the past into harmony

with narcissistic wishes—but then, it also, if possible, remolds reality as if this injury could be made not to have happened (in Hartmann 1987:122).

**The hostages** The symbolism of the ‘the US as hostage’ played well as a media and campaign emblem. This enabled the president to adopt a ‘Presidential’ image in the face of the inhumane actions of the Iranian horde, and to focus on each and every hostage life. Thus, the discursive acts of dimming the White House Christmas Tree lights, of the President visiting the hostage families, of praying with them publicly in the National Cathedral, and of Americans across the nation wearing yellow armbands, constructed US identity as one of controlled strength, and were productive of an image of undeserved suffering (McAlister 2005:209; Smith 1981:197).

Represented as regular citizens doing their job, the diplomats became the symbols of victimized American courage. American embassy actions in Iran were represented as a source of pride, having been conducted consistently and without blemish, that is, through internationally accepted practices of diplomacy that were good (and certainly, good intentioned) despite and within the atmosphere of violence and upheaval.

The hostages’ captivity was from the outset a political issue put to the service of US honour. Having been seized, they would not be traded easily, as their pain would not be squandered on easy gains for their captors. Their release would have to be, for them and their families—as symbols of America—a moment of pride. As Christopher later explained:

‘The objective of President Carter and his advisers was to cause the leaders of Iran’s revolution to decide that releasing the hostages was in their interest, but to do it in a way Americans would see as honourable’ (1985:47).

Here the US reveals a view of itself as still positioned to manage the crisis on its terms, while remaining stalwart and patient until that time arrived. The Iranians are depicted as not really knowing what their interests are, and needing the guidance and discipline of the parent to discover them. The word ‘cause’ carries an ominous overtone, suggesting that disciplining this delinquent child could be required as a step in the prosecution of America’s mission (Doty 1996: 90). Victimization, therefore, packs into it the concept of the powerful being patient (as opposed to helpless), and the parent’s willingness to accommodate and guide inheres in it the meaning of limit, and the necessity for

surveillance. That limit is reflected in the part of the phrase referring to honour, implying that any act that negatively affected American honour would not be in Iran's interest. At the same time, Christopher's statement makes clear that the hostages' freedom is contingent on how policy-makers determined what was honourable, the hostages themselves being but pawns in the larger game of American credibility.

Carter, after visiting with the hostage families five days after the seizure, imputed to them the nobility of victimization: 'They don't expect miracles and want their loved ones home, but they want them to come home *only* on honorable terms' (quote in Jordan 1986:54, emphasis mine). Could this be true? Or was this the passionate politics of the President, but not the families? Equally telling was Brzezinski's refusal to meet the hostage families so as to be free of emotional linkages 'should the time come when the country's honour is pitted against the safety of the hostages' (ibid).

Alternative views on honour, though never entertained by the decision-making elite, were, however, in circulation. An editorial entitled 'Lost Chance?' in *The Nation* (26/1/1980:67-68), for example, calls an initiative proposed by Tehran before the UN Security vote on sanctions, as having been 'peremptorily dismissed'. Advanced by the Iranian Ambassador to the UN, Mansur Farhang, it called for a UN delegation to investigate whether evidence was 'available to justify extradition of the Shah under the "common law" interpretation of international extradition' (p.67-68). The editorial observes that while 'lip service [is paid] to the ultimate safe return of the hostages, few bother to distinguish between that worthy goal and the need to save an ill-defined national honor.' 'Is the Administration,' it asked at the end, 'unwilling to risk any solution that would allow Iran to salvage its own national honor?' (ibid). Thus *The Nation* points to acknowledgement of the other as necessary in finding resolution of what was mutualized shame. Boyle shows equal insight: 'The primary obstacle to a speedy negotiated solution to the crisis proved to be the Carter administration's insistence that the "honor" of the United States precluded any American apology to Iran as demanded by the latter.' But, he adds, 'The "honor" of a superpower is never at stake until a president purposely decides to put it at stake, and thus, to risk its loss' (1985:197).

In these counter discourses, identity is elaborated in a more communitarian fashion than that adopted by American decision-makers, who, by contrast, constructed

Iran as not deserving such recognition. This stemmed from the ambiguity of the US position as narrated by the Iranians, which was designed to shame the US for meddling in its internal affairs and threatening its sovereignty. This in turn necessitated the construction of the US captives as innocent victims so as to banish any suspicion that they were acting outside their diplomatic mandate. As with earlier captivity mythology, the narrative of victimization reversed the chief protagonists, highlighting the temporal issue of the captivity, not the reasons behind it (Scott 2000). When American efforts to pass a Security Council Resolution imposing sanctions on Iran were rebuffed by the Soviet Union, Ambassador McHenry, indignant and incredulous at not being recognized by those outside Iran as the obvious victims, stated:

‘Written by Lewis Carrol as pages out of Alice in Wonderland, the light becomes darkness. The victim becomes the criminal. Commitment to international law becomes a defense of anarchy.’ (‘Statement to the UN Security Council’ 13/1/1980 in Alexander and Nanes 1980:501).

Prior to the hostage crisis, Carter’s emphasis on human rights as a pillar of his foreign-policy had garnered considerable criticism from within the pro-Shah tough conservative discourse, which interpreted it as a naïve and dangerous form of pressure on vulnerable allies, such as Somoza and the Shah (Dumbrell 1993:172; Ledeen and Lewis 1981). Its articulation as a primary policy goal had turned the social purpose of the US human rights mission, which until then had been so naturalized as to need no justification, into a site of contestation (Doty 1996: 83). The hostage crisis refixed the signifiers of human rights, re-constituting it as something proponents of both discourses could share. The characterization of the diplomats as civilians, rather than as military or government employees, was a critical element in reconnecting American political identity to the citizen-driven image of Carter’s human rights agenda. This made it a home-based example of the perpetual suffering experienced by individuals and their families in non-democratic parts of the globe, and which the US moral commitment to social justice was designed to alleviate (Brzezinski 1983:564). A united front on human rights and its role within American policy therefore served as a common platform by which to oppose the hostage-takers, and particularly, their discomfiting labeling of the embassy as ‘a den of spies’ and a ‘US corruption centre’ (Mather, *Observer* 4/11/1979)

The prompt focus by the media and the government on the hostages as 'ordinary people' whose work as government agents had no bearing on their rights as human beings was an expression of this accomplishment. Their role as state representatives whose activities at the time of the seizure could have been against the interests of the host government or its people, was discursively disciplined to reduce such ambiguity. The administration always denied that there were 'spies' (intelligence officers) among the captives, even though there were at least two, the documents of their assignment and details of their activities being among the records found and published by the SFLI early on (Boyle 1985:188-9; Mottahedeh 1980:19; USED, Tehran, Secret Document 0408072, *Asnad*). The insistence on the use of 'civilians' to describe the diplomats re-naturalized the self-evident social purpose of the US as a power committed to promoting democracy and human rights through emissaries who were ordinary 'Joes'. Their very ordinariness confirmed the goodness and honesty of American values. In this, the public embrace of the diplomats as 'just like us' served to emotionally reconfirm the norm of human rights promotion as something all Americans could identify with, and, despite whatever the Iranians said, could feel was a continuing part of the miracle of Manifest Destiny.

As several European states viewed it, and many Americans, too, had the Carter administration ignored the hostages, their value to the Iranians would have diminished, and their release might have occurred earlier (Sick 1985a:221; Weisman 1981:231-2; for a contrary view, see Pollack 2004:165, 175).<sup>7</sup> Yet the production of the crisis as a private odyssey played out on the public stage, in which the President's anger paralleled the anger of the families, neighbours, and communities, was understood to be emotionally appropriate, and ensured it would remain a factor in all subsequent decision-making on the issue. Carter's focus on them as civilians meant that their feelings, rather than what they had been doing in Tehran, became the highlight of a tragic, highly dramatic, but in the end, uplifting morality tale. The horror, outrage and eventually, obsession, on the part of the US public, media and administration at being victimized grew from the perceived danger of ordinary American citizens being taken across the boundary from the inside (American territory) to the outside (Iranian territory), and thus their torment and their

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<sup>7</sup> This view coloured European support for the US in the Security Council, affecting the votes in favour of economic sanctions against Iran. (N. Temko, 'Both Iran, US feel pushed to take tougher stand', *Christian Science Monitor*, 29 4/1980, p.1; Maurice Delarue, 'Le Silence des Neuf', *Le Monde*, 17-11-1979)

insecurity were imputed to be all America's. Observed *New York Times* columnist Steven Weisman, 'Their captivity offered the American people an unaccustomed opportunity to unite and play the role of aggrieved party in an otherwise ambiguous situation' (1981: 230).

The media loyally backed the Administration as victimized by a third world nation gripped by religious madness, and dedicated for the first six months an average of one third of every nightly newscast to the story. Further, 'it overwhelmingly presumed the self-righteousness of the American position' (Adams and Heyl 1981: 26, quote on 32), being 'filled with the conviction of being morally superior', and therefore defied any acknowledgement of the 'others' view, reason, or morality (quote in *New World Dictionary of American Language* 1986: definition of 'self-righteousness'). As framed by the media, the story did not lie in Iran, where alternative perspectives on the crisis had already been dismissed as illegitimate. As reporters were unable to reach the hostages personally, or the majority of the clerical leadership (most of which in any event did not speak English), the story focused almost by default on the hostages' families in the US, making it immaterial whether the hostages were official functionaries or not. Additionally, depicting the families as victims made for rousing drama, infusing the public and their leaders with constant reminders of the fear and pain that Iran was inflicting on them.

How US decision-makers denied the troves of embassy documents found and made public by the SFIL and which proved so shaming, is revealing for what it says about the way 'objective facts' were placed in a discourse that drew on emotion to silence the damning evidence of American actions and intentions. The denial took place on two fronts. First, the government convinced US and Western media that they should ignore the documents to protect the hostages lives. The government thus engaged the media in a collaborative effort to fix signifiers of danger on the implications of exposure. Any acknowledgement that there were actually intelligence operatives in the group was constructed to be morally irresponsible, and a betrayal of the hostage families. As Senator Ribicoff stated,

With respect to individual hostages and their fate, the State Department was highly concerned about publication of any stories that might suggest intelligence backgrounds of any of the hostages. Such information (which was developed by

some journalists but might not otherwise have been known to the Iranian captors) could have been fatal in the event espionage trials had ever commenced. Hostage families were concerned about the release of this kind of information. (1985: 391)

The buy-in by the media was almost universal. In typical blustery form, Safire contended, ‘The CIA – already blamed for non-existent conspiracies – should start conspiring now!’ (‘Restabilizing Iran’ *IHT*, 16/11/1979). Yet Ribicoff’s dig at those journalists who refused to be cowed by the government’s clampdown, on the false premise that it informed the Iranian captors of information they might not otherwise have discovered, is specious, in that it was the captors who were providing the evidence, both in the original, and in translation. This inability (or refusal) to recognize the hostage-takers as students capable of such understanding, suggests significant flaws in information processing taking place in Washington, or outright lying to discipline an otherwise pliant press – an extreme form of self-shaming (Sick 1985:354).

Second, the documents’ importance was belittled, their authenticity never acknowledged, and their utility cast purely in terms of Iran’s political callowness (and hence, inferiority). The discourse made light of Iranian fears concerning American activities in the embassy (Bani-Sadr 1982:160; Bill 1988:298). In his *Paved With Good Intentions, The American Experience and Iran*, which appeared only weeks after the hostages were released, Rubin adopts the sardonic tone of the superior parent who sees through the infantile simplicity of Khomeini’s, and the students’, designs.

‘The only explanation that Khomeini could accept was that CIA agents and people trained by them were working to create chaos, prevent employees from working, ruin harvests and sabotage factories. ... When his student supporters took over the American embassy on November 4, the first thing they did was to look for proof of these accusations. What they found was generally unimpressive: documents showing that the embassy had, for example, written reports on the situation in Kurdistan, in the army, and in various government ministries. Despite the lack of evidence, however, most Iranians firmly believed all these accusations’. (1982: 293)

By making Khomeini’s fears sound slightly ridiculous, Rubin deflects the question as to what the ‘CIA agents and those trained by them’ were actually expected to be doing in Iran – avoiding and denying any shame at US behaviour. The imagery comes from Cold War Soviet-style narratives—‘ruin harvests’, ‘sabotage factories’ – symbolic markers that hearken to a continuing emotional linkage with communist forces for lack of alternative



analogies, but which carry little relation to the situation in Iran. A rude innocence in regards to the political in Iran is projected on the 'student supporters' who, childlike, set out 'first thing' to engage in the game of undercover agents. Rubin generalizes to 'most Iranians' the same paranoia and gullibility he imputes to Khomeini, implying that the evidence showed that the US had no CIA agents in its embassy, the documents' blandness being the proof (a point Saunders likewise makes, 1985:58). Hinted at was the idea that the Iranians were on a different level than a sophisticated, 'worldly' power such as the US and that their clerical leader was politically paranoid, Rubin thereby adding his voice to the chorus that the clergy were incapable of modern leadership (see also Taheri 1988: 115; Mather, *The Observer*, 4/11/1979). This construction, and the emotional register of deprecation, retained staying power beyond the final negotiations and the hostages' release. As Pollack looked back on that period, the tone and the same passionate constructions persist:

'[T]he US government was forced to try to persuade a group of people whose ideas about America and the world were immature, ignorant, and fantastic, to gain the release of fifty-two American hostages who the Iranians truly believed were spies sent to enslave their country.' (2004:162)

**The enemy within** The position of the US-based, multifaceted Iranian community came to function as a third site of victimization. The ambiguity of the expatriate Iranians' individual opinions, actions and immigration status served to emotionalize difference into a 'defiling otherness', categorizing them all as 'the enemy within' (Campbell 1998: quote on 8; Doty 1996:6; Pipes 2002; Sherry 2005).

A proposed demonstration by pro-Khomeini students on the first day after the hostage-taking introduced the contingency of their position right away. The difficulty was perceived in terms that placed the demonstrators' constitutionally protected right to freedom of expression, in opposition to the security of the hostages at the hands of 'religious fanatics' that 'obviously ...don't understand our system of government' (Jordan 1982:39). The fear was that there would be a misinterpretation of the facts by the ayatollahs should things go wrong. 'If there were pictures of fistfights and bloodshed in front of the White House, they would conclude that whatever happened to the demonstrators was sponsored by the President and the government', Carter stated in a

Cabinet meeting (ibid). This passionate construction was countered by White House Counsel Lloyd Cutler, as well as Washington, D.C. Mayor Marion Barry, who maintained the more sanguine view that freedom of assembly was a cornerstone of American democracy, and that to disallow the demonstration was only to prove to Khomeini and his ilk that the US did not have the courage to stand by its principles. Nonetheless, anxiety, fear and anger suppressed the shame of going against such fundamental principles, and Carter revoked the permit. In his memoirs he explains his motivation: 'With our hostages in captivity, American citizens – including the President – were in no mood to watch Iranian 'students' denouncing our country in front of the White House' (Carter 1982:460). This established a signifier of danger to US-based Iranians that was sufficiently threatening to require the compromise of democratic rights enshrined in law.

Thus, the precariousness of America's democratic identity was engaged at the very beginning of the crisis, and in terms that pitted Iranians in the US, against the security of the hostages, and the honour of the US nation. For Carter, emotional intensity galvanized his thinking and motivated the policy that ensued: 'I am not going to have those bastards humiliating our country in front of the White House....[I]f I wasn't President, I'd be out on the streets myself and would probably take a swing at any Khomeini demonstrator I could get my hands on' (Jordan 1982:40).

Distinctions in the views of American-based Iranians concerning issues such as the Khomeini government, hatred of the Shah and Islamic belief were blurred in the media's pairing of their images with those of demonstrators in Iran (Altheide 1981:143). This contributed to the belief that the American homeland was endangered, and that American society had become the victim of its own liberal immigration laws and open-door policies. The discourse of othering in this way constructed US-based Iranians as indistinguishable from Tehran-based Iranians in a narrative of violence that evoked a frightening image of them 'as a unified quasi army' (ibid:147). Over the year, broadcast footage included Iranian demonstrators at the Statue of Liberty and clashes with American civilians and security forces in cities across the United States, highlighting the insecurity represented by the 'foreign other' on US soil. American sanctions prohibiting the entrance of Iranians into the US confirmed in the popular imagination that all Iranians

were Islamic fanatics, reducing the conditions of possibility for alternative interpretations and introducing the idea that the US was at war with Iran and Islamic fundamentalism<sup>8</sup> (ibid:134; Sick 1985:230).

The proximity of a combative Iranian community benefitting from the benevolence of American hospitality established tensions within American society that were played out in myriad personal experiences of strife. A story used by *New York Times* reporter Tom Wicker, highlights the confusion and anger that was inspired by the duality of having Iranian students free to live in the US while American hostages were held captive in Iran:

‘A Cleveland sportscaster destroyed an Iranian flag on camera at the close of his report the other night. His superiors told him not to do it again, but said they understood his frustration. So would many other Americans, judging from the counter-demonstrations that have been staged against Iranian students in many cities, and from a White House switchboard that is said to be jammed with protest calls.’ (‘US-Iran: A time to reason’, *NYT* 12/11/1979)

This anger toward an incongruous ‘domestic danger’ perpetually reinvented the play of personal insecurity in an international drama, and was crucial in enabling motivated bias, constructed as articulating and carrying out popular will, to take place at top decision-making levels, particularly in the context of the presidential campaign (Saunders 1985:47). Emotionality was in these circumstances interpreted as a positive motivator for decision-making, its instrumentalization rationalized as patriotism, inner coherence, and strength of character. As veteran *New York Times* reporter Weisman put it, ‘It was good politics’ (ibid). Looking back years later, Pollack argues for the appropriateness of this emotionalized policy motivation:

‘These constant images of Iranians blaming America for everything wrong in the world, the sense of anger that a country would commit such an offense against us,

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<sup>8</sup> At the time, Islamic fundamentalism was understood as primarily Shia radicalism that was being practiced in Iran and later, Lebanon. The PLO, and other Palestinian militants, were purely secular at the time, and few in the West noticed the extremism developing in Sunni Islam until well after the coordination between its proponents and the US in the Soviet ouster from Afghanistan. The use of ‘Islamic terrorism’ or ‘jihadism’ did not include connotations now prevalent in the post-9 11 term, in which Salafi fundamentalism and violence have become synonymous with the international terrorist network of al-Qaida. Although in the Anglo-American discourse the distinction between the two is often vague, and the cumulative view has become normalized in that what began as Iranian Islamic terrorism is perceived simply to have got worse over time until it begot the al-Qaida variant, the two, though sharing common inspirations (including the Qoran), were, and remain, distinct; see for example Graham Fuller (2003) *The Future of Political Islam* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan).

and the demand to do something about it, became driving emotions for the American public – and their elected officials knew they had to do something to address these passions’ (2004:161).

The fragile positioning of American identity between the principled and the emotive established conditions of possibility for perpetuating an anger that would survive the actual hostage crisis. The yo-yo affect of this self-righteous identity structuring and the danger that it represented, was recognized early on by Jordan. ‘I was glad that the people cared, but bothered that they cared so much.’ he noted in his diary on November 7, 1979, adding, ‘An ugly mood will develop in this country if the hostages aren’t out soon.’ Richard Sennet, sociologist at New York University argued that the extreme national identification with the hostages and the accompanying fear of the enemy within, was counterproductive. ‘The crisis became a symbolic confrontation in which a realistic judgment of the stakes gave way to an exercise in mass hysteria. in which we pursued the thing that yielded the greatest psychic and emotional benefits’ (quote in Weisman 1981:231). Hysteria so entwined the public and private that the rational could no longer be identified, prompting political heavyweight George Ball to complain: ‘Television played it like a soap opera, and made it the greatest soap opera of the year....In 1968, when the Pueblo hostages were taken, it was not made into one of the great events of our time....Television has played this situation up so that it has become the central issue of American policy, which I think is absurd.’ (quote in *ibid*: Dumbrell 1993:168).

