

Discourses and Counter-discourses of Iranian National Identity during Khatami's Presidency (1997-2005)

Submitted by Shabnam Jane Holliday to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, November 2007

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Abstract

This thesis expands the discussion on Iranian national identity into the period of Khatami's presidency. Within the theoretical and methodological framework of discourse analysis this thesis contends that the multiple constructions of Iranian national identity, which coexist and compete with each other, can be better understood as discourses. The detailed analysis of five discourses of national identity illustrates a complex set of relationships based on the meanings attached to Iran's Islamic and pre-Islamic identities and how the West is dealt with in the construction of national identity. The first discourse addressed is the Islamist discourse of national identity, which prioritises Iran's Islamic culture. At the opposite end of the spectrum the Iranist discourse, which is based on the prioritisation of Iran's pre-Islamic culture, is deconstructed. It is contended that this represents a new indigenous Iranism that is based on a rediscovery of Sasanian Iran as opposed to Achaemenid Iran. Khatami's discourse is presented as an attempt at a dialogue between Islamism and Iranism. It is argued that the Khatami period is unique in terms of the articulation of national identity because Khatami has combined for the first time ideas, which together form the Islamist-Iranian discourse of national identity, as an official state discourse. These are the combination of Islamic and pre-Islamic culture, the notion of 'dialogue among civilisations' and the idea of Islamic democracy. While these three discourses are based on the politicisation of culture, two additional discourses are presented that reject this politicisation. The first is a discourse of civic Iranian national identity and the second is a discourse of cosmopolitan Iranian national identity. It is contended that Khatami and his Islamist-Iranian discourse have allowed the more open articulation, since the establishment of the Islamic Republic, of these constructions of Iranian national identity.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, University of Exeter for my studentship. I thank my supervisor, Professor Ali Ansari, for his academic guidance and sustained interest in and enthusiasm and support for the research. I would like to thank Dr Nadjé al-Ali, for her great moral support, academic guidance and friendship. I thank Professor Yousef Choueiri, who was there for the initial year of my research.

I express my gratitude to the British Institute of Persian Studies for facilitating the research trip to Tehran and for providing a wonderful peaceful place for study in Qolhak. My sincere thanks go to Dr Hamid Ahmadi, Dr Kaveh Bayat and Dr Rahman Gahramanpour for discussing Iranian identity with me and to Dr Ali Pakdaman and Dr Bahrami at the School of International Relations in Tehran.

I would like to thank Abrisham, Hoorá, Torang, Sohrab, Amin, Ali, Nahid and Faraz for letting me into their lives and discussing Iranian identity with them.

I thank all those that I interviewed for their time.

I am grateful to my family, Fereshteh and Ziba Honarbin and Manzar Mori, Ramin, Anahita, and especially Sara Alavi for their enduring kindness and hospitality and sheltering me in Iran. I am also indebted to 'Akijoon' Golmohammadi for her wisdom and always being watchful of my well being. I also thank Evaleila Pesaran for 'being there'!

To my parents, Professor Adrian Holliday and Dr Mehri Honarbin-Holliday, whose encouragement, understanding, insight and energy have supported me on so many levels, I say thank you.

Finally, I would like to thank Brieg Tomos Powel for his love and enduring emotional and academic support and without whom this incredible voyage would have been far more difficult.

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Chapter One: Orientation of the Thesis

The Question of Identity

Now, the important questions that arise are the following: where among these three cultures does our identity lie? What did those saviours and reformers mean by “salvation” and “identity”? What does “cultural identity” mean, anyway? Is it possible or desirable to aspire to a true and pure cultural identity, and in that case which of our three cultures would be closer and more loyal to us, which more faithful to our “true identity”? Which one subverts it and takes us away from ourselves? Is it a duty to remain loyal and to preserve the old culture? Is there such a thing as cultural repentance? Is any nation permitted rebellion against parts of its own culture? Is there an opportunity and an avenue for intercultural exchange, or must cultures keep their windows closed to one another? Is it right to advocate the hegemony of one culture over others? What does “returning to one’s authentic self” mean, and in whom and what does that “self” consist?

Abdolkarim Soroush¹

The three cultures to which Abdolkarim Soroush refers in the above quote are Iranian culture, Islamic culture and Western culture. This is of particular importance because it is the relationship between and with these three cultures that in many cases causes the contestation of Iranian national identity. This thesis looks in detail at how Iranian national identity is constructed in the Khatami period; how Islam, Iran’s pre-Islamic heritage, and relations with the West are dealt with. Integral to this process are the questions that Soroush raises: how is being ‘faithful to our “true identity”’ to be achieved; is it a return to the “old”, or is it allowing the different aspects of Iranian identity to intermingle?

1.1 Central Thesis

The contention of this thesis is that there continues to be multiple constructions of Iranian national identity, which coexist and compete with each other. These constructions can be better understood as discourses. Therefore, a complex set of relationships between two sets of discourses are considered. On the one hand, there are the Islamist, Iranist and Islamist-Iranian discourses of national identity, which are based on the politicisation of culture, and on the other a discourse of civic Iranian national identity and a discourse of cosmopolitan Iranian national identity, which reject the politicisation of culture. Based on a discourse analysis of the texts, it is contended that there is a new indigenous Iranist discourse of national identity that is based on a rediscovery of Sasanian Iran as opposed to Achaemenid Iran. It is also argued that the Khatami period is unique in terms of the

¹ Soroush, Abdolkarim ‘The Three Cultures’ in Sadri, Mahmoud and Sadri, Ahmad. (eds) *Reason, Freedom, and Democracy in Islam: Essential Writings of Abdolkarim Soroush*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. pp. 156-169, p. 162

articulation of national identity because Khatami has combined for the first time ideas, which together form the Islamist-Iranian discourse of national identity, as official discourse on the state level. These are the combination of Islamic and pre-Islamic culture, the notion of ‘dialogue among civilisations’ and the idea of Islamic democracy. In addition to this, the contention here is that Khatami has also allowed for a more open expression, since the establishment of the Islamic Republic, of the articulation of a civic Iranian national identity and a cosmopolitan Iranian national identity. The discourse approach to national identity also enables some conclusions to be made about the nature of the state. It is contended that the state apparatus of the Islamic Republic of Iran demonstrates the poststructuralist understanding of the state. This approach draws ‘attention to the way in which the state itself is politically contested’.² As will be illustrated, the discourses of Iranian national identity discussed in this thesis have a direct impact on the desired nature of the political system. Thus, there is a direct relationship between national identity and state identity. Furthermore, since during the Khatami period there are at least two discourses of national identity, each calling for a different political system, it can be argued that the state of the Islamic Republic is not only politically contested, but it also demonstrates ‘a complex ensemble of various discursively formed rationalities’.³

This chapter aims to present the basic dimensions of the study by outlining its justification, epistemological framework, the statement of the problem, its argument and contribution to knowledge, the limitations of the study and the structure of the thesis. The theoretical and methodological framework, which will outline the concept of ‘discourse of national identity’, will be discussed in the following chapter.