The requirement to find some way to respond to the popular torment, which vacillated between stoic endurance and belligerent confrontation, raised the tension between the pragmatist and touch conservative discourses. In the Oval Office, the need to counter the months of humiliation and falling support in the polls, gradually shifted hegemony away from the former and toward the latter (Sick 1985:330). Carter’s ‘rational’ rhetoric of restraint, seen as complacency, had failed. ‘In domestic politics’, Sick observed presciently, ‘continued passivity not only condemned the President to self-immolation in the polls, but it risked generating a popular backlash in favour of forces who opposed everything Vance and Carter represented’ (*ibid*:347).

Brzezinski’s views appeared increasingly persuasive over time: ‘Yes it is important we get our people back. But your greater responsibility [Mr. President] is to

protect the honor (sic) and dignity of our country and its foreign policy interests' (Jordan 1982:44).

As Jordan ruefully admitted, 'Cy's calm approach sounded good, but Zbig's tough approach felt good' (p.53).

### *Innocence*

In securing American identity through the signifier of innocence, the meanings attached to the hostage-taking were played out by emotionally denying the past (Admas and Heyl 1981; McAlister 2005:110; Sick 1985:218). Innocence thus instrumentalized the image of the US as a nation wronged despite—or more tellingly, perhaps because of—its democratic and benevolent character.

Failure to engage with the historicist aspect of US-Iran relations contributed to the play of difference in two ways: a) it enabled American identity to be secured as a rational and legally grounded entity within the framework of international law. This located it in diametric opposition to what was constructed as the irrational, and illegal nature of the Iranian other, and the false memory that the US had never tolerated such an act by another state; b) it shifted, through impaired information processing, the understanding of Iranian motives from a desire to protect and isolate itself from American interference to a desire to aggress against American democracy and directly influence the American public. Unproblematized innocence enabled the US self to be constituted in terms of self-righteousness using symbols of good and evil, which in turn suggested that universalist values without force to back them up could not always be assumed to triumph.

**Legality, memory and passion** In a news conference on November 28, 1979, Carter called the hostage-taking 'an unprecedented and unique occurrence. Down through history,' he said,

'we have had times when some of our people were captured by terrorists or who were abused, and there have obviously been instances of international kidnapping which occurred for the discomfiture of a people or government. So far as I know, this is the first time that such an activity has been encouraged by and supported by the government itself.' (quote in Houghton 2001: 80).

Similar views were expressed by Under Secretary of State Christopher and others in the administration (1985:1; Jordan 1982:19), despite their knowing that there had been two cases in the recent past in which American diplomats and other representatives had been held by foreign governments for up to a year, one in a very similar post-revolution situation (Houghton 2000:92-100). How could educated and moral state actors knowingly elide such information?<sup>9</sup> The only explanation can be that the submerged spiral of alienation and shame in the Iranian case released such strong emotions of anger and outrage that it appeared fundamentally different than those other, less emotionalized cases. In interpreting it as a novel occurrence, any rationale by the Iranian regime for taking such a step was viewed as simply ratcheting up a process that already had caused severe separation anxiety, and thus its 'reasons' were viewed as immaterial and immoral. The Iranian discourse that imputed danger to specific factors such as the ongoing relationship between the US and the Shah, or the history of US foreign intervention to overthrow sitting governments (including one of its own), was not recognized as valid – and hence, as a pointer to a solution. Instead, it was dismissed as paranoia, and used as a factor in laying blame (Ioannides 1986; Boyle 1985:96). Little credence was given to any possible Iranian process of political assessment or consensus-building concerning the necessity to bring into tandem Islamic and international rules; instead, the Iranian leadership was labeled as unaccountable. As Boyle assessed it, 'the Carter administration adopt[ed] an essentially rectificatory and positivistic approach to the Iranian hostage crisis whereby it acted as if it were a plaintiff vindicated on all counts of its petition' (ibid:194).

This is not to say that compelling, if subjugated, discourses did not flourish, or in fact, reach the public (Falk 1980; Said 1997:99-100).<sup>10</sup> Boyle argued that the hostage taking could be justified as an act of pre-emptive self-defence under article 51 of the UN Charter based on the Iranians' perceptions of American threats to their revolution, and

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<sup>9</sup> Vance drew on these analogies frequently, and brought them to Carter's attention. Brzezinski, who did not consider honour to have been well served in either previous case, where negotiation took months, never acknowledged the applicability of these analogies (Houghton 2001, op cit: 92-3; Vance 1983, op cit:408-9).

<sup>10</sup> Among the most extraordinary was I.F. Stone's article, 'A Shah's Lobby Next?' in the *New York Review of Books* on February 22, 1979, written just two weeks after the revolution, and which uncannily anticipated much that subsequently occurred, including demands by Iran to return the Shah for trial, but which he argued from the perspective of American over-meddling in Iran's affairs without learning the lessons that might cause it to retaliate.

which, under these imminent circumstances, took precedence over Iran's obligations under Charter articles 2(3), 2(4) and 33 (Boyle 1985:189). Seeing the crisis in these terms suggested there were alternative ways to perceive it, and therefore, avenues never pursued that could have resolved it quite differently. Without excusing the Iranian seizure of the embassy, Boyle found 'a plausible legal argument on the Iranian side that should have been taken into account by the Carter administration...as part of the definitional context of the crisis' (ibid: 191). By failing to entertain any discourse that publicly acknowledged that the dispute warranted inquiry within a mutually acceptable international tribunal, as the Iranians frequently requested, and without pre-conditions, the Carter administration made it clear that American identity security relied first on its honour being secured as unblemished and innocent, rendering a solution without preconditions unimaginable (*NYT* 14/11/1979; *Washington Post* 15/11/1979; Bani-Sadr 1982:49). It therefore frequently would claim it had 'exhausted all diplomatic channels', a quote McDermott, for example, uses (and accepts) as a given (1998:45).

Doty describes this as 'reversal of visibility', an extension of what Foucault attributes to practices of disciplinary power (Doty 1996:143). 'Inherently moral subjects did not need to account for their practices,' she argues. Since American standards of human rights and democratic practices were the guide-post around which international norms were understood to gain their meaning, the US was able to ignore its own violations, or justify them within the context of international imperative. Pollack's easy dismissal of any guilt might seem disingenuous without this insight: 'For so many Americans, a key point,' he writes, 'is that we were innocent of the charges that the Iranians leveled against us, and that they claim motivated them to launch the attack' (2004:174). Drawing on Foucault's concept of 'useful delinquency' as a mechanism of 'controlled illegality', Doty explains this ability of the US to practice inconsistency abroad while still viewing itself as innocent of culpability. 'The implicit hierarchy of countries and the system of surveillance made it possible for the US to profit by the violation of human rights (in the sense of keeping order and prevent leftists from coming to power in "third world" countries) and still condemn those practices' she states (p.143).

When Washington did decide the crisis should go to an international body, it brought the issue on its own terms, with the intent to obtain condemnation of Iran, not to

support an international investigation into any human rights abuses that may have occurred. The UNSC resolution and the International Court of Justice rulings, which narrowly confined themselves to Iran's obligation to release the hostages, and did not call for any punitive measures, were nonetheless construed by Washington as being 'exactly as the United States had wanted' (Pollack 2004:164).

When the US turned to its allies to enact sanctions against Iran in January 1980, and they refused, the US interpreted it as weakness in that they offered but 'paltry excuses for inaction', the implication being that their need for Iranian oil and trade had overshadowed their principles (ibid). The European view, by contrast, was that the US had made too much of the crisis, compromising the financial and oil markets, and therefore compromising its own interests as well as theirs through its rigid standoff. Negotiation, they contended, would help the hostages more than sanctions (Harsch, 'The Bear Made Them Do It', *Christian Science Monitor* 25/04/1980: 23) To the White House, this smacked of disloyalty, a particularly galling development in light of Washington's self-perceived effort to take the civilized path of working through international institutions to resolve the crisis, temporarily straining the social bonds with Europe.

Nonetheless, in sharing US 'we-ness', the allies' moral cooperation was seen as a necessity within the emotional structuring of its own sense of honour, for their withholding it would further the shame. Thus, US officials and the media repeatedly claimed that world opinion was solidly behind the US as a 'nation of laws' (Sick 1985b:168) and that it was Iran that had made a huge diplomatic sacrifice, becoming isolated and spurned by the world community. Nonetheless, despite the attempt to fix the hegemony of its discourse, US confidence was shaken by the fickleness of its allies and their failure to acknowledge its pain through right action. This prompted Senator Ribicoff to sound a warning, later instrumentalized in Ronald Reagan's War on Terrorism, in which US credibility became contingent not on the restraint it could show within international fora, but through its willingness to protect its own self-interests when its identity security was endangered.

'We must face the reality that we cannot count on support or even on friendly agreement within the established world institutions on moral or peace-threatening issues affecting our basic national interests no matter how rigorously we play by



the rules for the submission of disputes for peaceful institutional resolution. We must always stand prepared to act alone... Thus we maintain our credibility as a world power' (1985:379).

**Playing to America** Through its ongoing privileging of the relationship with the Shah, and its own discursive disciplining of innocence, the US government and media, as noted earlier, remained unengaged, and uninvolved in the debates of democracy-building and the role of religion and tradition within the process of rethinking social relations in Iran. The months-long debates over the construction of the constitution, the unique role of Khomeini as leader, the elections—these subjects were barely acknowledged and little interested an administration which constructed the politics of Iran purely through the passionate opposition of US-Iran relations (Bakhash 1985; Christopher and Kreisberg, eds. 1985; Keddie 1980:532; Sick 1985:201).

The construction of US identity throughout this period, therefore, represented the hostage crisis as the dominant theme of Iranian politics just as it had become in American politics. Implicated in this representation was the claim that the US (and the Shah) were being painted as culpable of carrying out crimes against the Iranian people purely as a ruse to help secure the clerical dictatorship, even if—or in fact, especially if—such crimes had not occurred (Jordan 1982:116). Thus, Iranian practices were implicated as flawed, and unworthy to be recognized as anything vaguely resembling modern liberal democracy. This view was of course abetted by the post-revolution confusion and undemocratic tactics that sheared away Khomeini's opponents and allowed his version of the constitution to triumph. The lack of interest and the paucity of detail provided on that process, however, made it secondary within the American discourse.

The view that the elections were a sham, and that there was no democratic principle involved, remains a theme in analysis of this period, as the discourse adopted by Pollack reflects: 'At the end of January,' he writes, 'Iran held its first presidential elections, and Khomeini's candidate naturally won with 75 percent of the vote' (Pollack 2004: quote on 166; Sick 1985: 235-237). Pollack's use of 'naturally' underscores the presumption that the elections were not – and never could be – genuine, as does his failure to mention that several clerical candidates ran for the job, that Khomeini never endorsed any candidate or party, and that it was a layman that ultimately won. In his

voluminous study. there is only this single line that describes the election of the first president to be voted into office in Iran`s history.

At the same time, the rejection by Iran of the American model was too discomfiting – and too shaming – to accept. Khomeini spoke of building walls around Iran in order to keep out the plunderers brought in by the Shah; he questioned whether the West even *had* a civilization - let alone one to be copied - and pointed to Islam as the source of Iranian salvation (Khomeini in Algar 1982). This rhetoric was so contrary to American conceptions of self that it was literally indigestible, there being no narrative heuristics, constructions or signifiers to make knowable, let alone acceptable, such a stance (Houghton 2001; Pollack 2004:179). Instead, since the American media was at the embassy, and the American focus was on the hostage story, the complexities of the post-revolutionary year were reduced to terms that fit the hostage storyboard, and Iranian actions were seen only in terms of American reaction. Each Iranian move was interpreted as designed to influence the United States, and eventually, to justify itself to the American people (Sick 1985:204). Khomeini`s celebration of the West`s alienation from Iran was ignored. Instead, in the estimation of Sick and others at the time – and of Pollack twenty five years later – Iran had the opposite goal, to engage the Americans. This was a gambit Pollack contends failed – an extraordinary statement that erases the memory of a United States passionately submerged in the hostage story for over a year (p.180). Rejection, too horrible to contemplate for the narcissist, or parent or lover, is here reversed, so that, according to Pollack, the US never `cared a jot for Iran` and it was the US that rejected `the psychic gratification the [Iranians] so craved`, not the other way around (ibid).

In sum, the loss of political love, and growth of political strife significantly impacted the rupture, as well as the settlement of the identities that followed. Political emotion played a much larger role in this case than would be expected in a relationship that was not so tied to both American and Iranian ideals of self. The loss of Iran as a validator of American self-esteem, and of its illusions of omnipotence expressed through an idealized self-image of benevolence, left the United States shocked, humiliated and exposed. Television`s maturing during this period only contributed to the dramatic rendition in which it was `we` who suffered at `their` hands, and for no good reason.

At this point, it is already possible to see the developing pattern of dysfunctional communication in which American-Iranian discourses that inculcated shame in dealings with the Shah, became embedded and institutionalized into a mutualized policy stance of alienation. The endless shame-anger-disrespect loop, which has contributed to the US finding it elusive to construct a coherent ‘Iran policy’, grew out of collective responses of outrage and despair that repeatedly compounded the unhealed hurt, fear of powerlessness, and commitment at all costs never again to experience such perceived humiliation and injustice—reactions that constitute the maturing of a love-sick relationship. In advocating the need for reprisals to protect and promote American honour, Secretary of State George Shultz warned against the United States becoming ‘the Hamlet of nations’, a spectre that evinced the horror not only of weakness but of madness (speech April 3, reprinted in *US News and World Report* Dec. 24, 1984).

**Chapter 6****Political Passion and the First War on Terror**

‘We should no less remind ourselves of what we tell the Iranians, that passion is not policy’. –Ramazani, quote in *Sacred Rage* (1985):250.

Within a week of the hostages being taken, Carter was publicly calling it an act of terrorism, and labeling the Students Following the Imam’s Line (SFIL), along with the government, as terrorist. This was a refrain he used regularly. As he stated in a speech after meeting with the hostage families: ‘It’s vital to the United States and to every other nation that the lives of diplomatic personnel and other citizens abroad be protected and that we refuse to permit the use of terrorism and the seizure and the holding of hostages to impose political demands’ (‘Transcript of Carter’s Statement’, *The New York Times*, 13/11/1979). The importance of this claim was made clear in Carter’s ‘Executive Order 12170: Freezing Iranian Government Assets in America’, November 14, in which he attested:

I, JIMMY CARTER, President of the United States, find that the situation in Iran constitutes an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy and economy of the United States, and hereby declare a national emergency to deal with that threat’ (Alexander and Nanes 1980:481).

Choosing to categorize this incident from the outset as a national security threat, and national emergency, terms that constitute the danger as pertaining to the American citizenry as a whole, Carter elevated the scale of the incident by putting it on a par with war, natural disasters and the ideological threat of communism. By so doing, Carter sanctified ‘terrorism’ as a present and ‘extraordinary threat’, and the actions of Iran as unique in human history. Since the students, and the clerical leadership spoke in terms of Islam as the purpose and God as the guide for their actions, Islam was notionally imbricated within this signification, its role left vague, but its propensity for violence clear.

The hostage crisis constituted a nodal point in the discourse of American identity in that it created the conditions of possibility for a change *in* discourse. Once Ronald Reagan was instated as President on January 1981, and the hostages were released in

Tehran, containing, punishing and pre-empting terrorism became a primary foreign policy focus. In his first statement as Secretary of State, Alexander Haig announced: 'International terrorism will take the place of human rights' because 'the greatest problem ...in the human rights area today is the area of rampant international terrorism' (McAlister 2005:199; quote in Wills 2003:3).<sup>1</sup>

The hostage crisis thus launched the Age of Terrorism. Of course, well-publicized terrorist/criminal acts had punctuated the previous two decades (Ledeen 1986:90; Sterling 1986:103-05); yet it was not until the hostage crisis that terrorism was understood by Americans to have struck home.<sup>2</sup>

The narrative practices constituting terrorism dehumanized and individuated the danger to US identity security, imbuing terrorism as beyond any moral order, and therefore, requiring pre-emptive containment as much as punitive measures. This shift in the discourse of danger, which elaborated a broader use of force in defense of American identity, could not have taken place without the predicate of vulnerability and emotionalized disarray made possible by the loss of political love and Iran's pointed repulse of American norms and international modeling. Yet, at the same time, the temporal and locational contexts affected the shift in discourse and were critical to its hegemonic progression. The hostage crisis, paired very quickly with the invasion of Afghanistan by the USSR, took place in a geostrategic location and historical moment in which conflicts pitting east against west were expanding. Further, it was one in which relations of danger made possible practices and approaches to understanding a 'rising threat' of (Shi'a-inspired) Islamic terrorism as the hegemony of communist tyranny was dwindling (Cottam 1990:176). In sum, the socially constructed threats instrumentalized through the hostage crisis impacted with enormous power discourses that were being elaborated as the terrains of danger shifted. Critically, this nodal point enabled an emotionalized discourse in which tyranny could be joined to terrorism, and eventually, for terrorism to stand alone as the primary threat to US identity security.

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<sup>1</sup> See chapter 4, footnote 4, for discussion of the meanings understood at the time in the term 'international terrorism'.

<sup>2</sup> A similar response took place with the events of 9/11, in that the American perceptions of previous activities by the al-Qaida terrorist network were not framed as 'global' until its attacks struck the homeland, and prompted the launch of the (second) War on Terror.

This change incorporated the fear of victimization, and the commitment never again to be so vulnerable to the engulfment of political love. The construction of American honour shifted during the experience of the hostage crisis to inculcate immunity (through force, if necessary) from such pain and incursion: 'no more Irans'. no more humiliation at the hands of others. Honour therefore, became entwined with the idea of willing to protect American identity security at all costs. In contrast to the post-Vietnam experience, the US adopted a radical stance: If it was to be seen as credible, it had to be willing to use force to protect its honour. Deterrence, as well as retaliation and reprisal against terrorism, were understood, post-hostage crisis, as fundamental to America's self-defense and self-image as able to withstand whatever evils surrounded it.

Innocence as a moral play of practice likewise contributed in a key way to the shift in discourse. Carter's uncompromising unwillingness to countenance any discussion of US actions in Iran prior to resolving the crisis represented American values and the actions they enabled as morally inalienable. In this way, the US reproduced itself as innocent of any wrong-doing in promoting these values, and in fighting back against the a-morality of terrorists. Reagan's brash optimism in America's greatness, and specifically, in US principles as inherently moral, added varnish to the play of innocence in America's mission. McCrisken argues that 'any aspect of US foreign policy could therefore be justified simply by declaring it as morally furthering the cause of freedom and democracy' (2003:93).

This had several ramifications which have influenced and made possible American policy formation through both Democratic and Republican administrations since. The moral rectitude of America's universalist mission, which powered the US fight against communist totalitarianism, was now combined with moral 'innocence' in the face of terrorism, elaborating the 'good' self, in opposition to the evil 'other'. This enabled a passionate self-righteousness toward what were perceived as the follies of international consensus in the face of inflictions on American interests. Here a space was opened to justify the use of force against those indulging in what the US defined as international violations through terrorism or tyranny. The hostage crisis in effect contributed to the ability of the US to stake out the geography of its identity through a refinement of its vulnerabilities, and the means (and meanings) by which to overcome

them. The scope of these meanings and practices—where American identity began and ended within its larger mission of projecting its values to others—was appropriated as acceptable democracy. Outside the borders of this identity—in the geography of otherness, where shame and violence was perceived as directed against the democracy espoused by the US—lay the domain of terrorism and totalitarianism. It was this domain against which American honour and credibility, as produced post-hostage crisis, had actively to defend. The shift in discourse enabled the hostage crisis to launch the Age of Terrorism, as well as a War on Terrorism, which was as much a mission for establishing a hegemonic narrative of what constituted terrorism, as it was a means for using force against those carrying it out.

This chapter analyses terrorism as a signifier in American discourse and how it linked the hostage crisis with the First War on Terrorism under the auspices of Ronald Reagan and his Secretary of State George Shultz. The crisis constituted a juncture in which the need for self-discipline and self-protection took on a new horizon, enabling the establishment of the Shultz Doctrine, which codified the US right of pre-emptive strikes against suspected terrorist operations, even though, as Shultz admitted, ‘we may never have the kind of evidence that can stand up in an American court of law’ (Shultz speech Dec. 9, reprinted in *US News and World Report*, Dec. 24, 1984; Wright 1985:248). What is more, it was continuation of the Shah’s discourse which had defined the mutual ‘threat of the Red and the Black’ as a new variation on the old danger of communism, a discourse he projected in interviews even from his hospital bed in New York (Jordon 1982:90)

In securing US identity as a power in opposition to terror, Washington developed an array of policy structures to define and contain it. It was in this period that a rising level of terrorism (both Islamic and secular) was being directed against the US and Israel, much of which Washington and Tel Aviv attributed to Iranian management (or meddling) even when evidence was lacking to support it (Halliday 1990:256; Weinberger 1990:250) For the moment, Islamic terrorism was secondary to the Cold War threat, and yet, it began to impact the representations and meanings associated with totalitarianism, beginning the shift that would ultimately produce the former as the greater danger. The discourse developed within the context of the hostage crisis was easily transmuted to a

rhetoric of diabolism, most visibly, for example, in Reagan's use of 'The Evil Empire' to describe the Soviet Union, a takeoff of Iran's 'Great Satan' (Cottam 1990:274). There was also the growing perception that the Arab-Soviet partnership was promoting terrorist tactics (a point passionately made by Israeli politician Benjamin Netanyahu in statements linking Soviet support to PLO violence), prompting portrayal of a 'League of Terror' emanating from the left and the right, which catapulted Claire Sterling's *The Terror Network* to prominence (McAlister 2005:217-19; Netanyahu 1986:12; quote in Shultz 1992:16; Sterling 1981).

The necessity of 'avoiding another Iran' offered a means to reconstitute American identity as a protector and promoter of a specific form of democracy, which, in alliance with other Western states sharing similar values, in particular Britain and Israel, was perceived as uniquely able to secure a world order able to combat terrorism (Netanyahu, ed. 1986: *passim*). The use of terrorism to describe those responsible for the hostage crisis had several implications, which, elucidated in the language of political passion, enabled the construction of Iran as beyond any possible relationship. First, motivated bias was revealed in the Carter administration's inability to acknowledge the clerical leadership as anything but irrational and vengeful, seeing its abuses of power as so corrupting and contrary to international law and human rights that it deemed Iran to have forfeited its position as a member of the international family of states, and therefore, classified it a rogue, the ultimate act of shaming. Such a reading of the Islamic Republic in effect dehumanized Iran, placing it outside any moral cartography. The rogue discourse enabled the United States to attempt to fix a narrative around Iran that would limit contact with it by other states, and internationalize the figuration of us and them around American conceptions of freedom and democratic values (White House Press Secretary, 'Statement and Fact Sheet on President's Anti-terrorism Legislation', 26/4/1984, in Simpson 1995: 405-411). To a large degree, this discursive strategy of fencing off Iran worked, at least until the Khatami presidency. Iran's own actions regularly abetting this disposition among US allies. Containing radical Islam (first the Shi'a, and then the Sunni Salafi variants), however, proved more difficult.

Second, the external threat of terrorism and the domestic threat of crime were conjugated in similar narrative terms (Sherry 2005). This connected them as signifiers



that transgressed and merged the private and public domains, necessitating and justifying the use of state-sponsored force for punishment, retribution and pre-emption. In approaching the two as common blights, the shame of having such high levels of crime in a 'good' democratic society was elided, and projected outward as the need to eliminate criminal and terrorist evils abroad (Sherry 2005:252; Altheide 1980:143). This enabled counter-terrorism and military force to 'be undertaken for the sake of something identified as private – love, the family, revenge,' rendering ambiguous the constraints on such actions by international legal rules that had been designed specifically to address the contingencies of war – not crime (McAlister 2005:233).

Third, the inscription of Islam as an enabler and promoter of violence, such as the taking of hostages, offered an opposition to Christianity, which entered the play of practice as a signifier of American values and morals. McAlister describes this as 'mobilization of religion as nation'. She chronicles the widespread use of the exodus narrative, and the oft-repeated broadcasting of the Black spiritual, 'Let my people go', to back up her assertion that 'as Islam emerged as the category for understanding Iran, Christianity became remarkably prominent in media accounts' in the US (2005:211). The emotionality implicated in religious legitimation has often been used to instrumentalize political authority and inhere apostasy to a foreign 'other' (Campbell 1998: 47; Connolly 1989:325). In merging domestic and international discourses of danger around religious we-ness, the conceptual framework of exclusion contributed to a monological expression of difference in religious terms (Guillaume 2002). For Carter, the claim to be the victim of uncivilized and a-moral behaviour was emotionally communicated by drawing on analogies with other recognized faiths:

'The actions of Iran have shocked the civilized world. For a government to applaud mob violence and terrorism, for a government actually to support and in effect participate in the taking and the holding of hostages, is unprecedented in human history....There is no recognized religious faith on Earth which condones kidnapping. There is no recognized religious faith on Earth which condones blackmail. There is certainly no religious faith on Earth which condones the sustained abuse of innocent people.' ('Presidential News Conference', Alexander and Nanes 1980:482)

## Literatures of violence

Literature that addresses the implications of Iran's new leadership role in the Islamic world, and its assumption of this mantle through the terror/crime nexus of the hostage crisis, for a long time was dominated by Orientalist argument (Said 1979: 1997). In these treatments, Iran's ideological posture in exporting its revolution in the wake of the hostage crisis, and the security threat this implied for governments around the Persian Gulf, and Western interests within the region, are couched in the flamboyant and passionate language of 'rage', 'wrath', 'militancy' and 'danger', what Scheff and Retzinger categorize as 'code words' for shame, and its projection outward. Robin Wright's *Sacred Rage, The Crusade of Modern Islam* (1985); Bernard Lewis's 'The Roots of Muslim Rage' in *The Atlantic Monthly* (September 1990) and Samuel Huntington's 'The Clash of Civilizations?' (*Foreign Affairs*, May/June 1993, published as a book 1996) are three prominent studies in a cottage industry that developed the concept of terrorism and a 'crescent of crisis' that was seen to be emerging as a result of the ideological export of Khomeini-ism. This literature is not confined to Western writers, as, for example, Taheri's highly ideological *Holy Terror* (1987). Elevating the movement to the forefront of 'evil' as the Soviet 'Evil Empire' crumbled, this literature spawned the term 'Islamist', even as the plethora of arguments concerning its roots, purpose and containment by the West revealed that terrorism was a subject that fascinated not only the public, but the Western Academe. Books on terrorism abounded and are too numerous to list, though many reflect the emotional (if not ideational) bias of, for example, Barry Rubin, previous editor of *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, and his co-author Judith Colp Rubin (2002). Their compilation of a selection of incendiary Muslim documents and speeches attempts to link the diverse agenda and histories of modern Islamic political radicalism into a single stream, by showing how 'Khomeini's thought...created a sort of Leninism for the Islamist movement' (p. 8) and is 'foundational in the thoughts of Usama Bin Laden' (p. 13). Wills' *The First War on Terrorism* (2003), offers a narrower documentary history of terrorism using Reagan administration materials in more narrative form, and is useful for how it reprises unvarnished the fear, panic and passion involved in the discourse that led to the First War on Terrorism.

This theme is taken up on a theoretical plain by McAlister (2005), who argues that 'media terrorism' turned Iran into 'the paradigmatic signifier of America as a nation imperiled by terrorism' (pp.199-201). Hurd (2005), in focusing on the implications of religion as a factor within politics, unpicks the laic dimension, seeing the US rejection of any engagement with the clerical Iranian leadership as based on a Judeo-Christian bias against other religious doctrines' ability to encompass democracy, and the laic conception of 'neutral public space' that rendered a theocracy both 'irrational' and against 'common sense and public good' (p. 27). Another category of studies locate the Islamic (and Islamic terrorist) 'turn' within a larger politico-sociological context (for example, Burgat 2003; Esposito 1992; Ramazani 1986; Roy 2007; and Sayyid 1997).

### **'Terrorism' as Political Passion**

'Terrorism' was a useful and effective rhetorical device within a discourse that politically denied its object expressivity (Guillaume 2002:6). The terrorist image evoked memories of the kidnappings by the Symbionese Liberation Army, Red Brigade and Bader-Meinhoff - acts of criminality as much as of politics (Boyle 1985:192). It was a natural step to discursively extend what had been already constructed as the madness of the tyrannical Khomeini and the barbarity of the fanatical Iranian mob into the moral depravity of terrorism. Further, it recalled in (white) America's imaginary the spectre of the race riots of the '70s, led by Muslim Black Panthers, as well as the anti-Vietnam demonstrations of the '60s, incidents which had done their part in (re)naturalizing the use of force for the establishment of order, and of the role of the police (men in uniform) in sorting out people of colour (Weldes and Laffey 2004). Terrorism merged the signification of actions carried out by individuals with that of the state. In representing those in power in Iran as terrorists, whether they had taken over the American Embassy or were holding posts in government, the US inscribed the Iranian clerical regime as evil. This constructed the politics of Islam as essentially antipathetic to the spiritual and moral rectitude of Christian America (and the Christian West) – and thereby, an existential threat.

Terrorism offered Carter's administration an evocative vocabulary to address domestic public shock and outrage. It shut down the narrative of 'the other' and

maintained a discourse that conformed with Bakhtin's conception of monologue, which '...manages without the other, and therefore, to some degree, materializes all reality. Monologue pretends to be the ultimate word. It closes down the represented world and represented persons' (1984: 292-293). Classifying events in Iran as terrorist meant the Iranian accusations against the United States and the Shah were figured as coming from terrorists – and US policy-makers could therefore adopt the standard official response always taken toward terrorists, namely, that the US did not negotiate with them (Sick 1985b:219). Iran's unacknowledged accusations, paralleling as they did many of the accusations that the US was making against Iran, energized the need for the US to starkly demarcate the moral boundary between self and other to ensure the 'other' was understood in different terms and clearly estranged while the self was naturalized through its moral concerns. This relationship between identity/difference is described by Guillaume in his study of the politics of alterity: 'a national community is continuously ready to protect, to perform and/or propagate this self-representation, either in order to actualize it or in order to defend it against competing representations (internal/external, concrete/imagined). A national self-understanding...is in essence an answer to the utterances of other national identities' (2002:13). In this case, the utterances of the other perpetuated a spiral of denial, the need to defend against the disrespectful representations of the other, communicated through a politics of strife.

In repeatedly using a freighted term such as terrorism in its representational practices, the US can be understood to have felt compelled to re-inscribe its identity as good and incapable of the actions that Iran accused it of, while Iran was inscribed and re-inscribed as wicked and capable of anything – including the victimization of 'innocents' (Saikal 2003:79). The United States thus amplified itself as rightly becoming emotional, because it had been betrayed, but also, despite its great power, because it too could 'feel the pain' of being a victim. Thus, stature and pride accrued to it because of its humanity, which situated it in opposition to Iran's inhumanity. Like the Irish, or more importantly, the Israelis, it had been ill-used, but now would ensure it would never suffer that pain again (Campbell 1998:105,107; McAlister 2005:199). In this way, insult and hubris increasingly characterized representation of the 'other' through a process of narrative self-defense. The painting of the 'other' as 'fundamentalist' and terrorist can be

understood as a politics of strife, in which Washington's framing of 'Islamic' terrorism, and Tehran's framing of 'American' terrorism, so emotionalized the discourses of danger that facts and specifics were subsumed in narrow heuristics and inflamed sentiment. 'To make anything very terrible, obscurity seems in general necessary' observed Edmund Burke. 'When we know the full extent of any danger, when we can accustom our eyes to it, a great deal of the apprehension vanishes' (1990:54).

The framing of the hostage issue as an act of international terrorism that could brook no negotiation was generally considered a diplomatic success by Democrats and Republicans alike (Reagan, 'Carter-Reagan Presidential Debate', 28/10/1980). In fact, although Reagan criticized the Carter administration as too soft, he adopted the Carter terminology of terrorism wholesale to describe the hostage crisis and the threat of radical Islam (Wills 2003:19). Couched within a rhetoric of responsibility to bring 'truth to light in a world groping in the darkness of repression and lies' (Reagan, Voice of America Remarks, 24/2/1982), Reagan expanded on Carter's rhetoric to justify enacting legislation to combat Islamic terrorism as an evil. This Islamic evil was exemplified by, but not confined to, the clerical regime in Iran, for the anti-terrorist legislation to protect democracy (NSDD 30, NSDD 138, NSDD 179) referred to 'radical Islamic guerilla groups in the Middle East and Northern Africa' not simply terrorists (quote in Simpson 1995:366), and tasked Vice President George Bush to develop tactics for 'pre-emptive or retaliatory actions to combat terrorism' (Shultz 1985, Dept. of State *Bulletin*, September, p. 36, quote in *ibid*:454). (NSDD 138, 179 reprinted in Simpson 1995: 404-411, 576-577; Schultz 1986:648-650; Weinberger 1990).<sup>3</sup>

### **Emotionalized discourses for political retribution**

Linguist George Lakoff argues there is a tradition in American foreign policy to personify other nations with labels that constitute them as particular types of characters. In his view, 'The nation as a person is pervasive, powerful, and part of an elaborate

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<sup>3</sup> The implications of protecting democracy abroad for the sake of democracy at home increasingly imbricated questions of sovereignty, as in the case of the invasion of Grenada, and later, the arrest and trial on US territory of Panamanian President Noriega. Although international law addresses the rights of states in protecting their own sovereignty against outside aggression, questions of human rights and sovereign rights in the context of democracy promotion assumed new relevance. See for example, Cynthia Weber (1995) *Simulating Sovereignty: Intervention, the state, and symbolic exchange* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

metaphor system. It is part of an international community metaphor, in which there are friendly nations, hostile nations, rogue states, and so on.' (Beeman 2005:41; quote in Lakoff 2004:69). Lakoff describes this US propensity as a 'metaphoric' system; yet, his arguments suggest that it goes beyond metonymy and in fact, is a representational practice that reflects US political emotionality, despite its claim to be a realist power. Sheikh approaches the perceptions of the US toward other states in a larger context of hierarchy: 'American political cosmology [is] a cosmology that stratifies states in a hierarchy, the horizontal rubrics of which range from the demons (revisionist states) to the divines (liberal-democratic allies and clients), as per their ideological proximity vis-à-vis the American ideal' (Sheikh 2001:4).

In characterizing Iran as terrorist and a rogue, the US employed a term of rejection and disdain to describe what was previously a love object. As in the case of love, in which narcissism sees the desired object as an extension of self by obliterating the other's identity, so in the case of love's destruction, in which the contours of the other are erased by the narcissist's inability to see the object as an extension of self. Thus, in perceiving no validation of its own self, but instead, only painful reminders of its own deficiencies and fears, the US apprehended Iran as a menace, reflecting back onto the US self its own shame. Sick describes the intensity of the remorse (like guilt, a code word for internalized shame) of those in government who faulted themselves for allowing fellow countrymen to become enmeshed in the maw of such peril:

[V]irtually everyone in the policy circle experienced some measure of personal guilt for having permitted this predicament to occur; and that sense of culpability contributed to an exceptionally high level of emotionalism...it was almost like taking religious vows... (Sick 1985a: 221).

Pollack, speaking as a member of the American intellectual elite, as well as 'for most Americans', admits that 'emotional obstacles play a very significant role in our differences' with Iran, but goes on to dismiss American responsibility for that emotionality (2004: 171-2). Denying the shame inculcated in those differences is a critical ethical issue, according to Scheff and Retzinger, in that 'shame becomes part of one's character, [and] would seem to interfere with the functioning of conscience' (1991:187). As shame is experienced in response to immoral actions, ignoring it impedes

understanding the consequences of those actions. Pollack makes this vividly clear as he captures the emotions of anger, blame, and buried pain that have contributed to US policies toward Iran, but he misses the critical component of shame:

The hostage crisis has left a terrible scar on the American psyche. It is an episode so frustrating that most Americans have simply preferred to forget about it, ignore it, and minimize it as much as they can. However, few Americans have ever forgiven Iranians for it. It is America's great underlying grievance against Iran and as such it has been the 'elephant in the living room' of US policy toward Iran ever since. We never discuss it openly, but the residual anger that so many Americans feel toward Iran for those 444 days has colored (sic) every decision made about Iran ever since. (2004:172)

This performatively bears out Kernberg's contention that narcissism is often characterized by the ability to use sophisticated analytic interpretation in relation to the self, and yet, the process is less an act of self-awareness than emptying the expressed concepts of meaning. This he contends provides the narcissist the means to feel a sense of possession and superiority without engaging with the insight offered by the analysis (Kernberg 1975; Lasch 1967:40). Pollack talks of the terrible scar left by the hostage crisis as the 'elephant in the living room', but his arguments, sophisticated though they are, do not reflect on the complexities of the grievance, or the consequences of its denial.

From the outset, the interpretation of Iran's act as illegal and terrorist suggested to commentators and decision-makers alike that the ire of the US would not easily be assuaged, and that full retribution would follow once the freedom of the hostages had been accomplished. According to this view, no acknowledgement by Iran, even if it were to be forthcoming, would be sufficient to re-secure diplomatic normalcy, implicating the shame-anger-revenge spiral to have done its work in so damaging the social bonds that they would be comprehensible only in terms of strife. This rationalized the right of revenge, the right to publicly punish, regardless of the terms the US agreed to in order to bring the hostages home. The need for revenge, however, implied on-going social bonding – an inability to let go. In fact, Americans saw it as a moral duty to bring justice to those practicing terrorism once Washington's hands were no longer tied by the need to protect the hostages lives (Wicker 1979: *IHT* 13/11). Negotiation was not seen as a sign of acquiescence concerning the perpetrators' right to practice such violations. As Sick explained:

When President Carter stated publicly in late November that the release of the hostages would not “wipe the slate clean”, he was expressing not only his personal view but also the view of many of his closest advisers and probably most of the American public at the time, that America had suffered a grievance that could not be rectified merely by a return to the status quo ante. The deep anger was a constant and inescapable element of policy-making at the time, and it was fueled by endless hours of television coverage from Iran. (1985b:150).

Here Sick reveals that from the very beginning of the crisis, anger was a significant contributor to policy that objectified Iran as a regime to be rejected, raged against and allowed no forgiveness. Safire often expressed frustration at the inability of the US to bring appropriate action against Iran and anticipated with some relish the time when it could:

‘What does the US do when the impasse is resolved? [D]o we turn the other cheek, forgive and forget? On the contrary – we should treat this kidnapping with great seriousness and turn this provocation to US advantage’ (*IHT* 11/11/1979).

This passionate need to exact retribution and regain the advantage, which had no outlet as long as the administration favoured restraint to protect the hostages’ lives, led to severe disappointment and self-doubt, even by many doves in the ranks of the media and the government. As Anthony Lewis commented in *The New York Times* five months into the waiting game, the ‘American posture is passive, even verging on the submissive’, while at the same time, ‘it is inconsistent, unpredictable and undignified’ (‘The View from Entebbe’, 27/4/1980). The upshot was the sense that Iran had succeeded in its gambit, while the US had allowed itself to be shamed (*ibid*).