1.2 Justification for the Study

Throughout the twentieth century Iran has been through a series of dramatic political events that have been instrumental in the articulation and continuous construction and reconstruction of its national identity; such events are the Constitutional Revolution, the rise of the Pahlavi Dynasty, the rise and fall of Mohammad Musaddiq, the 1979 Islamic Revolution, and the Iran-Iraq war. More recently, the period of Seyyed Mohammad

² Finlayson, Alan and Martin, James. ‘Poststructuralism’ in Hay, Colin, Lister, Michael and Marsh, David. (eds) *The State: Theories and Issues*. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006, pp. 155-171, p. 163

³ Torfing, J. ‘A Hegemony Approach to Capitalist Regulation’ in Betramsen, R. B., Thomsen, J. P. F., and Torfing, J. (eds) *State, Economy and Society*. London: Unwin Hayman. 1991 cited in Finlayson, Alan and Martin, James. ‘Poststructuralism’ in Hay, Colin, Lister, Michael and Marsh, David. (eds) *The State: Theories and Issues*. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006, pp. 155-171, p. 162

Khatami's presidency - 1997 to 2005 - has also witnessed the continued reconstruction of Iran's national identity. This period is of particular interest because of the internal and external political and social dynamics. External changes can be symbolised by the notion of Khatami's 'Dialogue among Civilisations'⁴, which signifies a departure from economic and political isolation typical of the earlier stages of the Islamic Revolution. For example, Khatami's interview with CNN was perceived by many as a step towards reconciliation with the United States; there is dialogue rather than the clash of civilisations as argued by Samuel Huntington.⁵ Internally, on the one hand, there has been a vibrant debate regarding the very nature of the Islamic Republic, and on the other hand, there has been notable social and political liberalisation. These factors and events are essential for a better understanding of the context of the construction of national identity in the Khatami period. After all, this did not take place in isolation.

The social and political liberalisation is evident in the proliferation of newspapers and books, as well as non-government organisations. Since the Revolution in 1979, Iran had not observed such an increase in the publication of newspapers and magazines.⁶ It is argued that 'the function of the press was in essence to set the terms of political discourse and dictate the agenda.'⁷ Whether or not this is the case, it can certainly be argued that the press contributed to the opening up of political discourse, the transmitting of ideas and discussion regarding Iran's political development in the public space. Another example of liberalisation is evident in how the art community has also particularly flourished in this period with the opening of numerous public cultural centres and galleries. Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, in particular, was able to sustain education through art, which was made available to the younger generation. Social restrictions on this generation were eased in response to the election results in 1997; seventy per cent of the twenty-nine million, who turned out, voted in favour of Khatami.⁸

⁴ Khatami, Seyyed Mohammad. *Empathy and Compassion: Believing in Dialogue Paves the way for Hope* (Speech at the U.N. Sponsored Conference of Dialogue among Civilisations, New York. trans. U.S. Federal Broadcasting Information Service). 5 September 2000.

<http://www.iranian.com/Opinion/2000/September/Khatami> - date accessed 25 July 2006

⁵ Term coined by Samuel Huntington's 'The Clash of Civilizations?' *Foreign Affairs* 72, 3, Summer 1993. pp. 22-49

⁶ Milani, Mohsen M. 2001. 'Reform and Resistance in the Islamic Republic of Iran' in Esposito, J. and Ramazani, R. 2001. (eds) *Iran at the Crossroads*, New York: Palgrave, pp. 29-56, pp. 43-44; Milani identifies *Khurdād*, *Nishāt* and *Asr-i Mā* as openly supporting reform, and *Kayhān*, *Jumhuri-yi Islāmī*, and *Risālat* as those that challenged Khatami's policies.

⁷ Ansari, Ali M. *Islam, Iran and Democracy: The Politics of Managing Change*. 2nd edn. London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2006. p. 119

⁸ Kazemi, Farhad. 'Why Iran chose Khatami (I)' in *Middle Eastern Lectures*, 3, Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 1999. pp. 9-16, 12

This relative social and political liberalisation is positioned in a context of high rates of literacy and education. It is estimated that over eighty-five percent of Iran's population are literate. According to the *2004/2005 National Statistics* published by Iran's Ministry of Education's Educational Programme, over fifteen million individuals are engaged in primary and secondary education. Over half a million of these are adults seeking literacy. Additionally, there are three million students in higher education, including vocational training, many of whom have entered urban spaces from remote towns and villages for the first time. These figures are on the increase, and significantly sixty-five percent of this student body are female.⁹

In addition to liberalisation and high literacy rates, it is worth mentioning that Khatami's presidency has also been in the context of a growth in and advancement of communication technologies. It is argued that the fourth most popular language in weblogs is Persian. This in turn has enabled easier communication between Iranians in Iran and those among the diaspora.¹⁰ More importantly, as far as this thesis is concerned, the growth in mass communications has enabled people to be local despite being part of a more globalised world. With regard to Iranian national identity, this has enabled the articulation of both particular and general discourses of Iranian national identity. While communication technologies and literacy have enabled expression on the Internet, in a sense these reforms and changes have also allowed political and social discussions to be moved into the public space in Iran.

These social changes and political liberalisation are in many ways a part of or the result of a vibrant intellectual debate regarding the very nature of the Islamic Republic causing tensions within the establishment. Hamid Dabashi, points out that 'many of the inner tensions within the Islamic Republic that surfaced after ... Khatami's election ... were in fact already present during [Ali Akbar Hashemi] Rafsanjani's presidency'.¹¹ However, he argues, Rafsanjani had managed to 'co-opt all the Islamic (and even some of the secular) dissenters by appearing to be their only hope, thereby saving the Islamic Republic ... from internal dissent'.¹² This 'internal dissent' manifested itself in an ideological opposition that appeared from within the Islamic Republic. It was led by activist intellectuals, who came to call themselves *Rawshānfikrān-i Dīnī*, or Religions Intellectuals.¹³ Asef Bayat argues that the *Rawshānfikrān-i Dīnī* were the main intellectual

⁹ *2004/2005 National Statistics*. Tehran: Ministry of Education's Educational Programme

¹⁰ Alavi, Nasrin. *We are Iran*. London: Portobello Books, 2005. p. 1

¹¹ Dabashi, Hamid. *Iran: A People Interrupted*. New York and London: The New Press. 2006, p. 189

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 189

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 190

source of what he refers to as ‘post-Islamist practices’. He argues that their articulation of a ‘major discursive shift’ ‘generated one of the most remarkable intellectual movements in the Muslim world with far-reaching implications for religious thought and democratic practice.’¹⁴ Some of the proponents of this post-Islamist movement will be discussed in Chapter Five in relation to Khatami’s Islamist-Iranian discourse of national identity.

It is worth mentioning that Bayat argues that there are three factors, many of which, incidentally, have been raised above, that were responsible for the ‘post-Islamist’ condition. The first of these is the ‘failures and contradictions of the Islamist project that entailed a rethinking of Islamism from within’. The second is ‘social changes (increasing literacy, urbanisation, and an economic shift) that generated actors (educated middle Classes, the young, increasingly literate women) who together ... pushed for social and political transformation’. The third and final factor is ‘global context within which these changes were taking place.’¹⁵ The aim of this thesis is to deconstruct how Iranian national identity is constructed in the context of this environment of dissent within the Islamic Republic and in the context of social and political liberalisation.

As will be demonstrated, there is the continued discussion in both the public and private spaces, not only in Iran but also among the diaspora, regarding Iranian identity and Iranian national identity. The fact that there is a plethora of books and articles published during Khatami’s presidency in Iran addressing in the issue of ‘identity crisis’ and ‘Iranian identity’ reflects that the nation itself is going through a process of self-analysis.¹⁶ It is likely that this self-analysis was taking place in Iran before Khatami was elected as president in 1997, but they were encouraged by Khatami’s relative political liberalisation. Additionally, the fact that much of the literature about Iran outside of Iran is in fact written by those of Iranian origin also indicates a certain sense of self-analysis regarding what it means to be Iranian, or a search for explanations to the political events mentioned above.¹⁷ A subject for further research would be how the discussions in this thesis, which are primarily related to Iranians within the territorial boundaries of Iran, translate among the various Iranian diasporic groups. Taking all these factors into consideration, the Khatami period makes for an interesting and exciting period with regard to political

¹⁴ Bayat, Asef. *Making Islam Democratic: Social Movements and the Post-Islamist Turn*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press. 2007, p. 84

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 97

¹⁶ This is evident in the very existence of edited volumes such as *Guftārḥā darbāra-yi Huvīyat-i Millī -yi Īrān* (*Discussions on Iran’s National Identity*), *Khudkāvi-yi Millī dar ‘Asr-i Jahānī Shudan* (*National Self-Analysis in the Age of Globalisation*), and *Īrān: Huvīyat, Millīyat, Qawmīyat* (*Iran: Identity, Nationality, Ethnicity*), all of which were published during Khatami’s presidency.

¹⁷ Some such works will be addressed in Chapter 6 as part of the discussion by Iranian academics on the issue of Iranian national identity.

discourse in general and the articulation and construction of Iranian national identity in particular.

Although the issue of identity in all its forms has been endlessly critiqued, as Stuart Hall highlights, it continues to be a heated discussion outside the academic sphere.¹⁸ It is worth stressing that Iran is not unique in its discussions on national identity. For example, Britain is one country among many that is witnessing public discussions regarding the issue of national identity. This is an issue of concern and interest for Gordon Brown, the United Kingdom's Prime Minister since 2007. He has taken it upon himself to explore what it means to be British. At the Fabian Society Conference on 14 January 2006, Brown's keynote speech entitled *The Future of Britishness* argues that there must be 'a clear view of what being British means, what you value about being British and what gives us purpose as a nation'.¹⁹ He raises the question of whether being British is based on only race or ethnicity, or on common values and opts for the latter because of Britain's diversity:

While we have always been a country of different nations and thus of plural identities - a Welshman can be Welsh and British, just as a Cornishman or woman is Cornish, English and British - and may be Muslim, Pakistani or Afro-Caribbean, Cornish, English and British - there is always a risk that, when people are insecure, they retreat into more exclusive identities rooted in 19th century conceptions of blood, race and territory - when instead, we the British people should be able to gain great strength from celebrating a British identity which is bigger than the sum of its parts and a union that is strong because of the values we share and because of the way these values are expressed through our history and our institutions.²⁰

A more populist discussion of what it means to be British, or rather English, came to light during the 2006 Football World Cup. For example, Mike Marqusee, in his article 'In thrall to St George' asks why there has been 'an unprecedented display of England flags' in England not only at the matches themselves. In response he argues:

... the flag betokens Englishness, that mysterious something which we are said to have in common But it remains difficult to define. England is not a nation-state or significant political unit. And Englishness is a category vague enough to accommodate radically opposed ideas of what being English might be. Crucially it carries both ethnic and national connotations. (Though the usage is increasingly contested, being 'English' is frequently a synonym for being white native-born English.)²¹

¹⁸ Hall, Stuart. 'Who needs 'Identity'?' in *Questions of Cultural Identity*, London, Thousand Oaks & New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1996. pp. 1-17, p. 1

¹⁹ Brown, Gordon. *The Future of Britishness*. 2006. http://www.fabian-society.org.uk/press_office/newssearch.asp?newsID=520 and http://www.fabian-society.org.uk/press_office/display.asp?id=533&type=news&cat=43 - date accessed 30 March 2006

²⁰ Ibid.

Marqusee goes on to offer several arguments for the re-emergence of a popular discussion on English national identity. On the one hand, some argue that this is due to the 'EU, Scottish and Welsh devolution, [and] globalisation'. On the other hand, there are those who feel the need to fight against the 'alien forces' who threaten English identity. Finally, for some it is a case of positioning a modern and modest sense of Englishness in the plural world.

This plural world includes Wales, which is also worthy of mention in relation to the notion of British national identity. Indeed for many, Britain is not accepted as an identity; one is Welsh and European, not British. This is possibly because Wales is perceived by some as an English colony. To this regard, in his article, 'Wales: England's Oldest Colony', Niall Griffiths discusses the relationship between Wales and England in terms of identity. In response to the question 'What are they [the Welsh] for?' Griffiths states:

one of the functions of the Welsh is not to be English: that people, nation and language are there for an arrogant and imperious bully of a neighbour to measure itself against, and to find itself wanting.²²

The aim of highlighting these discussions on British and national identity is to show that Iran is not unique in her self-analysis. There are clearly contesting notions of what it means to be British and English. Furthermore, a closer look at the issue will show there is also a discussion on how the British national identities work or fit with the English, Scottish and/or Welsh national identities. These examples illustrate that the issue of identity, and national identity in particular, continues to be worthy of discussion.

1.3 Epistemological Framework

As is argued by Stuart Hall, 'what we say is always 'in context', positioned.'²³ Bearing this in mind, it is necessary to be aware of the standpoint or ideology by which the researcher is influenced. First of all, the researcher is of Anglo-Iranian heritage; therefore, the issues of identity in general and Iranian identity are of particular interest. In relation to this, it is important to be aware that the researcher has particular views of how Iranian national identity is constructed. Despite this, while accepting that nothing is objective and that the issue of identity in many ways is subjective, the aim has been to be as objective as possible when interpreting how Iranian national identity has been constructed in the various texts. This is facilitated by discourse analysis. As will be demonstrated, a

²¹ Marqusee, Mike. 'In thrall to St George', *The Guardian*. 27 June 2006

²² Griffiths, Niall. 'Wales: England's Oldest Colony', *New Statesman*, 23 April 2007. pp. 32-34, p. 32

²³ Hall, Stuart. 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora' in Rutherford, J. (ed) *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990. pp. 222-237, p. 222

discourse approach to national identity enables us to become aware of the *multiple* ideologies embedded in the *multiple* constructions of Iranian national identity. Consequently, there are concurrent competing discourses. Furthermore, a discourse analysis of the texts, whether speeches, academic articles or interviews, helps to illustrate how subjective the construction of Iranian national identity is despite the claims by some that Iranian national identity is an objective and static phenomenon.

The researcher is also influenced by postcolonial, poststructuralist and postmodern approaches to the social sciences. Thus, it has been the aim to not treat any political or social unit or concept in an essentialist manner. Since, it is often the case that the theoretical literature approaches to the discussion of nation, nationalism and national identity come from a Eurocentric standpoint; the tendency is to assume that the notions prescribed are universal. This is clearly not the case. One must be aware that it is possible that the concept of nation in Europe incurs or is associated with different references and interpretations to that anywhere else in the world. Therefore, any definition must not be treated as a monolithic concept. The conceptualisation of nation outlined below bears these issues in mind, by focusing on how Iranians themselves, on different levels, construct their sense of Iranian national identity. In turn, the theoretical discussion on national identity is adapted to the empirical evidence. Nonetheless, although these guidelines apply to the case for Iran, it is necessary to point out that variations of these guidelines may be necessary for different nations.