Writing 25 years later, Pollack’s language parallels uncannily, that of memoirists and journalists writing much closer to the time, implicating his representational practices as bounded by the same disciplining of difference, and revealing that the emotional contingencies, having become institutionalized over time, have enabled little change in the discourse in the intervening years (p.173).

In effect, Iran, ‘the insurgent’, had committed the unforgivable by ‘call[ing] into question the self-evidence of the existing order’ (Doty 1996:85). By defying the US, not just in the taking of hostages, but in appearing not to care that Washington planned to isolate it, and condemn it within the international family of nations, Iran suggested ‘the possibility of alternatives—alternative political identities, alternative social arrangements



and political orders—at both the domestic and the international level’ (ibid). The unexpectedness of Iran’s responses, the ambiguity and yet stability of its positioning, dismayed Washington. As Sick observed: ‘There was a tendency within the US government, especially among those engaged in managing this massive exercise in international public relations, to overestimate Iran’s vulnerability to external pressure’ (1985b: 218). One reason was that, to the US, insurgency was a phenomenon characterized by disaffected group activity, not the stance of a whole nation. A January 1980 Congressional briefing by the White House, for instance, stated, ‘the most powerful single political entity in Iran consists of the international terrorists or kidnappers, who are holding our hostages’ (reprinted in Alexander and Nanes 1980:495). This was a faulty heuristic that distilled the new Iranian state into the single structure upon which the US was focused, while ignoring the political machinery at work in the constitutional project, the reconstruction *jihad*s being launched, and all the other activities conducted by other political entities. Further, by constructing the SFIL as ‘international terrorists’, the White House maintained the fiction that they were part of a network operating outside Iran, even if they were also working with Iranian clerical support. Dismay that the precarious ‘domestic ordering’ in Iran did not crumble, or even provide expected openings for US and other international pressure, heightened the tension and confusion in the making of policy.

Iran thus problematized the concept of insurgency in a wider context, in that rejection of the existing order was the product of a national, and to a large extent, popular stance. Symbolically, the hostage taking irretrievably confirmed that Iran had not only rejected the US as an object of its affection but that it had adopted an alternative teleology of world order, namely, the divine inspiration (and protection) of Islam. This rejection was interpreted in the subjectivity of American identity production as an act of political violence that could threaten the entire fabric of the international order. The ambiguity of this peril, and the perception of arbitrary and unfounded hatred associated with it, was productive of a fear and anger that could only be understood in terrorist terms, fixing the boundary between the US self and the Iranian other as the border between inside the world order and outside; as ‘it’ alone and ‘us’ together. In its perceived role as the leader of the free world, however, the US as the ever-caring parent -

not just of the obstreperous and hurtful child, but of all the nations in its community - could not allow such 'bad' behaviour to go unchallenged. Sovereignty and freedom were signifiers that from Washington's perspective remained in flux when attached to Iran. Further, it allowed for the idea of retribution as a corrective measure not only to re-secure US honour, but to secure Iran's real freedom (as well as international order). Iran's rejection of America was ignored as ridiculous, while America's rejection of Iran's clerical leadership was privileged as rational.

Since the hostage taking was represented in the US discourse as a signifier of Iranian and Islamic identity, rather than as an aberration (a unique act, for example, of mob violence, see Boyle 1985:195), the release of the hostages inspired a promise by the newly elected President Reagan to institutionalize American security such that acts of hostage-taking and terrorism would suffer punishing consequences (Simpson 1985:31, NSDD 30, reprinted in *ibid*: 112-115; Reagan 'To the Congress of the US' in *ibid*: 408-411). Further, Iran's rhetoric of revolutionary export was interpreted as an overt expression of terrorist mobilization, and virtually every act of Islamic terrorism during the ensuing decade was attributed directly to Iranian influence and cooperation (K. Fatemi, '3000 Days of Ayatollah Khomeini', *Wall Street Journal* 30/4/1987; Weinberger 1990:250; Wright 1985:139-40). This need to blame Iran as the puppet-master of all Middle East terrorist activity, such as the shut-down of Mecca in 1980, the TWA hijacking in 1985, the Beirut bombing (of 'Fortress America'), and the Kuwait Airlines hijacking in 1988, instrumentalized the ongoing outrage felt by the American population at large and US government actors toward Iran (Wright 1985:109). Suspicion of its motives, actions and reach were contextualized in an unfulfilled need to exact vengeance. The ongoing but disguised US hurt was thereby translated into a pattern of policies that continuously enflamed the wounded social bonds, implicating the US as no more able to separate itself from Iran than Iran in fact was able to separate from the US.

As the US adopted the increasingly forceful position of representing itself (and Europe) as the moral utopia(s) of democracy, that is, as terrorism's opposite, the narcissistic apprehension of meanings associated with democracy fractionated off the conditions of possibility that Islam and democracy could be compatible. This re-figuring of the ideology of universalism (which previously maintained that all peoples desired and

could achieve democracy), Hurd identifies as drawing on Judeo-Christian representational practices in which democracy is understood as incompatible with other religions' tenets, a discourse that had been overshadowed while the site of fear focused on Godless communism (Hurd 2005:17)<sup>4</sup>. In the shifting of endangerment to re-include a site understood as religiously inspired, namely, Islamic terrorism, tyranny and terrorism were represented as twinned in their blasphemy against democracy. Arendt suggests that the construction of reality in such ideological terms creates 'a coherent world, albeit an entirely fictitious one' (Arendt 1973: 475). This false analogy, which linked terrorism to tyranny in an ideologically freighted heuristic, necessitated mobilization within the fiction of complete good versus complete evil, superior versus inferior. To Robin, 'ideology' in this way becomes 'a moral narcotic altering its adherents' sense of ethical reality' (Robin 2002: 119; Sheikh 2001:4; for contending discussion, see Howarth 2000:92).

Under Carter's watch, both the 'tough conservative' and the 'pragmatist' discursive strands represented Iran as having rejected democracy outright, first by ousting the Shah and second, by spurning the moderates after the revolution. As such, Iran was apprehended as not only led by a violently tyrannical regime, but as representing a people—and a religion--*incapable* of choosing and practicing democracy. What failed to be examined was how a popularly supported government, elected by its constituents, but representing views and values and actions that did not parallel Western ones, differed from a democracy—and what that meant for American understandings? The US could not publicly examine this question because of the fear and anger with which the US now apprehended its previous love object, and the vulnerability of its universalist idealism to the shame of rejection.

The danger was heightened because Iran was a state the US understood only obscurely, but which, because of Iran's own claim to universality and moral utopianism, was constructed in the American discourse as impervious to democracy and dangerously expanding the barbaric terrain of terrorism. It was in this terrain, affirmed British Orientalist Elie Kedouri, that Iran was most comfortable. 'The fact that political

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<sup>4</sup> Hurd makes no claims to a historical Judeo-Christian linkage, but simply that both inherited in their traditions negative views toward other religions' democratic practices and capabilities.

terrorism originating in the Muslim and Arab world is constantly in the headlines must not obscure the perhaps more significant fact that this terrorism has an old history,' he stated (Kedourie 1987:12). Thus, in his genealogy of Islamic terrorists, which starts off with the 'first political assassination' of Ali and concludes with 'Khomeini's Iran exemplifying a "terrorist state"', the incoherence of linking such diverse and historically spread-out acts is obscured in the fabric of historical trompe-l'oeuil, which fills the historical content of Islam with representations of violence and terror, those fruits of its failure to respond to Westernization. This veiled emotionality was equally practiced by Bernard Lewis, who in several works, including 'The Roots of Muslim Rage' (written ten years after the hostage crisis), represents 20<sup>th</sup>-century Islam as so corrupted with hatred at the power of the infidel that it is in fact beyond rehabilitation. 'Clearly, something deeper is involved than these specific grievances numerous and important as they may be—something deeper that turns every disagreement into a problem and makes every problem insoluble' (1990:24). Relations with Iran epitomized this insolubility, and the fear such fundamental incompatibility between self and other implied.

Reagan, like his successors, developed no detailed policy toward Iran because, once the hostages had been released, the US perceived no benefit in acknowledging it, only harm – an attempt at establishing status by officially ignoring it, despite the political strife that continued to reveal an ongoing relationship between the two (Pollack 2004: 182). Iran represented 'abnormal values' and 'emotional imbalance'; to avoid hurt was understood, therefore, as a rational policy choice (ibid:177). In Weinberger's memoirs, he remembers the feeling clearly: 'I was always completely convinced as I am to this day that it is impossible, unwise and very undesirable to try to secure any kind of relationship or have any kind of negotiations with a country led, as Iran is, by fanatical terrorists whose principal platform is vitriolic and unreasoning hostility to America and to all the values we honour' (Weinberger 1990:250)<sup>5</sup>. Here Weinberger echoes a view propounded by

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<sup>5</sup> Weinberger disapproved of the plan to provide 'arms for hostages' to Iran, killing a draft covert action finding to that effect in the fall of 1985. Uninformed about Iran-Contra until it broke, he considered it a confirmation of his view of Iran, and was joined by most of Reagan's administration in his perception that the US had once more been victimized and shamed by Iran. See 'Draft NSDD US strategy for Iran' in Christopher Simpson (1995) *National Security Directives of the Reagan and Bush Administrations: The declassified history of U.S. political and military policy, 1981-1991* (Oxford: Westview Press), pp. 452-3; Casper Weinberger (1990) *Fighting for Peace. Seven Critical Years at the Pentagon* (London: Michael Joseph), chapter 12.

Carter and increasingly employed as a refrain in foreign policy construction: that hostility to the US was not only a danger, but a form of 'unreasoned' deviance. In this way, sentiment was projected outward in a perpetuation of policy that enframed the US both as victimized by others and as ready always to fight for its principles.

Vice President George H. Bush, in the course of the presidential campaign in October 1984 stated:

'Let me assure you of one thing: the United States under this administration will never, never, never let terrorism or fear of terrorism shape or determine the foreign policy of the United States of America. We are not going to move out because terrorists move in. We are too great. We are too strong. We are too proud. And we are too principled to let terrorism shape our foreign policy' (*New York Times* 28/10/1984).

In these ringing words, meaning can be seen to be the exact opposite of what Bush actually states: a denial of the shame and anger the US was experiencing in a projection of muscular superiority through exaggerated communications symbols of status.

Secretary of State George Shultz had officially launched the First War on Terrorism that spring, and legislation suggested by Reagan had successfully been passed by Congress (Simpson 1995:454)

'The hostage crisis reawakened the United States to an old reality: that its good intentions are not enough' Weisman states in *No Hiding Place* (1980:228). Reagan, who offered heroic leadership, and a rhetoric of gunboat diplomacy, appealed to the battered American self, which understood itself to have been the innocent object of terrorism despite its best of intentions. 'Iran provided Americans a look into the abyss of hatred for America abroad that is going to make it more difficult, especially on an emotional level, to do future business with the Third World', Weisman warned (ibid: 228)

### **Shifting Endangerment from the Cold War to the First War on Terror**

The discursive economy of terrorism enabled the hostage crisis, and by extension, Islamic politics, to be internationalized. Moral equivalence was discursively disciplined in the confluence of common significations for the communist (totalitarian) and the Islamic terrorist evils. Meanings and fears domesticated in the signifiers of innocence and victimization simply drew from established codes within the totalitarian discourse to

imbue the terrorism narrative with an already familiar internationalized otherness that imperiled the West, both at its individual and societal levels. Use of the false analogy to link them heightened emotionalized discourses around both, since the perception that they worked in parallel ways to destroy democracy increased the sense of identity insecurity being experienced in the democratic world. As it can be argued that Washington maintained a separate relationship of political strife with both Moscow and Tehran, discourses of alienation and hostility in regards to the one now informed the other.<sup>6</sup> The two coexisted for over a decade, aspects of the discursive construction of the one bleeding into the other and visa versa as the fresher danger of Islamic terrorism developed in importance within the Reagan administration. No longer just as an isolated incident that took place during Carter's tenure, Shi'a-Islamic hostage-taking, now in its second permutation in Lebanon, was increasingly understood as a more generalized Western problem.

What remained ambiguous was how to define terrorism, what level of proof was required before retaliation could be carried out, and whether pre-emptive strikes were a moral necessity or morally wrong. Even the tough Reagan administration rhetoric was unable to discipline a hegemonic discourse that effectively inscribed the border between the US self, in the exercise of legitimate use of force (including pre-emptive self-defense), and the 'terrorist' other, which served to weaken American representative practices in responding to its violence (Simpson 1985:454). A Khomeini statement such as 'we are not worried about invasion, we are worried about American ideas', for example, contributed as seriously to US representations of Iran as terrorist, as any threat or use of force by Iran, legitimate or otherwise. Such a statement, in other words, as part of a politics of strife, was construed as an attack. Likewise, an ally of the US, discursively represented as an upstanding member of the community of nations, such as Iraq at the time, or Israel, can be understood to have been given wide discretion in the use of self-defence (or pre-emptive self-defence) without concern that it would be produced as a terrorist act (Cottam 1989; Zunes 2003:33).

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<sup>6</sup> Although it is beyond the scope of this study to detail analysis of the relationship between Moscow and Washington, based on the theoretical analysis presented in chapter two, it can be seen to have been a isolating, but ongoing relationship of political strife.

From the outset, a strong narrative connection was made between Marxism and Iran's Islamic revolution. Conditioned to see subversion as communist inspired, there appeared from the very beginning to be a determination to see the hostage takers as somehow operating under Soviet direction or otherwise linked to the left. In particular, the student-clerical axis seemed to elude the administration, which, according to John Kifner of the *New York Times*, 'tended to view the militants in standard "red menace" terms'. He quotes White House Press Secretary Jody Powell as telling reporters a good two months after the seizure that they followed 'a rather radical and certainly a Marxist line' (quotes in Kifner 1981: 182). Influential scholars such as the Hudson Institute's Constantine Menges, and senior journalists such as CBS's Marvin Kalb, stated, without reference to specific sources, their presumption that the fundamentalist Muslim hostage takers were working in conjunction with the Soviets (communists) and the PLO, because they shared a 'coincidence of interests' (NBC Today Show 10/12/1979; CBS 12/12/1979; Menges: *The New Republic* 15/12/ 1979; Said 1997: 87). Said notes that no more evidence was necessary than the 'diabolism' of communism 'in natural alliance with the devilish PLO and satanic Muslims' (ibid).

For Reagan, riding to the White House on polls in which 71 percent of the US electorate agreed that 'the US has been at the mercy of the Ayatollah, who has made us look weak and helpless' (*IHT*:15/4/1980), and who repeatedly asserted that US security was at risk because Carter was a vacillator and peacemaker and had allowed the military to so degenerate that 'it was incapable of defending the country' ('War and Politics', *The Nation* 26/4/80: 481), it was time for Americans 'to dream heroic dreams' again, and to embark on 'a crusade for freedom' (First Inaugural Address, 20/1/1981; Address to members of the British Parliament 8/6/1982). Further, the spectre of seeing Moscow sweep into a weak Iran in a repeat performance of Afghanistan, served to link, however tenuously, the idea of Soviet-sponsorship of anti-American terrorism under the auspices of Islamic terrorism in the Middle East (Taheri 1988:141). Ready to redress the tarnished image of the US in the wake of both Vietnam and Iran, Reagan's administration perceived American credibility to ride on American military capability. With the hostages' release, the perceived need for restraint was rendered moot, and replaced by an offensive strategy to ensure against further self-sacrifice at the hands of Islamist evil.

This gave the use of force greater signification in the passionate construction of 'post-hostage-crisis America' (Pollack 2004:173) A discourse of vengeance now could enjoy free play as a way to assuage American hurt and shame. Yet even here, the backbone of principle that was constituted as primary within the American self acted to justify that violence in terms of innocence, figuring revenge as ultimately serving the good of mankind (McCrisken 2003: in the discourse of Carter's administration, see 61; of Reagan's, see 94).

The construction of the Iran hostage situation as a product of terrorism enacted by ideologically driven individuals supported by the state, energized the US discourse on Soviet-sponsored terrorism, particularly as it affected the Arab states and Israel. This was provoked by a perceived ambiguity in how aligned or even dependent the Iranian Muslim tactics were, or what was defined as terrorist activity encouraged by the Soviet Union elsewhere in the Middle East. This included the PLO, the serial plane hijacker Abu-Mussa, and Soviet-backed Syria, which harboured The Jackal, the Venezuelan who held the members of OPEC hostage in 1975 in Vienna. The figuration of terrorism as a hand-maiden or twin of totalitarianism became a topic of serious debate by an intellectual circle within the Reagan administration (which included, among others, neoconservatives as well as members of the Christian right) (Halper and Clark 2004:70; McAlister 2005: 220; Wills 2003: chapter 1). In dialogue with counterparts in the Israeli political elite, several US officials, among them CIA-director William Casey, accused the Soviets of inserting indoctrination into terrorist camps in places such as Yemen, Iraq, Lebanon and Libya (Wills 2003:33). At the same time, reports of Iran's inspiration of Islamic militants in such places as Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait and Qatar, were perceived as threatening both Israeli and US national interests and shared security (Wright 1985).

The overlap of American and Israeli discourses of terrorism served to internationalize the concept of terrorism in such a way that the citizens of democracies were interpreted to be the primary victims because they served to bring international media attention to the terrorists, something that purely local terrorism did not do (Netanyahu, ed. 1986). This privileged certain types of terrorism over others, specifically hostage-taking (of Western victims), hijackings (involving Western travellers), and suicide-bombings (of Western targets). The specific Israeli contribution to the discourse



privileged the act of rescuing hostages rather than negotiating for them—an approach that fit well within the shifted American discourse that perceived US honour as countenancing no further humiliation. At the Second Conference on International Terrorism in Washington, Shultz noted that like the threat of international communism which imperiled the free world through its disdain for the rights of the private citizen, and by association, the values at the core of America's universalism, so terrorism, 'wherever it takes place, is directed in an important sense against *us*, the democracies, against our most basic values' (1986: 18). Like tyranny, terrorism victimized the private citizen for the sake of public purpose—and that purpose was understood to be Western public opinion. Thus, local terrorism was no longer understood to be on a par with international terrorism, since the latter, like international communism, transgressed borders with the purpose of invading not only domestic security but international order (McAlister 2005:221).

Another contributor to the Conference was US Ambassador to the UN, Jeane Kirkpatrick, a first generation neoconservative who, like Caspar Weinberger, Irving Kristol, and Zbigniew Brzezinski, was committed to the global credibility strand of the 'conservative' discourse and containment of the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, Kirkpatrick neatly sets out how American conceptions of victimization and innocence enabled a reading of terrorism that was deeply entangled in the narrative of totalitarianism, while at the same time, enframing aspects of the latter discourse in terrorism's re-inscription of American identity.

The affinities between terrorism and totalitarianism are multiple. Both politicize society. The totalitarian makes society, culture and even personality the objects of his plans and actions; the terrorist sees the whole of society as the object of his violence, his war. Both regard violence as an appropriate means to their political ends and both use violence as the instrument of first resort. Both reject the basic moral principles of Judeo-Christian civilization. Both terrorists and totalitarians act and see themselves as acting in the name of a new morality....

I see two important links between totalitarianism and terrorism. First, the most powerful totalitarian state of our time is also the principal supporter and sponsor of international terrorism. Second, those who pursue power by using terrorism generally aspire to form totalitarian societies.... (*Harpers* 1984:44-46).