1.4 Statement of the Problem

The issue of nationalism and national identity in Iran is much discussed in the existing literature. However, on the one hand, the discussions demonstrate a very general approach to the issue, or on the other hand, this tends to be restricted to events up to and including the Islamic Revolution. There is some discussion on nationalism and national identity at the time of the Iran-Iraq War. These historical studies on Iranian national identity and nationalism will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter, ‘The Construction of Iranian National Identity: Historical and Intellectual Context’. The focus of this thesis, however, is the Khatami period and it is the detailed approach to this issue that allows this thesis to be a valid contribution to the existing literature.

The research question is two-fold. Firstly, what is Iranian national identity during the Khatami period and how does it compare and relate to earlier twentieth century constructions of national identity in Iran? Secondly, what does national identity during the Khatami period tell us about the social and political dynamics of his presidency? It must

be stated from the outset that this discussion of Iranian national identity is based on the assumption that Iran is, albeit contested, a nation. Thus, how Iran came to be a nation will only be discussed in as far as it relates to a particular discourse.²⁴

1.5 Argument and Contribution to Knowledge

This thesis is a contribution to existing literature because it expands the discussion of Iranian national identity into the Khatami period. The detailed analysis of texts demonstrates that during Khatami's presidency Iranian national identity continues to be contested and can be understood in terms of concurrent discourses and counter-discourses of national identity that have a hegemonic and counter-hegemonic dimension. These competing discourses are articulated on both state and non-state levels. The aim of the thesis, therefore, is to contribute to an understanding of how Iranian national identity can be interpreted. This analysis can also contribute to more general discussions on the social and political dynamics of the Khatami period.

Chapters Four, Five and Six will demonstrate different ways Iranian national identity is articulated and contested. Five discourses of national identity have been identified for discussion. While acknowledging that these are by no means the only discourses in Iran and that they are not rigid categories, they are, for the benefit of analysis, useful labels and conceptual tools. It is argued, on the one hand, that the Iranist, Islamist, Islamist-Iranian discourses of national identity are based on the politicisation of what is perceived to be Iran's "authentic" culture - either *Īrānīyat* (Iran's pre-Islamic culture or being Iranian), *Īslāmīyat* (Islamic culture or being Islamic), or both. Politicisation, in this sense, is to be understood as the use of culture as the basis for a particular political system. Thus, culture is inseparable from the state apparatus. The basis of contestation is that authenticity is contested. The competition is further exacerbated by the existence of the discourse of civic Iranian national identity and the discourse of cosmopolitan Iranian national identity. In these cases, it is contended that the contestation is based on the rejection of either *Īslāmīyat* or *Īrānīyat* as the basis of Iranian national identity.

Naturally, this thesis is not able to explore every way that Iranian national identity is constructed and articulated. Nevertheless, a commonality between the discourses identified for discussion is that they all prescribe a particular political apparatus, or at least critique the political systems advocated on the state level during Khatami's presidency. Thus, that which unites these discourses of national identity is that they are

²⁴ See Kashani-Sabet, Firoozeh. *Frontier Fictions: Shaping the Iranian Nation, 1804-1946*. London & New York, I. B. Tauris, 2000. for an in depth discussion on how those now within the territorial boundaries of Iran came to consider themselves as part of Iran as a nation.

attached to a particular political system or apparatus. For example, albeit in different ways, the Islamist and Islamist-Iranian discourses, as will be shown, subscribe to the notion that Islam is Iran's authentic culture and is a means of justifying and legitimising an Islamist government, or in other words, Islam as the framework for Iran's political apparatus. The Iranist discourse justifies the notion of monarchy as the country's political apparatus. Since the various discourses of Iranian national identity are not necessarily adhered to or accepted by elements of Iran's population, they can only essentially be considered as aspirations for the identity of the nation, or *huvīyat-i millī*. The issue of *huvīyat-i millī* will be dealt with in more detail in the following chapter.

The ideas and contentions presented in this thesis build on existing scholarship. With regard to the issue of contested constructions of Iranian national identity, this has been addressed in terms of nationalism during Iran's earlier historical periods. It is Ansari's contention that 'many of the political debates in modern Iran revolve around the contestation between various definitions of Iranian nationalism and the determination to monopolise discourse by imposing and 'authentic' version'.²⁵ These 'various definitions of Iranian nationalism' are secular nationalism, dynastic nationalism and religious nationalism. This thesis contributes to this scholarship by discussing these nationalisms in terms of how they relate to the discourses of national identity during the Khatami period. Thus, the contestation between the discourses asserting a particular authenticity is addressed through the notion of discourses of Iranian national identity in the Khatami period. This thesis also contributes to the discussion of Iranian national identity and nationalism by offering a detailed focus on the Khatami period.

Nevertheless, there are also more general approaches to Iranian national identity written during the Khatami period, mainly in the Persian language. This scholarship, however, does not present Iranian national identity in terms of co-existent competing discourses. For example, Hamid Ahmadi identifies elements in Iranian national identity, which he argues is static and fixed. These elements are history, myths, geography, cultural heritage and religion.²⁶ While these factors undoubtedly form part of Iranian national identity, Ahmadi does not take into consideration the meanings attached to these factors and that for different groups in Iran they mean different things. In another article, Ahmadi argues that throughout Iran's history there have been 'integrative forces' which have enabled Iran

²⁵ Ansari, Ali M. 'Iranian Nationalism' in Choueiri, Yousef (ed) *A Companion to the History of the Middle East*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2005. pp. 320-333, p. 320

²⁶ Ahmadi, Hamid. 'Huvīyat-i Millī-yi Īrān; Vīzhigīhā va Avāmil-i Pūyāyī-yi ān' ('Iranian National Identity; Its Specificities and the Search for its Elements') in Mirmohammadi, Davud. (ed) *Guftārḥā darbāra-yi Huvīyat-i Millī -yi Īrān (Discussions on Iran's National Identity)*, Tehran, Iran: Iranian Civilisation Publications, 1383 (2004/2005). pp. 189-212

to stand-up to ‘foreign invasions’ and ‘external crises’.²⁷ One of these ‘integrative forces’, as he argues, is the ‘national identity dynamic’, which is the ‘potential for action which resides in a mass which share the same national identification’.²⁸ According to Ahmadi, the first manifestation of the ‘national identity dynamic’ was the resistance to Arab dominance by Iranians in the seventh and eighth centuries AD. The second was in reaction to the Russians and Ottomans following the fall of the Safavid dynasty in 1722. The most recent example is the participation by almost all Iranians in the election that brought Khatami to power with the hope of a democratic government.²⁹ The other ‘integrative forces’ are based on what Ahmadi considers the ‘foundations of Iranian national identity and unity’, namely Iranian political heritage, Iranian cultural heritage and the omnipresent role of religion.³⁰ Once again, Ahmadi does not take into consideration that Iranian national identity is contested.