In the terse first two sentences, Kirkpatrick draws on the familiar and already understood discourse surrounding totalitarianism to situate her view of terrorism. ‘Both politicize society’ is thus presumed to be understood by the reader as a condemnation, implying that society is not naturally political, but instead, the realm of ordinary people conducting their private lives far from the institutions of politics. Totalitarianism and terrorism both are interpreted as rending asunder the safe haven which is ‘the whole of society’ and turning it into an illegitimate battlefield. The only difference between the two is their place in ‘the hierarchy of institutional politics’ (Fortin 1989:198). In coldly bureaucratic and ‘rational’ language, Kirkpatrick isolates and fences off the terrorist from any legitimate social purpose (thus distinguishing him from a freedom fighter), and sees him instead as utilizing violence solely to subvert the public. Kirkpatrick denies any just cause to the motives of those she describes, seeing them as a-moral, and by so doing, renders them faceless – a deeply shaming act in relation to another human being. Kirkpatrick’s erasure suggests a fear and hatred that cannot countenance the individual. In assuming the superiority of the ‘moral principles of Judeo-Christian civilization’, she denies those principles historicity and ethics and situates the confrontation as civilizational—that is between the Judeo-Christian world (itself a post-World War II construct that denies the violence that previously characterized their relations) and the Muslim world .

Kirkpatrick’s pattern of thinking employs signifiers interchangeably for both totalitarianism and terrorism, and by so doing, privileges the innocence of the Western private sphere as the object of their violence. In the revitalization of the war against communism that was taking place in the personalized war of the terrorist, the language implies that the attack, the first salvo, is coming from the ‘other’ side, and hence, containment or counter-force are rationalized as necessary, and linked.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> US support for the Sunni *jihadists* in Afghanistan fighting against the aggression of the Soviet Union was not constructed in terms of Islamic terrorism, which at the time was confined to specific groups such as Iran’s (see footnote 8, chapter 5), the Islamic Brotherhood in Egypt which had killed President Sadat, and extremists in Saudi Arabia which had taken over the Great Mosque in Mecca. To Kirkpatrick and others, the Afghan ‘guerrillas’ were fighting tyranny, not abetting it, and therefore never referred to as Islamic militants, but instead, constructed in the positive light of counter-terrorism. It was, in fact, because they were framed so very differently in the discourse that their turn against the US was so shocking – an opportunity for the analysis of an engulfing relationship of political love gone bad that exceeds the dimensions of this study.

The US attempt to turn this post-hostage discourse into a hegemonic representation of terrorism and totalitarianism, had a powerful advocate in Kirkpatrick, who, as Halper and Clarke note, 'used her position at the UN to its full capacity in convincing the other member states that they were fully accountable for their behaviour toward America' (2004:75). The perception that terrorism had the same reach as totalitarianism in what CIA Director Casey was already calling 'a perpetual war without borders', emotionalized a discourse in which failure to preempt such primal violence was constructed as the ultimate shame (McAlister 2005:218; quote in Wills 2003:33).

### *Iranian Revolutionary Export as Terrorism*

In Reagan's perception, the superior 'moral power' of the United States implicitly made its actions good for mankind, and hence, there was no need for post-Carter discussions of redemption (since America had in fact never 'fallen'). Nor was there need for soul-searching as to why terrorism targeted Americans, beyond its obvious rejection of American values and commitment to democracy (McCrisken 2003:93-34). However, the social and political impact of the hostage crisis lingered in Washington, affecting for example, the policy decisions concerning the on-going Iran-Iraq War. 'Our official policy was to remain neutral in this conflict', Wienberger stated, 'but the Iranian outrages against our people, beginning in 1979, made it difficult for me to remain neutral in any conflict in which Iran was a party.' (1990:251). Weinberger's claim to neutrality (and his begrudging acknowledgement that it was difficult) points to the reification of the shame-anger spiral in the construction of policy.

The increasing incidence of terrorist activity in the Gulf region, including bombings, hijackings, foiled coup attempts (such as in Bahrain in 1981 by 'militants') and finally, the Beirut Marine bombing in 1983, embedded the contingency of Iran's revolutionary export as the culprit behind it all, even when its involvement was untraceable (Wright 1985:19, 141). Commented Weinberger, 'I also felt, with some support from the intelligence community, that most of our citizens who had been seized and held as hostages in the Middle East over the years since 1984 had been kidnapped either by direct Iranian action or by the actions of people working for and under the direction of Iran' (ibid: 252). This heuristic, borne of motivated bias is here rationalized

by relying on 'some support from the intelligence community'. Thus, for example, though the Beirut bombing was directed at Marines, that is, soldiers in the service of the American military quartered in Lebanon to act as not altogether neutral peace-keepers in a civil war, the bombing was constituted as an act of state-sponsored terrorism rather than an act of institutionally recognized warfare. Not only was it represented as victimizing unwary innocents on a par with the hostages taken in Tehran (only in Beirut, they had died), but to ensure against the shame of such an interpretation, the definition of terrorism was made to include the targeting of off-duty personnel.<sup>8</sup> The act was interpreted as funded and manipulated from Iran for the purpose of exporting its violence not only into Israel's near abroad, but back into American living rooms, once again, to gain American attention.

As Iranian handiwork was perceived to be expanding the realm of terrorism, while the Soviet danger was observed by some in the Reagan administration to be lessening (as both its rhetoric and the belligerency of its behaviour began to wane), a reassessment began. In place of the fear of Soviet communism, the greater diabolical enemy gradually became Islamism led by Iran, with its export of Islamic revolution, and its shadowy networks of terrorists (Cottam 1990:281; Halliday 1990:256; Hoogland 1990).

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<sup>8</sup> The US State Department 'Definition of Terrorism', Title 22 US Code, Section 2656(d), states in Footnote 1 (its sole footnote, which significantly elaborates on the definition of 'non-combatant'), that it includes: 'civilians, and military personnel who are unarmed and not on duty. In addition, attacks on military installations or armed military personnel when a state of military hostilities does not exist are also considered to be terrorist acts.' This definition, it states separately, has been 'employed since 1983'; see [www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov).

**Chapter 7****British Democracy and Competing Freedoms: *The Satanic Verses*, the *fatwa* and the enemy within**

‘Salman Rushdie is in hiding, but in the Muslim world, he is everywhere.’

--Mahnaz Ispahani. *The New Republic* 3/7/1989

‘[The British] government has taken the lead in making this matter purely political. The more they take this line, it will have a disastrous effect for the whole world’.<sup>1</sup>

--Akhundzadeh Basti. Iranian Chargé D’Affaires, London 1/3/1989

The call by British Muslims to ban the *Satanic Verses*, followed by Ayatollah Khomeini’s *fatwa* on February 14, 1989, condemning its author, Salman Rushdie, to death, unleashed passions in response to perceived threats to British identity security that were to have long-term consequences. Indeed, the Affair was a nodal point in the British discourse of self, in which the need to secure fundamental norms constituting Englishness<sup>2</sup> emotionalized signifiers of freedom, democracy and secularism as referents of identity. The publication of *The Satanic Verses* enabled a modern discursive conflict to be fought over the role of religious practice in both domestic politics and international relations. In effect, the Rushdie Affair inspired two significant shifts in the hegemonic British discourse: a) it implicated the threat of anti-democratic Islamic violence (terrorism) as both a national and international danger; b) it represented protection of religion within state practices as less compelling than the promotion of liberal notions of freedom<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Lisa Appingnanesi and Sarah Maitland (1989) *The Rushdie File* (London: Fourth Estate), p. 136

<sup>2</sup> Gamble inverts the usage of ‘English’ and ‘British’ as labels for the purpose of generalizing identity, stating, for example, ‘The English, which included all the British’. This usage of ‘English’ and ‘Englishness’ as describing the ‘self’ that all Britons understood themselves to be within the Union is adopted here in this chapter. Andrew Gamble (2003) *Between Europe and America, The future of British Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan), p. 63; see also Talal Asad (1993) *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press), p. 244.

<sup>3</sup> It is interesting in light of the conflict between state protections to freedom of expression and sensibilities of belief (which had their follow-up in the Danish cartoon affair), that the protection of religious dress in the performance of state duties was viewed as acceptable and became, in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century,

The rhetoric and behaviours elicited by the Rushdie Affair involved passionate political exchange, not only with Iran, but internally. In the former case, this ruptured what had been over the previous year (1988) a gradually neutralizing policy between the UK and Iran (Joffe 1991:80). In the latter, official representations of multiculturalism became emotionalized and increasingly exclusive, and mobilized the population to adopt 'core British values' as a requirement of inclusion (Patten 1989). In both instances, it prompted an increasingly monological discourse in relation to both the international and domestic objects of threat, following the pattern in which the 'other' is objectified, in essence, becoming 'a subject of one's own conscience, which can be interpreted and modified at will as a function of the self's own needs as an identity' (Guillaume 2002:9).

At the heart of the Rushdie Affair was the concept of freedom of expression and how it related to British commitments to democracy. Freedom, by virtue of its location at the centre of British identity, inspired strong passions in defending it against competing representations by Muslim forces inside and outside Britain. However, the very act of protecting this freedom narrowed it as a code of social representation in contravention to both historical and current practice. In this way, it seeded a politics of strife not only between the British government and its primarily Sunni Muslim communities at home, but with Muslims elsewhere, particularly in relations with Iran. As the outrage of Britain's Muslims was joined not only by Sunni Muslims across the globe, but Shias as well, the Affair did important work in discursively casting the vast Islamic community as a single, undifferentiated Muslim threat. The Affair thus served to naturalize emotional expressions associated with a generalized Islamophobia (Poole 2000:158).

The passions that marked the debate around freedom of expression and freedom of belief, as well as around the degree of protection accorded to either by society and the state, suggests that the crisis unleashed by the Rushdie Affair cannot be explained by reference alone to an objective threat said to reside in the actions of Iran or the calls for censorship by the Asian communities in Britain. Instead, it reflects how responses were instrumentalized based on conviction, suggesting an economy of passion that mobilized action rather than restraint (in contravention to the classic British, 'stiff upper lip', which

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officially protected in regards Muslim practices, following already established Sikh practices in Britain; this stood in contrast to practices established in the same period in France.

seeks to control the environment by controlling the feelings [Colls 2007:47]). In fact, the Rushdie Affair can be seen to have been a reaction to a deep seated sense of betrayal, as it spotlighted the tenuous social bonds linking resident minority Muslim communities to British society in a relationship of engulfing pseudo-assimilation. The revealed alienation, which until then had been suppressed, elicited shock and denial on both sides, the failure to effect solidarity within British society experienced as a source of unacknowledged shame. The perception that its ex-colonial, 'black', Muslim minorities did not 'de-self' (or efface) themselves sufficiently, and instead, exhibited disrespect for British mores, underlay the anger that infused popular responses. In the self-righteous narcissistic imaginary that constructed Britain as having it in its power to bestow its universalist values on a perpetually willing community of others, the breakdown in these social bonds was deeply disillusioning, and provoked a raft of self-protective discursive reflexes on the part of both the liberal public and the political elite to insulate the British self from further harm.

The simmering disconnect between official discourses of assimilation and the lack of it by the Muslim communities erupted during the Rushdie Affair into a national crisis of public anger at what was perceived as a moral siege, and of private fears regarding the 'enemy' within. This re-ignited in the English collective memory the 'alien-ness' of the colonial 'other' with their distinct religious and ethnic traditions. It also re-naturalized the emotionally structured Orientalist dialectic of a superior/inferior hierarchy, which drew on the legacy of Empire as it became politicized into racism, and from ethnic racism to religious racism (Gamble 2003:64)

This chapter examines this passionate discursive crisis. Attention is drawn to the growing parity in representational practices between the UK and the US not in order to insist that a grand clash of civilizations is inevitable, but to illustrate that rhetorical strategies of superiority and exclusion are common mechanisms in the imperial/exceptionalist encounter – that is, the meanings and presumptions associated with the way dominance and power emotionalize and negate alternative interpretations of reality are global in nature<sup>4</sup>. In the case of Britain and the United States, the added

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<sup>4</sup> Similar practices can be seen in the Athenian case as laid out in Thucydides, see R.N. Lebow (2001) 'Thucydides the Constructivist' *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 95 (3), pp. 547-560; and in

dimension of their own special relationship, and their shared language and literature, contributed to the conditions of possibility for a gradual merging at key points to establish a common Anglo-American discourse in respect to democracy promotion, the threat of Iran, and Islamic radicalism.

The trajectory of the British discourse in various ways mirrored the American response to the hostage crisis, and is of interest, since at the time of that crisis, Britain's stance had reflected more closely the European rather than American discourse. In short, it perceived the hostage crisis as an unnecessarily 'public' conflict in which innocence was not clearly demarcated, and viewed American handling of the crisis as over-internationalized, over-politicized and over-emotionalized.

Yet, once confronted with a politicized Islamic crisis of its own, in which religious ethics were seen to clash with secular ones, and fundamental norms underpinning identity security were perceived to be at stake, British politicians and public alike adopted a position in many ways analogous to the American. Terrorism, particularly as regards the actions of Iran (but not exclusively so), was adopted as a signifier to describe the barbaric moral activism underpinning all variants of radical Islam, particularly regarding what was construed as the transgression of private space through the public sphere. Although the hostage-taking and the *fatwa* were quite different in nature, the question as to whether Khomeini's actions were acts of war haunted both, and characterized debate in the media and political spheres in both cases. Like the Iranian community inside the US, which was perceived to be an extension of Tehran during the hostage crisis, the Muslim community inside Britain came quickly to be linked in the course of the Affair to the Muslim community abroad. As in the US at that time, it was no longer viewed as an integral part of British society, but as a Fifth column for outside Muslim forces and therefore a potent threat to the harmony of British society. In this context, no opportunity of self-conception allowed for a British understanding of the Iranian declaration as other than a claim upon its Muslim community, and an incitement to infuse that community with its own dangerous norms and practices. These meanings made thinkable the British construction of the *fatwa* as an act of cultural intervention



equivalent to state terrorism, a position that helped cement British and American policy toward Iran, as well as aligning them in regards to Islamic militancy.

The passions evoked by the Rushdie Affair, not just in Britain, but in the US as well as other parts of Europe (especially Germany) and many parts of the Muslim world (particularly Pakistan and India), loosed previously fixed meanings associated with hegemonic discourses relating to Christianity and Islam and their relation to democracy. This took place not only within the communities in these states, but in relations between states, affecting modern discourses that however uncomfortably, had momentarily diffused and suppressed binaries such as inferior/superior, state religion/democracy, Muslim/ Christian, post-colonial/modern, religious freedom/secular freedom, bigoted /enlightened. For Britain, the shock of the Iranian *fatwa*, as well as the reprise of colonial tensions this time expressed internally, evoked condemnations of ‘inappropriate’ behaviour by the other, and a rapid sequencing of shame (humiliation) and anger.

The next section briefly reviews the literature, and is followed by an analysis of ‘Englishness’ as a contributor to concepts of self, and the way interpretations and responses to the Affair were conceived within the public domain. The body of the chapter focuses on the discourse as expressed in the signifiers of innocence and victimization. Since domestic discursive strategies informed and were informed by the elaboration of identity internationally, the political passions released during the Bradford book burning are considered for purposes of elucidating the discursive structures operationalized in response to the *fatwa*. By making visible the motivated bias that informed the political decision-making process, a politics of passion is revealed to have infused the discourse, contributing to a politics of strife both inside Britain and in its policies toward Iran. The implications for the Anglo-American discursive construction of exclusive democracy, and the positioning of British international relations, concludes the chapter.

### **A Politicized Literature**

The Rushdie Affair broke almost quietly with the banning of the *Satanic Verses* in India just ten days after its publication by Viking on September 25, 1988. The outrage then rose gradually, until it reached a double crescendo, first with the Bradford book burning on January 14, 1989, and then, exactly a month later in February with the Khomeini

*fatwa*. Over the following months, its intensity subsided, although as Poole points out, media references to Rushdie as an iconic signifier of Muslim violence and religious rigidity continue (2000:164-5). It was throughout, like the hostage crisis, a media phenomenon, although in contradistinction to that event, it engendered a divisive and at times viciously passionate debate between pro- and anti-Rushdie campaigners that raged not just inside England, but throughout both the Muslim and Western worlds. This debate, in which the nature of freedom of speech became a fiercely contested signifier of democracy—pitting the oppression of individual rights against the oppression of religious discrimination—was subsequently taken up in the literature, and therefore can be seen to occupy two separate, highly politicized poles.

There is little Western scholarly work (and no full treatment, as far as this author could find) dedicated to analysis of Iran's position in the Affair, Iranian perceptions of the *fatwa*, and little on its implications for East/West relations or Iran's relations with its near abroad. Almost universally condemned as the desperate gesture of a dying man attempting to unite conflicting forces in a compromising domestic situation (Halliday 1998:136), the *fatwa*'s long duration (extended no doubt because of Khomeini's death), which contributed to a decade's-long diplomatic break between Iran and the UK, has been investigated only in chapters here and there (for example Fischer and Abedi 1990; Joffe 1991; Pargeter 2008). Its pivotal role within the construction of Anglo-American discourses toward Islamic terrorism in general, and Iran's characterization as a state sponsoring terrorism in particular, also remains under-examined. These issues are addressed in this chapter, but the treatment here too is necessarily brief. One further under-analyzed aspect is the inconsistency within the anti-Rushdie (usually, pro-Muslim) discourse of support for the *fatwa* – which by having been issued by Iran, evoked conflicting responses, not only in reference to Sunni-Shia differences, but in Muslim views of Iran's political practices in general. The legal ambiguity with which it was regarded contributed to a body of literature dedicated to discussions of different strands of Shari'a interpretation (B. Lewis 1991; Yapp 1989).

It is in the literature that attempts to dominate the discourse of the Rushdie affair, while denying the rationality of the attempt in the contending literature, that the political economy of identity creation and the politicized passion of democracy is writ large. On

one side was the 'liberal' literature, which interpreted unrestricted freedom of speech as foundational to democracy, and the introduction of religious concerns as a 'violation of the neutrality of public space' (Hurd 2005:19). The standout was novelist Fay Weldon's *Sacred Cows* (1989) in which she assumed a position of superiority over, and denial of the 'other' in her condemnation of the Qoran and its God of 'terror and vengeance'. Its sensational imagery of a monolithic, expanding Islam was adopted by many amongst the literati, including Norman Stone (*The Sunday Telegraph*, 19/2/1989). As Poole observes in her analysis of British Muslim representation in the media, 'By linking Muslims to conflict and ignoring their victimization around the world, this distorted picture is suggested to people who have few alternative images' (2000:157). In this literature, outrage, ignorance, fury, offence, contempt, vengeance, and other similar code words reflect a complex shame in which alienation between the British liberal and British Muslim world (internal and external) threatened and damaged social bonds that were undergoing a painful readjustment.

For Ruthven (1990), as for Pargeter (2008), British identity is understood as unassailably cosmopolitan, and the Rushdie Affair as a venal sectarian game fought by the Iranians and the Saudis to dominate political Islam in Europe. Pargeter argues that the Affair was but one step in the networked growth of Islamism, and the *fatwa* an act of opportunism in a political agenda outside the control of the UK or its Muslim communities. In her view, Rushdie was an unwitting if informed catalyst of darker identity constructions within the Islamic world, and a deeply unsettling symbol of the havoc that Islamist politics wreaks both at home and abroad.

Ruthven views the Affair as more about minority British Muslims and their affinity for 'a triumphalist faith of uncompromising masculine supremacy', than about social constructs within Britain itself (1990: 6, 161). Like much of the literature on both sides of the pro- and anti-Rushdie divide (in the former case, see for instance Pipes 1990; in the latter, see Sardar and Davies 1990), Ruthven uses textual analysis to argue that Rushdie is a masterful post-modernist whose abusers were inferior and bigoted, pointing to the failure of fundamentalist Muslims to accept (or even be aware of) the 'fictional agreement' that pertains to novel writing.

Oxford geographer S. J. D. Green (1990) occupies a middle ground, taking on the issue from the perspective of British social order. Offering a lucid analysis of social structure as a product of religious geography in Britain, he addresses the inter-relationships between religious peripheries and the liberal core. Using the Rushdie Affair as well as antecedents such as the Swann Report, he describes a bleak trajectory for liberalism, seeing it becoming so politicized that its inflexibility and dogmatism in the face of religious political pressures makes it, in his view, sadly inadequate to sustain the legitimacy of British ethics or the quality of British life.