By exploring Iranian national identity in terms of contested competing discourses, this thesis is able to refute essentialist and monolithic arguments regarding Iran. For example, when discussing Iranian identity and Iranian nationalism, a concept that often comes up is the notion of the ‘Iranian psyche’ or the ‘Iranian character’. Majid Tehranian refers to the ‘vast strength of the Iranian psyche that can withstand the harshest of political conditions’.³¹ Richard Cottam argues that despite repeated invasions of Iran throughout its history ‘an exclusive Iranian national character, culture, and history have survived’.³² Anoushiravan Ehteshami argues that Iran’s impotence against foreign interference ‘has left a deep and seemingly permanent scar on the Iranian psyche’ which has resulted in the ‘rise of a condition that [he calls] ... ‘the arrogance of nonsubmission’’.³³ While these arguments regarding the “Iranian psyche” may contribute to the construction and articulation of Iranian national identity, they are by no means the full picture. A discourse approach allows for multiple constructions of Iranian national identity to be demonstrated as well as an analysis of the power relations between them.

²⁷ Ahmadi, Hamid. ‘Unity and Diversity: Foundations and Dynamics of National Identity in Iran’, *Critique*, 14, 1. April 2005. pp. 127-147, p. 127

²⁸ Ahmadi 2005, p. 131 cites Bloom, William. *Personal Identity, National Identity and International Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990. pp. 53, 79

²⁹ Op. cit. Ahmadi 2005, pp. 131-132. He also gives other examples.

³⁰ Ibid., pp. 134-143

³¹ Tehranian, Majid. ‘Power and Purity: Iranian Political Culture, Communication and Identity’ in Jahanbegloo, R. (ed) *Iran: Between Tradition and Modernity*. Oxford, UK & Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2004. pp. 185-206, p. 187

³² Cottam R. W. *Nationalism in Iran*. Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Pittsburg University Press, 1979. pp. 23-24

³³ Ehteshami, Anoushiravan. ‘The Foreign Policy of Iran’ in Hinnebusch, R. and Ehteshami, Anoushiravan. (eds) *The Foreign Policies of Middle East States*. Boulder & London: Lynne Reiner Publishers, 2002. pp. 283-310 p. 285

In methodological terms, a discourse approach to national identity also exists in the scholarship. Ruth Wodak *et al.* apply Critical Discourse Analysis to a study on Austrian national identity.³⁴ Their work specifically uses Critical Linguistics to study of the discursive construction of national identity. However, the way in which the notion of discourse is approached in this thesis is similar to that of Larbi Sadiki in his discussion of democracy in the Arab Middle East. Just as Sadiki asks ‘What is democracy? Which democracy? Whose democracy?’ in the context of the Arab Middle East³⁵, this thesis considers the questions: what is Iranian national identity, which Iranian national identity and whose Iranian national identity? In Sadiki’s analysis of the afore mentioned questions, his aim is to ‘explore democracy in a variety of discourses and counter-discourses, dominant and marginalised, top-down and bottom-up’.³⁶ Similarly, the aim of this thesis is to explore a variety of discourses and counter-discourses of Iranian national identity, some of which are or have been dominant and top-down and others that are marginalised and bottom-up and aspire to be dominant and top-down. The ultimate aim is to illustrate that indeed Iranian national identity in the Khatami period is contested and that this is evident in the multiple discourses and counter-discourses. By looking at national identity through discourse analysis it allows the concurrent constructions of national identity to be examined in terms of a hegemonic and counter-hegemonic relationship. Not only does this shed light on the Khatami era, but also indirectly on any society. If national identity in general is examined using this paradigm of investigation, it is possible to learn of new dynamics.

1.6 Limitations of the Study

A limitation to the study is the absence of a discussion on certain groups in society; women, and ethnic and religious minorities. It is recognised that national identity is gendered and that indeed ethnic and religious communities are part of the nation. It is taken for granted that some members of communities such as the Kurdish, Azeri, Baluchi and Arab communities offer alternative discourses of Iranian or even non-Iranian national identity and challenge those of the state. Similarly, some members of the Zoroastrian, Sunni, Bahai, Jewish and Christian communities are likely to have their own discourses of national identity. Finally, how each of the discourses identified deal with the issue of

³⁴ Wodak, Judith, de Cillia, Rudolf, Reisigl, Martin and Liebhart, Karin. *The Discursive Construction of National Identity*. trans. by Angelika Hirsch and Richard Mitten. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999.

³⁵ Sadiki, Larbi. *The Search for Arab Democracy: Discourse and Counter-Discourses*. London: Hurst & Company, 2004, p. 2

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 7

gender is not discussed. The inclusion of these issues would make for another thesis altogether and are indeed worthy of further research.

A further limitation is methodological: how the data was collected in Iran. Initially, the aim was to carry out far more interviews than were actually done, especially with government officials. However, the field trip to Iran – September to December 2005 – took place only a few months after the election of Mahmud Ahmadinezhad in June 2005. Compared to the previous year, the mood was far more tense; it was suggested on a number of occasions that discussions on national identity would be received with caution and in even in some cases with suspicion. As the thesis will reveal, how national identity is dealt with in Iran is varied and illustrates that it is a highly sensitive and politicised issue. Nonetheless, the experience of weekly Persian language sessions, which focused on discussions on the issue of national identity with Reformist civil servants at the Institute of International Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, provided an excellent insight. These are limitations identified by the researcher; nevertheless, the researcher cannot be so bold as to claim they are the only limitations.

1.7 Structure of the Thesis

Having provided the ‘Orientation of the Thesis’ in this chapter, Chapter Two will provide the theoretical and methodological framework for the thesis by presenting what is to be understood by the notion of ‘discourse of national identity’. It is contended that nation is a socially constructed political unit based on shared values and/or common heritage. Discourse is the means by which ideology is articulated. Discourses also reproduce what come to be considered as assumptions in society. As will be illustrated, the notion of discourse of national identity allows for an examination of the ideology embedded in the way national identity is constructed. Furthermore, the notion of discourse of national identity enables the constructions of Iranian national identity to be understood in terms of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic dynamic; that is discourses and counter-discourses.

These contentions will be made through a discussion of three parallel concepts - nation, discourse and identity – that will be brought together at the end of the chapter in the notion of discourse of national identity. The concept of nation will be deconstructed by first considering the Persian terminology, *millat*, and related concepts. Secondly, the arguments provided in the English language will be considered. The final aim of this section is to reconcile *millat* and nation. Using existing discussions on discourse, the aim of the second section is to illustrate how discourse is to be understood as the means by which ideology is transferred, articulated or communicated. This will be done by defining

ideology and engaging with the issues of power. Following this, the chapter will turn to identity and national identity. Since it is argued that the discourses of national identity discussed here relate to particular political systems, it is also necessary to consider the concept of the state: the post-structuralist understanding of the state will be outlined. Finally, the chapter outlines the methods used for the research where the sources will be considered. Further theoretical discussions regarding the meanings attached to the notion of nation, which are directly related to the discourse of national identity being discussed, will be brought into Chapters Three, Four, Five and Six. These are anti-imperialism and authenticity in Chapter Three, culture and civilisation, tradition and modernity, and *Īslāmīyat* and *Īrānīyat* in Chapter Four, and finally civic nation and cosmopolitanism in Chapter Six.

Naturally, the discourses and counter-discourses of Iranian national identity in the Khatami period cannot be addressed in historical isolation. The contention here is that several of the ideologies embedded in the construction of Iranian national identity during the Khatami period have existed in earlier constructions of Iranian national identity. Therefore, Chapter Three, 'The Construction of the Iranian National Identity: Historical and Intellectual Context', aims to contextualise the discourses identified for analysis in this thesis through a discussion of an intellectual and historical background. This will allow parallels to be drawn between the discourses explored in Chapters Four, Five and Six and earlier twentieth century nationalisms and constructions of Iranian national identity.

Before proceeding with the historical and intellectual context, Chapter Three will begin with a theoretical discussion of the notions of anti-imperialism, authenticity and the role of intellectuals. This is essential for a better understanding of the different nationalisms and the meanings attached to them to be discussed in the chapter. The historical and intellectual context will be provided by illustrating the articulation of different Iranian nationalisms during four historical periods. As a means of introducing the notion of discourse of national identity, these Iranian nationalisms will also be reconsidered in terms of discourses of Iranian national identity. The periods identified as the framework of the chapter are the late Qajar period and Constitutional period; the rise and rule of Reza Shah; the rule of Mohammad Reza Shah; and religious nationalism and the Islamic Republic. This historical context is essential for a fuller understanding of the complexity of the constructions of contemporary Iranian national identity and enables them to be related to previous articulations of national identity.

Having established the theoretical and methodological framework and the historical and intellectual context, Chapters Four, Five and Six provide an analysis of the concurrent discourses of Iranian national identity articulated during Khatami's presidency. The focus of Chapter Four, 'Islamist and Iranist Discourses of National Identity: The Polarisation of Politicised "Authentic" Culture' is on the Islamist and Iranist discourses of national identity. However, before a discussion of these two discourses, there is a theoretical consideration of the notions of culture and civilisation, *Īslāmīyat* and *Īrānīyat*, and tradition and modernity. This discussion is essential for a better understanding of not only the Islamist and Iranist discourses of national identity, but also the Islamist-Iranian discourse of national identity addressed in Chapter Five.

The contention of Chapter Four is that for both the Islamist and Iranist discourses the basis for the construction of Iranian national identity is what is perceived to be Iran's "authentic" culture. It is also contended that this "authentic" culture is politicised and justifies a particular political apparatus. On the one hand, it is Iran's pre-Islamic culture (*Īrānīyat*) that is politicised in the Iranist discourse of national identity, and on the other hand it is Iran's Islamic culture (*Īslāmīyat*) that is politicised in the Islamist discourse of national identity. However, despite the importance of *Īslāmīyat* in the construction of Iranian national identity, it is argued that this *Īslāmīyat* is *Iranianised* Islam. Furthermore, it is also argued that while parallels can be drawn between the Iranist discourse in the Khatami period and earlier articulations, there is also a departure from the Iranism of the Pahlavis. This is demonstrated in the use of Sasanian Iran, as opposed to Achaemenid Iran, in the construction of national identity. It is also contended that the contestation regarding authenticity demonstrates a hegemonic and counter-hegemonic dynamic between the two discourses.

The theme of politicised culture in the construction of national identity continues in Chapter Five, 'Islamist-Iranian Discourse of National Identity: Khatami's State Counter-Discourse'. However, the contention here is that both cultures, Iran's Islamic culture (*Īslāmīyat*) and Iran's pre-Islamic culture (*Īrānīyat*), are considered as "authentic". It is contended that these form the first of three pillars that constitute the Islamist-Iranian discourse of national identity. The other two pillars are the notions of 'dialogue among civilisations' and Islamic *mardumsālārī* (democracy). It is contended that it is the bringing together of these three pillars as state discourse that makes Khatami's presidency unique in terms of the articulation of Iranian national identity. The aim of the chapter is to also demonstrate that Khatami's Islamist-Iranian discourse is at once hegemonic and

counter-hegemonic when considered in relation to the internal ‘other’, Islamist and Iranist discourses of national identity, and the external ‘other’.

While Chapters Four and Five focus on discourses based on the politicisation of culture, in Chapter Six, ‘Alternative Discourses of Iranian National Identity’, attention is drawn to two discourses of Iranian national identity that reject the politicisation of culture altogether. These are the discourse of civic Iranian national identity and the discourse of cosmopolitan Iranian national identity. The contention here is not that Iran’s Islamic and pre-Islamic cultures are not part of Iranian identity. Rather, it is their politicisation and the use of culture as the basis of a political apparatus that is rejected. Furthermore, it is also contended that it is Khatami and his Islamist-Iranian discourse that have allowed these constructions to be more openly articulated. The chapter is divided into three sections. The aim of the first is to illustrate how Iranian academics both within Iran and among the diaspora are engaged in the discussion of Iranian national identity and provide a critique of the constructions of Iranian national identity based on the politicisation of culture.

The second section turns to the discourse of civic Iranian national identity. Before illustrating how such a discourse is articulated, a theoretical discussion of the notion of civic nation is provided. It is contended that it is the notion of citizenship in a secular context, rather than an ethnic or ethno-religious national identity as is the case with the other discourses, which is the basis of the construction of Iranian national identity. In this case, the rejection of the politicisation of culture reflects a counter-hegemonic dynamic; the notion of ethnic national identity is being resisted. The third section turns to the fifth and final discourse discussed in this thesis. Again, before illustrating how a discourse of cosmopolitan Iranian national identity is articulated, a theoretical discussion of the notion of ‘being cosmopolitan’ is provided.

Finally, the thesis concludes by bringing together the complex set of relationships between the five discourses identified for analysis. Based on these relationships it is concluded that Iranian national identity in the Khatami period not only continues to be contested, but it must also be considered in terms of concurrent competing discourses of national identity. This reflects their hegemonic and counter-hegemonic relationship. Furthermore, attention must be drawn to the fact on a daily basis Iranians are moving between spaces, both public and private that are dominated by these conflicting ideas of national identity. The implication of this must be considered.

1.8 Translation, Transliteration and the Iranian Calendar

Unless otherwise stated, the author has carried out all translations from the Persian text. Transliteration from the Persian language into English is based on the transliteration table of the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. All transliterated terms will be in italics. Certain proper nouns are based on versions commonly used in existing scholarship, such as Seyyed, Ayatollah, Hojjatoleslam, Khamene'i, and Mohammad.

The Iranian solar calendar starts on 21 March. An Iranian year can be converted into the Gregorian calendar by adding 621. Thus, the Iranian year 1376 refers to the period 21 March 1997 to 20 March 1998. When a specific date is given in the Iranian calendar it is converted into the Gregorian date. When a year is given, such as 1376, the Gregorian date will be given as (1997/1998).

Chapter Two: Theoretical and Methodological Framework: ‘Discourse of National Identity’

Before the construction of Iranian national identity can be analysed and deconstructed in terms of discourses, it is necessary to first determine what is to be understood by the notion of ‘discourse of national identity’. Thus, having provided the orientation of the thesis, this chapter will now turn to this notion. It is in this theoretical and methodological framework that Iranian national identity is deconstructed. The contention here is that a discourse approach to the study of national identity is beneficial because it allows for an analysis of how ideology is or ideologies are embedded in the construction of national identity. Thus, the way Iranian national identity is constructed is considered in terms of discourses of national identity. Furthermore, by looking at the articulation of national identity as a discourse it allows for the construction of national identity to be examined in terms of power relations, which have a hegemonic and counter-hegemonic dimension.