Anthropologist Talal Asad (1993) analyzes forces of domination and delineation in race relations to draw dark lessons from the Rushdie Affair for the structure of British multiculturalism (an alternative anthropological treatment in support of Rushdie appears in Fischer and Abedi 1990). In tracing previous situations in which urban riots, racist murders, IRA bombs and questions of censorship were at issue, he observes that the British government's response in the Rushdie Affair was materially different, and lays the blame on a 'British post-imperial identity in crisis' (p.241). Yet, he ignores the question of why the introduction of religious concerns into the public sphere caused such passionate outpouring when secular society had become accustomed to tread lightly between the demands of blasphemy and freedom of speech (for further discussions of pamphlet burnings and book bannings, see Appignanesi and Maitland, eds. 1990; Ahsan and Kidwai, eds. 1991: *passim*).

A third category in the literature attempts to include both sides. *Sacrilege versus Civility* (Ahsan and Kidwai, eds. 1991) and *The Rushdie File* (Appignanesi and Maitland, eds. 1990), the former pro-Muslim, the latter pro-Rushdie, combine excerpts and previously published articles into single compendia to offer not only an accessible chronicle, but the hope 'that somehow we learn to live with our differences in a spirit of toleration' (Appignanesi and Maitland eds. 1989:vii). Scholarly analyses attempting to balance the 'liberal' and 'extremist Muslim' arguments include La'Porte 1998, Kuortti 1997, Piscatori 1990, and Halliday 1995. Kuortti investigates the notion of the sacred in the practices of both the secular and religious responses to the Affair. Broader analyses adopt aspects of the Rushdie Affair to examine, among other topics, cultural dialogue (Fischer and Abedi 1990), media representations (Cottle 1991; Hafez 2000; Poole 2000).

2002), Islamophobia and Islamism (Hippler and Lueg 1995); and Iranian foreign policy (Ehteshami and Varesteh, eds. 1994).

My analysis builds on the above, focusing on the emotional component as understood through stress on internal and external social bonds, and how that was expressed in discursive strategies and the structuring of policy.

### **The passion of 'Englishness'**

'Identities never die,' Colls reminds us, 'they only enfold into the landscape' (Colls 2007: 50). Although by the time of the Rushdie Affair, the empire had been officially dead for over 20 years, its legacies in British social relations were still part of the inner landscape (Gamble 2003: 62).

The concept of Englishness, the normative 'us', was tightly interwoven with the concept of freedom: 'free subjects, free speech, free ideas, free religion, free enterprise, free trade – [these] were the *historic* Liberal inducements of an *ideal* Englishness' (Colls 1986: 31, emphasis in original). What is more, this liberalism was represented as an ideal force, 'deep within the national character, and capable of universal dissemination as England's special gift to the world' (ibid:30).

Ingrained in this myth of the liberal self was its perceived importance to the security of the state, and thus, British military might 'projected external defense [as] extending to the protection of the British way of life and preservation of order, authority and moral health throughout society' (Gamble 2003:77). This fed into the iconic quality of Britain's self-perceived gift, as Seeley put it, 'to have conquered and peopled half the world in a fit of absence of mind' (1914:10). The construction of a superior and quintessentially English universalism instantiated a narcissistic discourse that implicated English exceptionalism as so compelling that its dissemination was seen to be almost off-handed.

This applied as much to the way the liberal elites conceived their relations with the lower classes and other disenfranchised within the English populations at home, as it did to the foreign immigrants and ex-colonial peoples. Thus, the imagined community of larger Britain was never a community of equals, but a community blessed by the engulfment of Englishness (Dodd 1986:35). A key factor necessary to make this a reality

was to effectively incorporate what Matthew Arnold termed 'provincial nationalisms' into English culture. In Arnold's view, 'Englishness is not so much a category but a relationship', ready to absorb minorities at the political level (even if this meant denying them political identity) by engaging (and recognizing) their contribution at the cultural level (quotes in Dodd 1986:12). Though Arnold delivered these ideas at Oxford in the 1860s, his concepts stand out in the discourses and practices of multiculturalism a hundred years later (Green 1990). In the latter, the values of the peripheries (the immigrant minorities) were felt (again) to be foundational to Englishness and its liberal capacity for renewal, the defining bonds of inclusivity, however, constrained primarily to that of culture rather than politics.

In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as waves of immigrants arrived from the British Orient to fill Britain's labour gap the myth of inclusivity was put to the test. Motivated by a sense of private transgression, ethnically naming various minority groups as 'blacks', 'Pakis', etc., discursively defined their identity as separate from the rest of society, rendering their social bonds perpetually contingent. Patterns of labour relations and the representational practices that had accompanied these groups in the colonies mirrored relations of dominance within Britain as the new immigrants were discursively and physically fenced off as separate communities (Asad 1993:243; Green 1990). The process was represented through the guise of altruism, which conceived of the social bonds in terms of Britain's willingness to include them and nurture these 'others' inside its own democratic society.

Altruism, however, in the liberal context masked and sentimentalized, through containment and discipline, those perceived as 'inferior'. Since assimilation was contingent on commonality, tension between master and mastered was a natural consequence. The result was what Benjamin describes as 'splitting', where 'one side is devalued and the other idealized' 'so they are available to the subject only as alternatives' (1988:63). The upshot is that when commonality is dismissed so that dominance can be extended, insular practices and emotional responses are elevated, and the realm of mutual, or negotiated, alternatives is marginalized. The strain this placed on the social bonds can be seen, for example in the Swann Report, the basis of the much vaunted policy of multiculturalism, but which in fact limited the degree of acceptable pluralism in

Britain's secular society. In that Report, religion was defined as a branch of knowledge, and expressions of pluralism accepted only insofar as they conformed to 'rationally held values' (Green 1989:17). Assimilation as a practice was thereby strictly bounded by the inability of the liberal outlook to acknowledge the identity of others that failed to resemble it, and instead, empowered only those that did. On the one hand, the narcissistic production of dominance over difference enabled the ex-colonial immigrant 'other' to remain so completely 'alien' that actual assimilation was permanently delayed. On the other, it enabled a complacency in which assimilation was imagined as inevitable as a result of exposure to Englishness, even when actual exposure was minimal. Group exclusion, therefore, deferred acknowledging how the immigrants were actually engaging with Englishness, and resulted in 'multicultural' practices that reflected core English values.

It took the Rushdie Affair to expose how the social interactions between the British core and its immigrant communities were constructed in relations of continuous chafing. Unacknowledged shame on both sides had been communicated through condescension, a sense of moral transgression, disrespect, the repression of ideas, and other expressions of disconnection (Scheff and Retzinger 1991:67). The Affair projected the private passions associated with race and religion into the public sphere, triggering an escalation in the process of separation, as the two sides were unable to negotiate or communicate respect for the identity of the other. The Rushdie Affair spotlighted a conundrum: not all freedoms were equal. The freedom of artistic (personal) expression and the freedom of protection against blasphemy were in fact socially constructed in a hierarchical framework that reflected a moral ordering elaborating English (Western) liberal identity. This ordering was understood as natural by those defining themselves as British, and, in revealing its fragility in the face of the 'onslaught' of alternative, Islamic interpretations, inspired rage and shock. This ordering was not understood the same way by those with Islamic sensibilities, hence the shock on their part.

Campbell points out that 'security and subjectivity are intrinsically linked, even in conventional understandings', since 'Foreign Policy works to constitute the identity in whose name it operates, [and] security functions to instantiate the subjectivity it purports to serve' (1998: 253). The attack on foundational concepts of Englishness within the

confines of its territorial core was conceived as a private invasion, and an act of violence. Perceived threats to fundamental norms prompted passionate protection to discursively demarcate the frontier between us and them. The re-secured boundaries contained exclusively those who conformed to core English values, and if they didn't, then as Michael Jones, political editor of the *Sunday Times* wrote in 'Ground Rules for the British Way of Life', 'it is sad, but too bad' (19/07/1989).

### **Innocence: The betrayal of the embrace of 'Englishness'**

The immediate and angry response of diverse Muslim communities both inside and outside Britain to publication of the *The Satanic Verses* caught the publishers, agents and close literary circles around Rushdie by surprise. The concept that a post-modern book should elicit such an emotionalized community outcry seemed initially absurd, as did calls to ban the work (Weatherby 1990). Pre-publication warnings by Khushwant Singh, a Penguin editorial advisor, that the book could be viewed as incendiary by a wide range of Muslim readers, had been dismissed, and it was only later that questions were raised about Rushdie's own awareness (and intentions) in regards to the outrage the book might cause (see e.g. M.H. Faruki, reprinted in Ahsan and Kidwai, eds. 1991:147). This lack of awareness on the part of the publishers or early reviewers points to the presumption of political de-selving within the construction of an otherwise embracing 'Englishness' that was conceived as incorporating the cultural diversity of its plural constituents.

Muslim anger against the book, and calls for censoring it, were interpreted as abrogating a code of behaviours and meanings that implicated assimilation, and thereby, as putting unacceptable pressure on the democratic system. The British Muslim community's dismay at what it declared was intolerable abuse of religious sensitivity masquerading as freedom of expression struck at the heart of the tenets of the British liberal ideal self, which considered itself innocent of ill-intent or wrong-doing. The shame at failing to acknowledge these sensitivities, and what that implied about British assimilation, was externalized as outrage at the 'inappropriateness' of Muslim responses both at home and abroad. An immediate spiral of injured surprise, and sense of betrayal ensued. Britain's willing tolerance of its many ethnic communities was perceived to define modernity and democracy, and therefore as directed to all, no matter how alien.



how 'un-English' they were. This, however, was contingent on the understanding that there had to be a give-and-take: acceptance by the immigrant communities of core British values, in exchange for British acceptance of husbanding foreigners resident on its soil (Gamble 2003: 66). Indeed, it seemed perfectly natural to presume, as did a leader in *The Times* on July 25, 1989, that 'British Muslim children should know their Koran: of course, but they should also know their Shakespeare'. For most of British society, therefore, the Muslim plaint failed to acknowledge the altruism of the British settlement, and therefore, threatened the social bonds between them.

As the Rushdie Affair unfolded, the significations of 'tolerance' (the ability to accept and embrace 'others'), and 'freedom of expression' (including religious defamation), became unhinged. Emotionalization infused the re-fixing of these referents, leading to the fractioning off of those perceived to lie outside the British self. Thus, within the discourse of the Affair, a duality rapidly placed in opposition English 'liberals' or 'secularists', and those named, and fenced off, as 'Muslims', 'fundamentalists', or 'extremists' (Green 1990:14; Howarth et al 2002:11).

The common usage of the 'Muslim' label, which gained currency during the Affair, was new. It homogenized along religious lines what had previously been differentiated as Asian, South Asian, African and West Indian. The label discursively erased not only the distinctive Muslim traditions and sects that defined the members of these communities, but the diversity of views within these radically separate groups that until then had seen little similarity among themselves. By distilling out the Muslim component in the public mind, differences in beliefs, practices and places of origin all became unimportant (Asad 1993; Fischer and Abedi 1990: 394-5; Sardar and Davis 1990).

The social disciplining effected by the 'British Muslim' label had two implications that became fixtures in the liberal discourse. First, it linked British Muslims to their home populations (whoever and wherever they were) in a heuristic that drew from the collective memory of empire and its linkages. The growing concern at the political and religious association between British Muslims and their foreign Islamist brethren fed into an emotionalized cycle of increasing hostility, which imputed a sense of endangerment to the British core from local Muslims. As the Affair progressed, these

latter were perceived as having more in common with Muslims abroad than with Britons, and worse, importing radical views into Fortress Britain – a key factor when subsequently the *fatwa* was issued

Second, it served to demarcate the identity of British Muslims to themselves. As Fisher and Abedi observe, being slurred as ‘Pakis’ or ‘Asian’ did not carry the same level of imputed abuse as being taunted and shamed as a ‘Muslim’, which provoked the need to defend the faith and the honour of God, in addition the honour of ethnic origin. The Muslim naming thus acted as a more acute antagonizer than ethnic labeling and served to discipline, through the defense of faith, the various Muslim communities into perceiving themselves as a ‘group’, where previously none had existed (Fisher and Abedi 1990:395).

The ‘fundamentalist’ label, which the US discourse had internationalized at the time of the hostage crisis as a precursor to the almost synonymous terms ‘Islamist’ and ‘jihadist’, was adopted in the context of the Affair as claiming in its grip all those who believed in banning the *Satanic Verses*. Even before Khomeini’s *fatwa*, and especially thereafter, it re-ignited associations of religious fanaticism and uncivilized behaviour, terms also used to describe those in Lebanon holding British and American hostages at that very moment (and presented in the British, as much as the American media, as master-minded by Iran) (Taheri 1988:168). Critically, fundamentalism instantiated an image of Muslim incitement to violence against innocents, a humiliating representation for the various Muslim communities and one causing consternation within the public political sphere. Few present this inversely linked duality as clearly as Hampsher-Monk in speaking of anti-Rushdie Muslims:

‘Fundamentalist belief is well armed to sustain bloody opposition through parables of trial, salvation through suffering, and personal election. These devices make fundamental religious belief incompatible with tolerant politics’ (1991:165).

Hampsher-Monk’s claim that such ‘devices’ make Islamic fundamentalism irreconcilable with democracy echoes Kirkpatrick’s rhetoric that placed Judeo-Christian civilization in opposition to Islam. Like hers, his view allows for no parallel ‘devices’ in his own national parables, even without the overlay of faith. His understanding of the

stories of British history and tradition, for example, are sufficiently naturalized (and sentimentalized) around chivalry and honour as to make it possible for him to ignore their similarities to the mythologies of Islamic history. What of the parables of trial in the Civil War, for example, or of T.E. Lawrence, whose tale is *par excellence* that of personal election? By failing to problematize the parables in his own tradition, Hampsher-Monk apprehended the situation the way many other liberals did too, that is, by engaging in a process of identity production understood to be bounded by different norms and motivations than those involved in 'fundamentalist' practices. Embedded in this discourse is the emotionalized presumption that Islam, armed to sustain bloody opposition, is inferior to Christian-Judaic tradition in relation to 'tolerant politics', an expression of false pride, and an approach Guillaume describes as unethically grounded (2002:9).

By drawing the limits of tolerance through the rhetorical device of excluding behaviours and beliefs associated with fundamentalism, identity production emotionalized the re-inscription of the British self as democratic and innocent of *intolerance*. Thus, the representation made by the Muslim communities that the public(ation) of *The Satanic Verses* placed what it considered sacrilegious content into the public sphere, thereby making it a political book, was elided by the liberal argument that it was the expression of a private individual with inalienable rights to publish what he wished in the free world. Argued Oxford's Green: 'Secularism's undefined nature does *not* allow for discipline on freedom of speech—unless it refers to treason or material damage' (1990:17).

When Muslim thinkers such as Mazrui, Parekh and others argued that freedom of speech was always contingent and that literary works were regularly banned in the US, UK and Canada (including *The Last Temptation of Christ*), they were ignored (La'Porte 1989:138). So was Atam Vetta's plaint that had the novel been directed at the Jewish faith, the response would have been different (Ahsan and Kidwai, eds. 1991:111). Anti-Zionist literature, it was pointed out, occupied the largest number of entries on the Anglo-Saxon world's list of banned books, lists which the Muslim community presented to the media to support its claims, as well as a list of 'Western countries' officially-sponsored violence on foreign soil against selected targets' (La'Porte 1989:138-9; Ahsan and

Kidwai, eds., *ibid*: 266; Appignanesi and Maitland, eds. 1990: Appendix). This, it was argued, revealed tolerance to be a political choice. The inconsistency in the banning of certain works and not others within democratic practice was shaming for both sides: for liberals, justification necessitated denial and externalization of superiority; for Muslims, it imputed to their sensitivities less worth than was awarded to others, which led to humiliation. On both sides, therefore, defensive mechanisms were relied upon to elide shame, which perpetuated the cycle.

The signification of tolerance, according to Lasch, is entwined with perceptions of race and racism. Though his analysis relates to the uneasy relationship between whites and blacks in 1970s US, his observations remain apt for the situation pertaining between Muslims and whites in the UK in the '80s. 'De facto racism continues to flourish without a racial ideology. Indeed, it is the collapse of *de jure* racism in the south and the discovery of de facto racism in the north, under the ideology of tolerance, that distinguishes the most recent phase of race problems' he writes (1978:25). The Rushdie affair located racism within the politically acceptable rubric of secular ideology, which, by having privatized religion, countenanced no further infringement upon the public sphere. In this manner, British politics was constructed as innocent of any possible imputed sacrilege upon its constituents, as in this sense, all its constituents were deemed equal, and the question of racism could be ignored. Yet, denying the Muslim view validity eroded the concept of tolerance, privileging instead the narrower, less generous meaning of 'sufferance'.

Home Secretary John Patten, whose position included responsibility for race relations, addressed these issues in a letter on July 4<sup>th</sup> directed to 'Muslim leaders in Britain' (reprinted in Ahsan and Kidwai, eds. 1991:321-325). This was followed two weeks later by a Home Office release entitled, 'On Being British'. Patten's focus was integration and the necessity for minorities to acquire British culture, on the presumption that British culture was innocent of intolerance and therefore 'good', and ready to be inclusive toward those behaving rationally. His moralistic stance reflected the fear of how alternative values would affect British society, an expression of an emotionalized decision to deny the validity of those values, and in so doing, promote a politics of strife.

Patten is remote, at times patronizing, at others didactic, but he always addresses the Muslim community as a singular, undifferentiated 'other', distanced and different from the English self. He never assumes the position of an official representing the Muslim constituency as one group among many within the British electorate responsible for empowering his government. Nor does he offer to mediate. Instead, he addresses 'British Muslims' as a subject of British rule and occupying a position not dissimilar to a colonial entity inside Britain. His purpose is to encourage this group to conform to the rest of British society, an attempt to ensure the relationship remain one of engulfment. Patten speaks with the political authority of secularism, that realm of rational democracy, public good and common sense, in which religion had been expelled from the public space (Hurd 2005:19).

'The Government understands how much hurt and anxiety that book has caused, and we also understand that insults, particularly to a deeply held faith, are not easily forgotten or forgiven. But we now have an opportunity to take stock. The single most important guiding principle as we move forward must be the aim of full participation in our society by Muslim and other ethnic minority groups.

Patten personalizes the Government as 'we', but avoids the direct reference of 'you', disembodied his addressees and therefore the ratification of their particular grievance. In this way, he establishes his position to define the subject as well as to judge it from a position of power – a point made in his last sentence in which moving forward is defined by full participation in 'our' society.. In employing the word 'understand', he extends paternal empathy; yet, by generalizing the 'hurt' across all religious belief, he fails to acknowledge the actual 'insult' while absolving the government of any further need for engagement. Patten sidesteps any language of solidarity that might suggest a willingness to negotiate or otherwise recognize the essence of the 'other's' view. This denial of the specific trauma is itself a political act (Fierke 2004:481). Despite the official language he uses, the government's entrenchment is implicated in an emotionalized perspective. Patten's intent is not to assuage Muslim concerns, but English ones; he therefore moves on to 'take stock' and confirm that the 'single most important guiding principle' is to confirm the myth of Britain's ability to absorb the diversity of others. Yet they are now specific others, in particular, those who have:

‘added to Britain’s wealth of culture and tradition. Many have come with values that can only be admired, such as firm faith; a commitment to family life; a belief in hard work and enterprise; respect for law and a will to succeed. To their credit, they have kept those values as the core of their life in Britain, too.’

Here Patten echoes Arnold, highlighting cultural inclusion while fencing off the political (Dodd 1986:12-13). He goes on to elucidate how Muslims must behave if ‘they are to make the most of their lives and opportunities as British citizens’. In this, there is the veiled accusation that if they do not conform, they are not ‘real’ British citizens (and thus, excluded), a point he makes in a different guise by extolling, toward the end of the letter, those Muslims who apologized for unacceptable Muslim conduct in response to the Rushdie Affair. The letter ends by briefly stating that *The Satanic Verses* cannot be banned, ‘nor would we seek or want such power’, as that would not be ‘British’ – or moral. His discourse instantiates British Muslims as dependent on British culture for their identity, and unable to exercise influence on either its basic tenets, such as freedom of expression, or the fate of its cultural artifacts, which in this case, included *The Satanic Verses*.

Two weeks later, ‘On Being British’ (Patten, Home Office 1989) revealed that the Government was unconvinced that the dislocation of identity had been sufficiently sutured by Patten’s previous statement. Further motivation to action around ‘core’ British values was necessary to decontaminate the environment of its threatening qualities (Post 1986: 677-9). In this diminutive manifesto, there is no mention of *The Satanic Verses*. Instead, the leadership focuses on strengthening national identity as a security measure against anti-Rushdie Muslims’ affront to British credibility. Attempting again to re-establish ‘order’, the directives underscore appropriate behaviour:

...[Participation] includes playing one’s part in the economy, playing one’s part as a neighbour, making a contribution which goes beyond one’s own family or indeed community.

In effect, Patten was acting consistently with the tradition articulated by Gamble of conceiving security as extending beyond external defense to include the British way of life and ‘the preservation of moral health throughout society’ (2003:7). In presenting British society in these terms, he articulated the meaning of a society whose tolerance and

embrace of diversity justified its shock and innocent suffering at the Muslim imputation of intolerance, while exonerating it of intent to harm.

### **Victimization**

The naming of Muslims as fundamentalist inscribed the behaviours of those within the Islamic community as militant, since, 'it is precisely militancy which characterizes Western media coverage of fundamentalism' (Kuortti 1997:37). This enabled the representation of Muslim responses as violent and dangerous, and British society as the victim (Asad 1993:239). Perceptions of innocence and victimization, however, are discursive mechanisms of social discipline, and 'prepare the way for justifying any act of retaliation' (Morrow 2003:29). Victimization was perceived in terms of betrayal, Britain's welcome of other peoples to its shores being constructed as having been taken advantage of. Thus Roy Jenkins, the main architect of the Race Relations Act of 1976 wrote in *The Independent* on March 4, 1989, 'We might have been more cautious about allowing the creation in the 1950s of a substantial Muslim community here.' The guilt (internalized shame) this implies contributed to the discourse of blame surrounding Muslim rhetoric and actions throughout the Affair, the latter promoted as productive of violence, and necessitating further fencing off of the Muslim community as a periphery of the British centre.

The discursive economy of privileging violence to enflame the emotional landscape is highlighted in Cottle's analysis of a television news report on an anti-Rushdie demonstration, in which a flag burning, and a tussle among two men in the crowd were highlighted (in Cottle's view, unfairly) without noting that they were single incidents in an otherwise peaceful rally. 'The close-up on the faces and shoulders of the disputants conveys the impression that the wider crowd was itself similarly locked in dispute, despite the fact that this was an isolated, and highly insignificant, incident at the fringe of the loosely assembled demonstrators' (1991:51). In this, by no means isolated instance, British tolerance was contrasted with Muslim violence, enabling emotionalized representations that figured the Affair as a conflict in which Muslims were engaging in aggression, intimidation, and lawlessness against the British social body. Not surprisingly, this passionate discourse fed off itself in that it contributed to a closing of

ranks among British Muslims themselves, creating perceptions among their separate communities of a need for solidarity in the face of their own sense of endangerment. This in turn contributed to the vicious circle of political strife within the media and among the chattering classes regarding the various Muslim groupings as constituting one undifferentiated and increasingly endangering community.

Constructions of victimization became most clearly evident in reactions to the Bradford book burning, and to the Khomeini *fatwa*. The discourses surrounding these two events linked British Muslim communities to worldwide political Islam, confirming their 'otherness' in the way both were articulated, and in the threat they were mutually perceived to represent to the British self.

#### *The Bradford Book Burning*

Demonstrations by Muslim groups calling for the withdrawal and banning of the *Satanic Verses* had failed to gain the attention of the media or the government, or in any substantial way to further the cause. Burning the book was designed to change that position. The Bradford incident in effect, pitted 'freedom of expression' against 'the freedom to blaspheme' in a ritual that came to represent the iconic quality for each camp of the sacredness of the word—the artist's text on the one hand, the Qoranic text on the other. In essence, the Bradford book burning implicated freedom of expression and blasphemy as the same thing, passionately produced in opposite ways by opposing sides. The antagonism and mutual efforts to shame the other revealed how to each, their text was sacred, and represented a symbol of identity that was being victimized as a political act (Kuortti 1997:90).

The attempts by the Muslim community to have the courts ban *The Satanic Verses* on the basis of blasphemy, and thereafter, to have the blasphemy law in Britain broadened to include Islam, were both unsuccessful attempts to incorporate an expansion of religious tolerance, and its definition of the sacred, and thereby to obtain acknowledgement of the shame felt by Muslims within Britain at the *Verses*' publication (Ahsan and Kidwai, eds, 1991:56). The construction of Rushdie's blasphemy as not against God (for God could never be damaged), but against the Muslim community, implicated that community's sense of public transgression as being ignored. This



paralleled the feelings expressed within the liberal discourse at the Muslim response. Yet, instead of uniting them, the similarities divided them, and the texts of both government and media were dominated by emotionally driven rhetoric that appeared to privilege inclusion within the construction of democracy while in fact affecting practices of exclusion, and thereby furthered the injury to the social bonds. As *The New Republic* in the United States put it, echoing liberal British sentiments, ‘Blasphemy is nothing to be ashamed about. It is a birth pang of democracy’ (quote in Kuorrti 1997:125).

This position notwithstanding, when the Bradford book burning took place, attacking objects of literary value was not discursively portrayed by the liberals as a ‘birth-pang of democracy’, but instead, emotionally apprehended as a violation of democracy’s freedoms. Producing widespread outrage, it was perceived to anticipate Ray Bradbury’s story ‘Fahrenheit 451’ in which book burning symbolized the end of civilization. Protecting ‘civilization’ – through democratic privilege on the one side, religious dignity on the other - was thus played out in the discourses of both sides in a politics of strife.

#### *The Khomeini fatwa*

Into the cauldron of this already emotionalized politics came Ayatollah Khomeini’s *fatwa*. Indelibly linking representational practices toward the British Muslim to Muslims abroad, it internationalized the Affair. Author Bikhu Parekh, revealing his own complex view of the matter, describes the *fatwa*’s cascading discursive effect:

‘It was depressing to note how the legitimate anger against the Ayatollah’s murderous interpretation and outrageous Muslim support for it escalated step by even sillier step to a wholly mindless anger against all *Bradford* Muslims, then against all *British* Muslims, then against all *Muslims*, and ultimately, against *Islam* itself.’ (1990:79, emphasis in original).

The *fatwa* was issued against Rushdie and his publishers on the basis of their having published *The Satanic Verses* ‘in opposition to Islam’.

‘I call on all zealous Muslims to execute them quickly, wherever they find them, so that no one will dare to insult the Islamic sanctions.’

‘In addition, anyone who has access to the author of the book, but does not possess the power to execute him, should refer him to the people so that he may be punished for his actions.’ (Khomeini, Iran State Radio)

The *fatwa* was issued at the end of a year and a half in which a climate of recriminations and death had characterized relations between Iran, the US and the UK. On July 1988, an Iran Air flight carrying 270 pilgrims to Mecca had been shot down by an American navy ship, the *USS Vincennes*, over the Persian Gulf. The US claimed the flight was mistakenly identified as an attack plane, and President Reagan promised to pay compensation. But compensation was never paid, prompting Khomeini to issue a *fatwa* promising the skies would 'rain blood' and offering \$10 million to anyone who could bring 'justice to Iran'. Five months later on 21 December 1988, the Lockerbie disaster occurred, and at the time of the publication of the *Satanic Verses*, the Scottish police considered the prime suspect to be a Palestinian group backed by Iran (Miles 2007:8). The *fatwa* against Rushdie can therefore be seen to have taken place within a context of *fatwas*, the first carrying a significant bounty, and which reflected Iran's perception that the West was attacking it, and the larger Muslim *ummah* both militarily and culturally. This message was repeated in speeches by various other Iranian leaders, including Speaker of the House Hashemi Rafsanjani and President Ali Khamenei, the latter stating, at Friday Prayer the day after the Rushdie *fatwa*.

'We Muslims should be as wary of the enemy's cultural front as we are of the enemy's military front. As the enemy's attack on our frontiers brings us into action, the enemy's attack on our cultural frontiers should evoke a reaction from us at least to do the same' (BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, 20/2/1989, from Tehran Home Service, 17/2/1989.).

Khomeini's *fatwa* evoked an immediate response from the British government, which imputed it, like much of the media and other liberal commentary, as demanding Rushdie's assassination, no matter where he was located. On February 20, Whitehall withdrew its diplomatic personnel from Tehran and demanded the withdrawal of Iranian representatives from London. Many Muslim intellectuals, such as Parekh considered the *fatwa* as bloodthirsty and inappropriate, and as a setback to reasonable attempts to attain redress for valid grievances. Although, in rejecting the *fatwa*, this group appeared ideationally similar to British liberals, the distinction in their perceptions was nonetheless critical. For the latter, represented by Harold Pinter and other writers in a letter to Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, the *fatwa* was interpreted as one more example of a

barbarous regime acting in the name of a religion whose tenets too easily accommodated violent behaviour (*The Guardian*, 16/2/1989). Further, in a manner similar to that in which the American public had taken the plight of the hostages as their own private suffering, political and intellectual society took Rushdie's martyrdom as its own – and all of Britain's. Anthony Burgess, in an article entitled 'Islam's Gangster Tactics' wrote: 'To order outraged sons of the prophet to kill him and the directors of Penguin Books on British soil is tantamount to a *jihad*. It is a declaration of war on citizens of a free country and as such, it is a political act.' (*The Independent*, 16/2/1989). Burgess' representation of Iran's political involvement as a *jihad* to be carried out on British soil and as a declaration of war on British citizens, was contingent on already emotionalized public perceptions.

The representation that the edict applied to British citizenry in general rather than to a single author, and that it was to be carried out inside Britain was fanned by Foreign Secretary Sir Geoffrey Howe:

'[N]obody has the right to incite people to violence on British soil or against British citizens...Ayatollah Khomeini's statement is totally unacceptable.'  
(*The Independent* 17/2/1989).

Howe represented Khomeini as impinging on British laws, and intervening in the law and order of another country. This reflected a two-prong debate that continues until today. It is critical for our purposes to understand how the *fatwa* was interpreted since the representational practices, and the emotionalized meanings and presuppositions upon which they were based, reveal a discursive economy of political passion, which homogenized and hegemonized the multiplicity of voices engaged in the Affair as the international and domestic threats merged. The emotionality of the discourse dominated decision-making and policy construction by excluding alternative identities. Thus, the internal Muslim community was linked to the external, and seen as supporting or even carrying out Khomeini's project, rather than seen as integral to British society, and, despite its various views on *The Satanic Verses*, as a bulwark against the *fatwa*. What was ignored, in what were already becoming institutionalized practices, was the immediate response of the British Muslim community. Dr. Mughram Ali Al-Ghamdi,

chairman of the UK Action Committee on Islamic Affairs, for example, publicly stated within the week that

‘We do not know what the Ayatollah has actually said. But we are a minority in this country and we intend to fully abide by the law. We are not above the law. We do not condone violence of any kind by anybody under any pretext’ (quote in *New Life*, 17 /2/1989).

This was paralleled by many others, who argued forcibly *against* the fatwa, while arguing *for* the banning of the *Satanic Verses*. Rushdie was rushed into hiding on the premise that his life was endangered by Iran, a pragmatic act in response to what was deemed the unpredictability of Iran’s regime; but equally, an act of political passion to securitize the Affair for the sake of securitizing Britain’s own identity. To accomplish this took a reading of Khomeini’s text at its most dangerous, denying its contingency and thus turning the Rushdie Affair into an issue of national security.

The two questions that continue to bedevil and are contingent in the issue of the *fatwa* are first, whether it pertained outside the *ummah*, that is, in the *Dar-al Harb*, since traditionally Islamic law is recognized to apply only up to the borders of official Shari’a legal rule (for discussions see Fischer and Abedi 1990:398-9; B. Lewis 1991); and second, whether Khomeini abrogated Shari’a law by declaring a death sentence without first having a trial. In regards to the first, Pargeter has (re)presented in scholarly terms support for Howe’s view, arguing it was an attempt by Khomeini to incorporate the Muslim enclaves of Britain into the *Dar-al Islam*, as much for political gain against similar attempts by Saudi Arabia, as for cultural hegemony. She quotes Islamic scholar Giles Kepel to back up her thesis: ‘Khomeini was demonstrating that, for him, the universal mission of Islam did not stop at national frontiers, but included populations who had emigrated to Europe and who were seen as Islamic enclaves, the bridgeheads of the Muslim nation’ (Kepel 1994:33,39; quote in Pargeter 2008:10).

This reading suggests that Khomeini’s imagined community included the Islamic enclaves of Britain, yet offers no discussion concerning the crucial fact that Shari’a law was not practiced in those enclaves, and therefore, that there was legal ambiguity (in Islamic practice) of their being constituted as any different than the rest of Britain. Further, the message was directed not to British Muslims specifically, but to all Muslims.

implicating the carrying out of the sentence as contingent on various options presented in the *fatwa*.

Khomeini calls on ‘all zealous Muslims to execute them [Rushdie and the publishers] wherever they find them...’ which constituted the primary focus of interpretation by those in the West. However, Khomeini adds a second crucial option: ‘In addition, anyone who has access to the author of the book, *but does not possess the power to execute him*, should refer him to the people’ (Tehran Radio, emphasis mine). In this sentence, Khomeini implies that there are those who do not have the option to carry out the *fatwa*, because they live outside the *ummah*. These he directs to hand Rushdie over to ‘the people’, that is, the Muslim community, to be punished. One option, certainly, was that he was suggesting Rushdie be kidnapped and brought to the *Dar-al Islam*. Another, however, was that the Muslim community inside Britain would have to decide on his fate - the banning of his book and a public apology being within the realm of possibility for resolution (Fischer and Abedi 1990:398). These considerations were never clarified nor even made thinkable; neither were they entertained by a government having already embarked on a discourse that through a politics of passion separated rather than united the communities of Muslims from other Britons. Yet, these possibilities suggest an alternative set of responses equally resonant within the British liberal tradition, but which were sidelined, even at a moment when a reassigning of ambassadors was being discussed for the first time in 10 years (a project the *fatwa* brought to a summary halt) (Joffe 1991:100). Producing Khomeini as threatening to aggress British territory and more generally, its citizenry, in language more commonly utilized toward an enemy in war, reflected how Britain had produced its own identity as endangered (Kepel 1994:39). A range of policy options failed to be considered because they were not suggestible – the emotionality involved making them ‘bad politics’.

The representation by scholars almost 20 years after the *fatwa* that Khomeini’s intention was to reach out to British Muslims and incite them to assassination or kidnapping, or try Rushdie inside Britain on ‘Muslim’ territory, points to the ongoing pull of political passion. The necessity of adopting and perpetrating this most threatening of readings suggests the fragility of British identity security. It effectively implicated the enemy outside sowing and inciting evil inside via a Trojan Horse effect, which rendered

any frontier porous and unsafe, and which risked both the core and the periphery. Ensuring that Rushdie remained in hiding under guard served the government as a way to publicly remind that the borders in this case had already been confined to their very lowest possible denominator: his liberty—and that of Britain—could be maintained only through imprisonment. Thus, ‘Rushdie is a modern martyr of secular liberty and tolerance’ Hugo Young wrote in *The Guardian* (27/2/1989). In this, their own trial with Khomeini, Britons could viscerally understand the public/private pain of the Americans in the course of the hostage crisis, the only difference being that in Britain, the hostage remained at home.

The second point, whether Khomeini was insisting on assassination outside the Islamic legal requirement of a trial, was more heavily discussed within the Islamic community (worldwide) than in the West. In Shar’ia law, the term ‘sentence’ does not easily translate, and is as commonly used to refer to an accusation as a sentencing (Yapp, *The Independent* 22/2/1989). Thus, the ambiguity of Khomeini’s term sparked debate among Muslim jurists, and contributed to the fact that no countering *fatwa* was issued by another jurist even among those communities (including Saudi Arabia), which publicly disclaimed the death penalty for Rushdie (*The Guardian*, 17/3/1989). A close reading of the *fatwa* does not reveal any proscription against a trial, and there is no reason to believe that the *fatwa* would purport to circumvent Islamic law, although these points were little discussed in the media frenzy that took place after the *fatwa* was issued (for an exception, see Yapp, *The Independent* 15/3/1989). More common was the presumption that Khomeini had transgressed Islamic law as much as British law, a position that was rapidly naturalized within the representational practices of seeing Khomeini and his regime as bloodthirsty and irresponsibly mixing religion with politics, and which enabled him to be apprehended as equally willing to break his own law, as any other—or alternatively, as too ignorant of the law, or too brazen, to know or care about its restrictions (Fischer and Abedi 1990:399). Harvey Morris in *The Independent* of February 16, 1989 implicates, through the use of sarcasm, the inferiority of such leadership by describing Khomeini not as a man of laws, but a master of artifice: ‘Ayatollah Khomeini’s sentence of death of Salman Rushdie yesterday emerged as yet another revolutionary *coup de theatre* by the 86-year-old founder of the Islamic

Republic'. In this same vein, the common misrepresentation that Khomeini himself had offered a bribe for Rushdie's death imputed to him the image of a crazed dictator: '£1,500,000 TO KILL HIM—by order of that Mad Mullah', for example, was the headline of the *Daily Mirror* on the same day.

This alternative analysis of the *fatwa*'s wording is offered here not with the intent to suggest that the *fatwa* should be perceived in one way or another, but to underscore that its interpretations are contingent and it remains a site of contestation. 'Theatre', 'madness', and 'sentence of death' served (as did many other tropes used at the time) to implicate Iran's Islamic regime as medieval and clownish, an interventionist danger to be contained and a potential contaminant of Western society that cannot escape such victimization even on home territory. Presuppositions about Khomeini and Iran's Islamic approach to law, combined with the politics of strife that characterized the domestic relationship with British Muslims wanting to ban the *Satanic Verses*, can be seen to have made thinkable a radical reading of the *fatwa*. Further, this positioned Britain as being Iran's opposite, the exemplary of the laic, modern and reasonable world.

Yet, Pipes (and others) angrily observed it was Iran, not Britain, that first severed relations on March 7, 1989. Though Foreign Secretary Howe described Iran as 'a deplorable regime', clearly distinguishing between Britain's system and Iran's, the precariousness of that distinction was confounded by the fears that there were dangerous linkages between Britain's Muslim community and the wider world, bringing into question the purity of the British enclosure, and its national imaginary as a culture able to absorb others without endangering itself. One result of the Affair was the use of a politics of strife to divide and isolate the two parts of society, rather than a politics of love to affirm and recognize domestic Muslim sentiment against the *fatwa* for the purpose of cementing the two. This naturalized practices of Islamophobia in both the media and the public, and once launched as appropriate, Islamophobia ensured the spiral of damage to the social bonds would continue (Poole 2000: 158)

The re-affirmation of Britain as a democratic society on the international stage was invoked against Iran as a rogue, despite Britain's inability to address or resolve its own Muslim community's concerns over fundamental aspects of democratic meaning and practice at home. In this process, Britain's foreign policy discourse reprised colonial

rhetoric, mixing it with elements of the American muscular narrative toward Muslim fundamentalism. This disguised the shame of its domestic conflict by demonizing Iran.