An understanding of the notion of ‘discourse of national identity’ will be developed through a discussion of three parallel concepts: discourse, nation and identity. The first section of the chapter addresses the first of these concepts. The reasons for a discourse approach will be established and through a discussion of existing scholarship on discourse, it is argued that discourse is the means by which ideology is transferred, articulated or communicated. It is also contended that discourses reproduce what comes to be considered as assumptions and perceived as common sense. The second section of the chapter focuses on the notion of nation. Also through an examination of the existing scholarship, it is contended that nation is a socially constructed political unit based on shared values and/or a common heritage. The third section turns to the concept, identity. The contention here is that identity, or how one identifies oneself, is in a constant state of evolution and reconstruction. These three different notions discussed in the three sections will be brought together in the fourth section with a discussion of the notion of ‘discourse of national identity’. It is argued that how the identity of a nation is constructed reflects a particular ideology or several ideologies. This will be followed by the fourth section, which delineates the post-structuralist understanding of the state. It is argued that the state is political contested and is best understood as an ‘ensemble of practices’. The fifth and final section of the chapter discusses the methods for the research. This includes an explanation of the sources.

1.9 Discourse

The choice of using discourse analysis as the theoretical and methodological framework for understanding a political or social situation reflects how society is perceived to function. That is, society is perceived in terms of discourses. This is based on the contention that ‘political concepts, ideas, language, behaviour and institutional arrangements are loaded with assumptions about the nature of the social and political world’ and that

discourses reproduce the everyday assumptions of society and that those common perceptions and understandings are encouraged and reinforced by those with access to the media, such as politicians, journalists and academic experts.³⁷

Thus, the purpose here is to identify and deconstruct the assumptions regarding society in relation to Iranian national identity. In other words, how national identity is constructed, articulated and reproduced will be deconstructed through discourse analysis.

The benefit of discourse analysis is provided by David Howarth. It is his contention that, through a discursive approach, it is possible to:

[theorise on] the complexities of political identity and difference; the construction of hegemonic formations; ... and the connection between the role of identities and interests in the social sciences.³⁸

With regard to Iranian national identity, as will be illustrated throughout the thesis, a discourse approach is a helpful means for deconstructing how Iranian national identity is constructed. For example, as will be demonstrated in Chapters Four and Five, a deconstruction of how Iranian national identity is articulated on the state level illustrates that there is diversity in political identity and that ‘hegemonic formations’ are constructed.

This thesis is not the place for an in-depth discussion of the merits of the different approaches to discourse.³⁹ Rather, how the notion of discourse is to be understood here is the subject of discussion. Louise Phillips and Marianne Jørgensen encourage the combining of aspects from the various discourse analysis perspectives. In brief, drawing on existing understandings of the concept, the notion of discourse is to be understood here as the means by which ideology, a set of values, is transferred, articulated or communicated. In other words, ideology becomes evident in discourse.⁴⁰ Thus, a

³⁷ Burnham, Peter *et al.* *Research Methods in Politics*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2004. p. 242

³⁸ Howarth, David. *Discourse*. Buckingham & Philadelphia: Open University Press, 2000. p. 6

³⁹ See Phillips, Louise and Jørgensen, Marianne W. *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*. London & Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2002., Howarth 2000 and Torfing, Jacob. *New Theories of Discourse: Laclau, Mouffe and Žižek*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999. for discussions on the various approaches.

⁴⁰ van Dijk, Teun. A. *Ideology: A Multidisciplinary Approach*. London: Sage Publications, 1998., pp. 14, 192, 193 and Fairclough, Norman. *Language and Power*. London & New York: Longman, 1989. p. 77

discourse approach enables an investigation of the ideological nature of Iranian national identity in a more analytical manner, rather than simply referring to it in terms of the “Iranian psyche”.

Taking Teun van Dijk’s definition, ideology is to be understood as a system or set of beliefs and ideas. This system of ideas usually pertains to how society is perceived to, or ought to function by an individual or group.⁴¹ Furthermore, ideology can be understood as ‘shared social representations that have specific functions for groups’.⁴² At one end of the spectrum, it is perceived that ideology does not accept that society is able to function in any other way. At the other end of the spectrum, an ideology can be a belief system that does not acknowledge that there is any set way by which the world can be interpreted. The contention that discourse is the means by which ideology is transferred, articulated or communicated draws on the arguments of both van Dijk and Norman Fairclough. Van Dijk argues that ‘discourse expresses or reproduces underlying ideologies’ that are reproduced in society.⁴³ Fairclough argues that ‘conventions routinely drawn up in discourse embody ideological assumptions which come to be taken as mere “common sense”’.⁴⁴ In other words, whereas ideology is a system or set of beliefs or ideas, the contention here is that discourse is the means of transmitting the ideas and sets of beliefs. Therefore, ideology is constructed and recognised in discourse. Furthermore, discourse is also the means of establishing ideology as common sense or as one of society’s assumptions. Thus, discourse is more than just the ideology that an individual or group of people subscribe to; discourse also reflects the meanings attached to the ideology, or what comes to be “common sense”, either consciously or subconsciously.

A crucial point in understanding the concept of discourse is the relationship between ideology and power. Integral to the arguments of both Fairclough and van Dijk regarding discourse is the role of ideology in maintaining power. Fairclough contends that “common sense” based on ‘ideological assumptions’ ‘contribute[s] to sustaining existing power relations’.⁴⁵ Van Dijk’s contention is that ideology ‘may be used to legitimate or oppose power and dominance, or symbolise social problems and contradictions’.⁴⁶ Thus, in the case of national identity, a discourse analysis of the way it is articulated reveals certain ideological assumptions. For example, as will be dealt with in detail in Chapter Four, the

⁴¹Op. cit. van Dijk, p.5

⁴² Ibid., p. 191

⁴³ Ibid., p. 193

⁴⁴ Op. cit. Fairclough, p. 77

⁴⁵ Ibid. p. 77

⁴⁶ Op. cit. van Dijk, p.5

one of the ideologies embedded in the Islamist construction of national identity is that Islam is all encompassing and that it is the most legitimate means of opposing what is perceived as Western dominance and power.

The relationship between discourse and power is elaborated by Robert Young in his introduction to Michel Foucault's 'The Order of Discourse'. He argues that the effect of discursive practices is:

to make it virtually impossible to think outside them. To think outside them, is by definition, to be mad, to be beyond comprehension and therefore reason. It is in this way that we can see how discursive rules are linked to the exercise of power; how the forms of discourse are both constituted by, and ensure the reproduction of, the social system, through forms of selection, exclusion, and domination.⁴⁷

To use the Islamist discourse of national identity as an example, an effective Islamist discourse of national identity would succeed in making people believe that it is only Islam that is the legitimate basis of national identity and furthermore, national identity is not constructed, rather it is innate. In other words, it becomes "common sense" and one of society's assumptions.