### **Hegemonizing the Anglo-American discourse**

*The Satanic Verses* Affair was a decisive moment for Britain. The need to re-present and re-instantiate its identity in the face of a linked domestic and international threat from political Muslim activism, served to re-internationalize its social purpose at the very juncture at which the Cold War was ending and its position between America and Europe was being re-evaluated. The response of Europe to the Rushdie Affair was supportive—the EU nations had withdrawn their diplomatic representatives from Iran when Britain did, and emotionalized statements from their respective governments and media helped mobilize public reaction, reifying the historical Muslim/European experience and condemning the blindness of current Muslim politics (Hafez 2002). Yet, it was the US, which had most personally suffered socio-political trauma at the hands of Iran, that was perceived as most in tune with British sentiments. What's more, the activism on both sides of the Rushdie Affair in the US had been high, and at times more violent than even in the UK. Official US response exceeded that of most EU states, with condemnation by the Senate and statements by the president and members of Congress (Pipes 1990:156). Drawing on similar constructions of public suffering and private pain, both Washington and London supported and promoted a discursive parallelism that arose out of commonalities in their representations of self, and the victimization they felt from a common enemy. Both constituted the post-Cold War geography as the breaching of Western security by the Muslim adversary that now combined both Shia and Sunni variants.

By the time of the Rushdie Affair, Britain's position in the world was being discursively re-oriented, and though no longer able to represent itself as the pivot of an empire, the special civilizational role of 'Englishness' was inscribed through its partnership and military support of the US (Dumbrell 2006; Gamble 2003:80, 84-45). Thatcher's May 1989 speech to the 1922 Committee, delivered a fortnight after Patten's note 'On Englishness', is explicit: 'A strong economic base has let *Britain stand tall* in the world again and we became an important part of the unfolding future of east-west



relations. It used to be said Britain had lost an Empire—and not found a role. We have now.’ (emphasis in original). A decade later, her expansion on Churchill’s concept of English-speaking supremacy, reflected the ongoing discourse of democracy and freedom as specifically an Anglo-Saxon project:

Moreover, Britain enjoys another advantage, namely that we're not just European. We are part of the Anglo-Saxon world, whose language alone is global, whose democratic institutions alone have proved enduring, and whose leader, America, alone can claim to be a superpower.

The freedom we take for granted today was created and upheld by the English speaking peoples. (Thatcher 1999: ‘Speech to International Free Enterprise Dinner’, 20 April)

As the domestic and international discourses of the Rushdie Affair unfurled, the representation of Iran and political Islam as threats to British identity, and the shared Anglo-American mission of promoting a superior world based on secular democracy and the free exchange of goods and services, re-inscribed significations of endangerment. Until then, figurations of the rise of Islamic politics in the Middle East had lacked a deep emotional component for Britain, being instead, representations of upheaval in a sphere that Britain had handed over to the US in 1966 (and even earlier, in 1956, in Iran). The Rushdie Affair, combined with the simultaneous holding of British hostages in Lebanon by Iranian-backed Muslim terrorists, changed this. Now, in producing its society as victimized and yet innocent at the hands of a domestic Muslim community linked to foreign Islamic militancy, the British/Muslim relationship became troubled through political passion, imbuing a discourse of political strife with stridency, and licensing the need for retribution. Thus, the entailments of Britain’s own identity re-instantiated the boundary between the good which was England and the evil of Islamic extremism, a representation of ‘other’ that enabled it on its own terms to share common cause with its greatest and closest ally, the US.

The passion unleashed by the Affair generalized responses of affront, both in public opinion and policy prescription. This can be observed in the increasing usage, once the *fatwa* had been issued, of ‘terrorism’ as a British security issue, a term previously utilized primarily for the IRA in Northern Ireland (O’Sullivan 1986:122). Hippler sees the ideology of Islamic threat having become the site of ‘culturally defined racism’, the images used producing ‘the psychological prerequisites to justify military

action if necessary' (2000:158). 'Rogue states are more difficult to control' stated Mrs. Thatcher. 'Islamic militancy threatens terrorism and instability.' (Free Enterprise Dinner Speech 20/4/1999).

When, within days of the *fatwa*, Rushdie issued a semi-apology for the pain he had caused Muslims (though refraining from withdrawing the book), *The Observer* summed up the shame many liberals feared: 'The very worst result of Mr. Rushdie's statement... would be if it were to give the impression that the fundamentalists had somehow won this one, and brought the West and its artists to its knees' (19/2. 1989:14). Using terms such as 'winning' and 'losing' pit the 'West' against 'fundamentalists' (whether at home or abroad), suggesting there was no currency of exchange; negotiating with the victimizer had become the equivalent of negotiating with a terrorist, and the relationship one of complete isolation.

The translation of this discourse into the international gained traction as relations between Tehran and London deteriorated and as policymakers and the media in the US heightened the rhetorical stakes. Noted R.J. Hollingdale in *The Guardian*: 'there is really no such thing as state terrorism: a hostile act by a state is an act of war' ('Iran Steps Beyond Terrorism', 12/2/1989). Meanwhile, the Senate condemned Khomeini's threat as 'state-sponsored terrorism' and President George Bush stated that the US would hold Tehran responsible for attacks 'against American interests' (quote in Pipes 1990:155). In England, the sense of terror at the invasion of fundamental British rights was much the same. When Labour MP Roy Hattersley, stated at the end of a speech that, 'A free society does not ban books. Nor does it allow writers and publishers to be blackmailed or intimidated,' nonetheless added that, likewise, in a free society 'the Muslim community must be allowed to do what it likes to do as long as the choice it makes is not damaging to the community as a whole,' he was met by scathing denunciations, including one by E. Pearce: 'The Hattersley faction of the Labour party has taken up a position at once illiberal, repressive and abjectly deferential to a bunch of Islamic clergy firmly planted in the 15<sup>th</sup> century' (quotes in Kuortti 1997:19). Repressed shame, translated into withering denial of the other, ensured monologism would preclude any mediation. Thatcher's statement delivered to the Commonwealth Summit in October 1989, recasts this view as a prescription against policy complacency:

‘There is a tendency to assume...that liberal democracy has comprehensively defeated Marxism-Leninism and there will in future be no other ideological challenge to it. That would be a very rash assumption when one considers the continuing power of nationalist, authoritarian and extreme religious fundamentalist ideas.’ (margaretthatcher.org/speeches)

The rhetorical strategy here leaves open the possibility of further conflict with nationalist, authoritarian and extreme religious fundamentalist ideas, identifying them—rather than familiar third-world dictatorships or Chinese-style totalitarianism as the most serious threats to liberal democracy. As Khomeini earlier pointed out, it was ‘ideas’ that had become the domain of identity endangerment, rendering the ‘other’ an existential threat. This is not to suggest that the nature of British foreign policy made an abrupt shift toward the securitization of Islamic fundamentalism, but that the representational practices that had evolved established the conditions of possibility for heightened sensibility toward the Islamic other, and a construction of identity that, by virtue of the antagonisms established by the Affair, could instantiate and discipline clear borderlines between the liberal us and the illiberal, fundamentalist Muslim them. As discourse theoreticians Laclau and Mouffe most simply define it, identity blockage occurs when ‘the presence of [an] Other prevents me from being totally myself’ (quote in Howarth et al. 2002:10). Radical political Islamic practices came to be represented both in American and British discourses as preventing either from being themselves, or to project themselves to others. Fundamentalist Islamic values and its universalist claim to law and right community, were passionately enframed as blocking Western, and more specifically, Anglo-Saxon identity, a derailment understood not just as hostility to democracy, but as tragically destructive to human aspirations everywhere and thus, morally evil.

**Conclusion**

Iran's was one of the great revolutions of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and inspired important work in reconceptualizing classic understandings not only of internal political cataclysm, but of relations between states (Foucault 1979; Ganji 2006; Mirsepassi 2000; Skocpol 1994: chapter 10; Selikar 2000). Existing explanations (whether realist, liberal or constructivist) remain unsatisfactory, however for understanding the prolonged animosity in the relationships that evolved out of the revolution, the impact on Western democratic claims, and the demonization of radical Islam. This study has attempted to better comprehend these issues by exploring through structured study the role of motivated bias in state policy responses. Emotions became the site of investigation as a result of a process of deduction. Motivations, as understood by liberal theorists, are explained in terms of resources and restraints, be they material or moral (Moravcsik 1997). Yet, to explain the ongoing hostility characterizing the Anglo-American relationship with Iran in terms of such restraints seems inadequate to account for the preferences adopted by both sides. Realist descriptions of state behaviour based on power, self-help and material threat identification likewise offered but a partial picture, as the acrimony between Iran and the West was not material but primarily existential. Geo-strategic and energy imperatives would seem sufficiently compelling to have relieved the strains between them; instead, the relationship has worsened over the course of 30 years, as Iran has successively been condemned as a pariah, enemy (of Saddam, who was then conceived of as a friend of the West), international state terrorist, and, finally, member of the Axis of Evil.

Further, moves by Iran, which internally, through elections, have brought a range of presidents into (and out of) power, and externally, re-integrated it regionally and within the larger association of Islamic and Central Asian states, have had little impact on the discourses of successive British and American administrations (with the exception of the brief thaw in tensions in 1999 under US President Bill Clinton), suggesting the threat Iran represents is not structural.

Normative explanations likewise are unsatisfying. The practices and meanings of the identity roles adopted by the US and Britain, in which they perceive themselves at the

leading edge of the Western democracy project, did not easily accommodate the rejection of an oil-rich nation overthrowing a dictatorship, and instituting a system of civic governance (Wendt 1992). Surely, the Anglo-American tradition includes relationships and democracy promotion with states whose leaders and oppositions objectively were at least the equal of Iran's in terms of human rights abuse and authoritarianism, but whose resources and geo-political positioning mitigated such concerns (as, for example, Saudi Arabia, and Algeria)? What then distinguished Iran, and made it so irretrievably 'other'?

Normative analysis, in fact, is too dispassionate to offer a full explanation. Iran's relationship with the West is a study of passion. It was filled with Anglo-American rage at Iran's spurning of what the West valued most – its universalist ideals, which included the vaunted altruistic intent by Americans and Britons to share what they considered the civilizing principles of democracy, modernization, and liberal capitalism within a framework of Western security. It seethed with the self-righteousness of the condemned – and the condemning; it became electrified in the public mind by the media theatre of the hostage crisis and conflagrations of the Rushdie Affair; and it resonated with the colourful but biting language of mutual demonization.

Examining passion as a contributory factor therefore appeared worthwhile, and normative modes of analysis offered useful tools to study emotionalism in policy construction. These tools include: concepts of identity politics; an anti-foundationalist perspective; the enabling of agency; and importantly, discourse as a means to highlight parts of language and meaning, while enabling the parts to be integrated into an understanding of the whole over time, and vice versa.

Once focused on, it became clear that emotions contributed not just to Anglo-American relations with Iran, but were present in all international relations, though certainly not always in passionate ways (Bleiker and Hutchison 2008; Mercer 2005). By being both a motivator and partner of reason, emotions are, like norms, constants in the structuring of decision-making (Crawford 2000). Yet, they are more fluid than norms, more physical, and, unlike norms, historically represented as something to keep in check (Marcus 2003; Ross 2005). Thus, the challenge was how to track them in a way sufficiently rigorous to be useful? Taking my cue from work done by Scheff and Retzinger (1991) in the sociological field, but working in the anarchic territory of world

politics already staked out by Adler and Barnett (1998); Bially-Mattern (2005), Coole (2005; 2007), Crawford (2000), Doty (1996), Fierke (2004), Guillaume (2002), Jervis (1976, 1985), Larson (1989), Lebow (1981) and others who have pursued behavioural, psychological, cognitive, and corporeal aspects in the politics of international relations. I have used shame and pride as the most reflexive emotions in order to calibrate relations between closely communicating states over time. How shame is acknowledged or dismissed, and where on the cycle of 'shame begetting shame', or 'solidarity begetting solidarity' any given relationship finds itself, provides crucial insight into the emotions that inform the behaviour of states. Pride and shame reflect identity, and its important underpinning of norms that compose a state's imaginary of self. The transgression of those norms through shame threatens identity, and it is identity insecurity that motivates states to establish security communities and special relationships.

In examining the behaviour of states in closely knit relationships in terms of shame or pride, it emerged, however, that unacknowledged shame or false pride was more prevalent in 'happy' settings than might otherwise be expected. This was revealing, as it raised the spectre of special relationships (and security communities) that are not purely felicitous, but instead, can be suffocating or alienating, regardless of whether the involved states regard them as such. This re-conceptualizes the logic of special relationships. Political love – a close relationship of choice - may in fact be so engulfing as to be threatening, despite the patina of we-ness and mutual embrace. Additionally, a new category of special relationship, political strife, reveals an insecure community, in which two (or more) states are bonded, not out of choice, but out of a reflexive response to the normative threat represented by the other, the need for constant vigilance and self-protection constituting a relationship of isolation (Scheff and Retzinger 1991:15).

This opens a range of possibilities for understanding preferences, bargaining and threat-perception between states engaged in relationships with each other that are more constraining than beneficent. This, it can be argued, still fits the liberal construct of 'restraint'. However, observing the shame spiral in patterns of discourse reveals that the emotional dimension – that partner of reason - is, in situations of identity threat, heightened, and hence, more salient, more passionate, than in balanced relationships, and more likely, therefore, to play an influential role in the decision-making processes. Taken

cumulatively, this suggests the conditions of possibility for a reification of emotionalized policies in state practices. Stable relationships (or, in fact, any relationships where identity security has a low threat threshold) have a low emotionalized register: 'insecure' relationships have high emotionalized registers. These latter develop patterns of emotionalized decision-making toward the other state (or states) which can become normalized, and though often narcissistic and monological, nonetheless, respond reflexively to the emotionalized content in the responses of the other (Bakhtin 1981; Campbell 1998; Guillaume 2002).

Applying this theory and method to the case of the Anglo-American encounter with Iran, several important findings emerged. First, the US and Britain both established a special relationship of political love with the Shah, which proved engulfing for all three. The Anglo-American discourse passionately constructed the Shah as a model son of the West, adopting, without independent intelligence corroboration, his narrative of Iran as a stable, modernizing, secularizing state, and of the opposition as minor, anti-West, and terrorist (Bill 1988; Sick 1985; Milani 1994). 'Pride' in the Shah, and their own roles in his development plans, blinded – through hubris – both Washington and London to the forces of oncoming revolution, its Islamic framework, and the deep hatred of the Iranian majority toward the Shah (Keddie 1981, 1987; Zunes 2003a, 2003b). The US vesting in political love for the 'Shah-as-Iran' discursively closed off possibilities for Washington to consider alternatives to him as his position weakened. Additionally, the shame of Khomeini's rejection not only of the Shah, but of Anglo-American involvement in Iran, their Western constructions of democracy and the secularism of governance, was projected as threatening. An emotionalized Anglo-American discourse, therefore, rejected the leaders and purposes of the revolution as benighted and treacherous, while denying wrongdoing by the Shah or their own contribution to his downfall.

Second, ongoing constructions of political love toward the Shah, rationalized, for example, in terms of honourable behaviour towards America's friends, denied that his clerical adversaries were attempting to construct a democratic system, and therefore, despite Iran's holding of a referendum, the drawing up of a constitution, and the seating of an elected parliament, the US failed to formally recognize the Islamic Republic. Likewise, emotionalized discourses ignored Iranian fears that continuing US support for

the Shah could imply intervention along the same lines as had occurred in 1953 with the overthrow of Mohammad Mossadeq. Passionate constructions based on impaired historical memory of that previous era, and on exaggerated and over-simplified heuristics of the clerical leadership as incompetent and naive, enabled the US to admit the Shah into its territory out of false pride that its power was such that it did not need to acknowledge the repeated concerns or warnings of the Iranian government. This was an expression of political strife that shamed Iran, and in turn, exposed the US to the next sequence in the spiral of alienation, which took the form of hostage taking (Scheff and Retzinger 1991:68-69).

Third, the passionate construction of the US as the innocent victim in the hostage affair, outside any reference to past Iran-American relations, inspired an emotionalized narrative of public domestic suffering, in which all America was perceived as held hostage, and Iran as barbarous and in the wrong. US failure to acknowledge Iran's own perceptions of victimization at the hands of the Shah, or the effect of past Anglo-American practices, while Iran's own shame was projected as anger and condemnation of the US, perpetuated the recurring loop of mutualized disrespect and discursive attack, which reflected continuing social bonding in a relationship of isolation (ibid).

Fourth, the release of the hostages in a deal that failed to necessitate any acknowledgement of the others' grievances perpetuated the spiral of shaming in reified policy orientations. Continuously threatened by Iran's adoption and aggressive export of an alternative (Islamic) doctrine of universalist ideals, the new administration of Ronald Reagan adopted a reactive Iran policy based on a politics of strife (continuous suspicion, anger, fear, distrust) and constructed (Shia) Islamic terrorism as linked and on a par with totalitarian violence (Kirkpatrick 1984). This enabled the formulation of Iran as the greater danger in the Iran-Iraq war, and fuelled the mobilization of the First War on Terrorism as a mechanism of identity security. This passionate construction of Iran helped blind the administration to forces of Islamic radicalism in the Sunni communities, enabling alliances in Afghanistan, for example, that would have serious consequences for American interests.

Fifth, the emotionalized grammar, which constructed Islamism as a threat to Western norms and practices of human rights, and Iran as a rogue and instigator of state-



sponsored terrorism against the West, was absorbed into the liberal British discourse in its own encounter with Iran and radical Islam during the Salman Rushdie Affair. Revealing the tensions that existed in the relationship of engulfment between the Muslim communities and the British social body, the Affair prompted an emotionalized discourse contingent on re-securing the British imaginary of self as a tolerant society. In the course of privileging 'core British values', the spiral of shame was perpetuated as the grievances of the anti-Rushdie factions were denied both domestically and internationally, a process which linked internal Muslim communities to external ones and produced an isolating relationship with Iran. In this way, passionate constructions of Iran and Islamic political radicalism were shared within a re-energized Anglo-American discourse, in which each state had separately produced an encounter with the Islamic Republic as bruising and endangering.

Sixth, this mutualized, if independently sourced discourse, served to reify emotionalized policy prescriptions as appropriate and warranted. Representations of bad faith and suspicious behaviour on the part of the 'other' contributed to an ongoing relationship of political strife, the war of words symptomatic of the threatened social bonds that still existed with Iran, and with proponents of radical Islam. The perpetuation of policy that continuously privileged norm protection over material interests or even moral ones, such as support of Saddam Hossein against Iran (at the very least, a moral dilemma), suggests that the motivation to protect identity security in the face of perceived threat, most especially existential threat, will over-shadow policy based on material interest protection. Emotionalized decision-making is therefore 'rationalized' on the basis of conviction, and 'rational' arguments used to explain normative inconsistencies and actions against a state's 'best interests' (Keddie 1987).

In sum, the politics of passion provides a theoretical framework for building an understanding of how states enter spirals of vengeance, self-righteousness, and guilt, as well as spirals of connectedness, and how these spirals effect short-term as well as long-term policy choices in certain relationships. Its ability to reveal new structural aspects of special relationships suggests that the application of this theory to other aspects of international relations analysis could prove revealing, and that in any event, it may provide a more nuanced understanding of special relationships in other specific cases.

such as between the US and Cuba or Israel, or, for example, between China and Taiwan. It can be understood, in this case, to contribute to an understanding of the ongoing politics of strife that perpetuates a relationship of isolation between Iran and the Anglo-American world, and how that politics has informed the discourse of democracy and radicalized Islam in the context of the first and second Wars on Terror.

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