Taking Foucault's notion of power, while discourse is a means of maintaining domination, there is the possibility of resistance to that domination.⁴⁸ This brings us back to the contentions of van Dijk and Fairclough. The latter contends that discourse plays a role in the sustaining of existing power relations, whereas the former attributes discourse the role of both legitimising as well as opposing power. Howarth offers an explanation for this. He argues:

... no matter how successful a particular project's discourse might be in dominating a discursive field, it can never in principle completely articulate all elements, as there will always be forces against which it is defined. In fact ... a discourse always requires a discursive "outside" to constitute itself.⁴⁹

In other words, the identity of a discourse is dependent on 'differentiation from other discourses'.⁵⁰ For example, the Islamist discourse of national identity partly sustains and defines itself in opposition to other discourses, such as the Iranist discourse of national identity that rejects Islam as the basis of Iranian national identity. Ernest Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's concept of 'social antagonism' also explains this. They argue: 'social antagonisms occur because social agents are *unable* to attain their identities (and therefore

⁴⁷ Young, Robert. 'Introduction' to Foucault, Michel 'The order of discourse' in Young, Robert. (ed) *Untying the Text: A Post-structuralist Reader*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981. p. 48

⁴⁸ See Mills, Sara. *Michel Foucault*. London: Routledge. 2003, pp. 33-34

⁴⁹ Op. Cit. Howarth, p. 102

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 102

their interests), and because they construct an “enemy” who is deemed responsible for this “failure”.⁵¹ Furthermore, Foucault’s understanding of discourse is also as a ‘means for different forces to advance their interests and projects, while also providing points of resistance for counter-strategies to develop.’⁵²

Since ideology is constructed and it is often resisted, it must be taken for granted that contesting ideologies can exist parallel to each other. Fairclough argues that the ‘state of social relationships and social struggle’ determines the extent of ideological diversity between different historical periods or societies.⁵³ Adding to this, the contention here is that, social struggle also takes place within a society; ideological diversity can therefore also take place within a society. Thus, drawing on Fairclough’s concept of ‘ideological diversity’, ideologies can exist parallel to each other, some of which may compete with one another. They can exist at the same time and compete for the same space. For example, within a single society or a part of society, such as the state or family, individuals can prescribe to competing ideologies. Furthermore, since ideology is embedded in discourse there is also discourse ‘diversity’.

Due to the contention that discourse is also a means of ‘providing points of resistance for counter-strategies to develop’⁵⁴, it can be argued that discourses not only assert power, but also provide a means of resistance. In other words, they are at once hegemonic and counter-hegemonic. Thus, in the case of discourses of national identity, it is contended that they have a hegemonic and counter-hegemonic dynamic, as will be illustrated. Hegemony, here, is to be understood in terms of Antonio Gramsci’s hegemony: political, cultural and moral leadership.⁵⁵ Although he also argues that hegemony is ‘exercised by the leading group in a decisive nucleus of economic activity’⁵⁶, the issue of economic activity will not be addressed in this thesis; that is not to say that the hegemonic nature of the discourses is not also economic. While hegemony is political, cultural and moral leadership, counter-hegemony is resistance to that leadership, often offering an alternative political, cultural and moral leadership.

When deconstructing discourse, and therefore also ideology, how it is interpreted is influenced by the context from which the issue is addressed or approached. Whether these

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 105

⁵² Ibid., p. 49

⁵³ Op. cit. Fairclough, p. 87

⁵⁴ Op. Cit. Howarth, p. 49

⁵⁵ Forgacs, David. (ed) *The Antonio Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings 1916-1935*. New York: New York University Press, 2000. p. 194

⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 211-212

concepts are considered as a negative force for describing the ‘other’ is a subjective interpretation. Similarly, whether ideology is understood as a means of justifying and exerting power and dominance over another group or as a means of resistance to power and dominance is also open to interpretation. The important point to remember is that it can be both.

What can be considered as discourse or discursive practice needs to be considered. Structuralist approaches to discourse, such as that by Ferdinand de Saussure, assume that there is ‘a clear analogy between language and social relationships’.⁵⁷ In this sense, discursive practice is limited to language and more specifically to speech. For the post-structuralist Jacques Derrida, however, discourse is extended to also include written text. The limitation of discursive practice to language in the form of speech or written text is also rejected by Laclau and Mouffe who argue that with the analysis of ‘non-discursive practices’, such as

political interventions, technologies, productive organisations - the clearer it becomes that these are relational systems of differential identities, which are not shaped by some objective necessity (God, Nature, or Reason) and which can only therefore be conceived as discursive articulations.⁵⁸

This is also taken on board by Howarth who argues that discourse analysis is:

the process of analysing signifying practices as discursive forms. This means that discourse analysts treat a wide range of linguistic and non-linguistic material – speeches, reports, manifestos, historical events, interviews, policies, ideas, even organisations and institutions – as ‘texts’ or ‘writings’ that enable subjects to experience the world of objects, words and practices.⁵⁹

In other words, ‘discourses constitute symbolic systems and social orders, and the task of discourse analysis is to examine their historical and political construction and functioning.’⁶⁰ Thus, discourse is not only evident in written texts and spoken words, but also actions and images.

Finally, it must be stressed that discourses are fluid. As Phillips and Jørgensen highlight, the discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe is based on the notion that ‘social phenomena are never finished or total’⁶¹; in other words society is fluid rather than static. As will be illustrated, the contention here is that ideology, discourse, identity and nation are all fluid socially constructed phenomena.

⁵⁷ Op. cit. Howarth, p.17

⁵⁸ Op. cit. Torfing, p. 90

⁵⁹ Op. cit. Howarth, p. 10

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 5

⁶¹ Op. cit. Phillips and Jørgensen, p. 24

1.10 Nation

The previous section established that discourse is the means by which ideology is articulated and that discourses reproduce what comes to be known as “common sense”. This section addresses the issue of nation and how it is to be defined. Before proceeding, however, it is worth mentioning that additional theoretical considerations associated with the meanings attached the idea of nation will be discussed in the following chapters.

It is contended here that nation is to be understood as a fluid socially constructed political unit. In relation to the Persian terminology, which will be discussed in more detail below, this is a combination of *millat* (nation) and *dawlat* (state). Although nation possesses specific territorial boundaries, it might also be viewed transnationally in relation to its diaspora. While some nations are synonymous with the state, the two are not necessarily contingent on each other. Nation, as it is known today, is a modern phenomenon; nonetheless it can also have pre-modern roots. Finally, nation is not only constructed on the state-level, but also on non-state levels; and it is likely that these constructions compete with each other and, therefore, the construction of nation is more often than not contested.

A deconstruction of national identity in the context of any country or community raises the methodological issue of how nation is to be defined. It is all very well examining the literature on nation and nationalism and coming up with a definition that fits with the researcher’s views on the subject or the researcher’s findings. However, what happens when the constructions of national identity being analysed clearly do not subscribe to the same definitions as that outlined by the researcher? Thus, any discussion on national identity in the Iranian context must address not only how the notion of nation and identity in the Persian language and in the context of Iran are discussed, but also the meanings attached to the terminology used. This section will first look at the Persian terminology and will then consider the scholarship on nation and attempt to reconcile the two.

As Sadiki argues, in his discussion on discourses and counter-discourses of Arab democracy, ‘an understanding of the dynamics of language is crucial ... for understanding ... the structure of political societies and ideological machinery and political thought.’⁶² Similarly, Nazih Ayubi stresses that in the case of the Arab world the word for state (*dawla*) epistemologically represents different things to the Latin root.⁶³ Bearing this in mind, the crucial issue, therefore, when looking at Persian language texts and interpreting

⁶² Op. cit. Sadiki, p. 96

⁶³ Ayubi, Nazih. *Over-stating the Arab States: Politics and Society in the Middle East*. London & New York: I. B. Tauris, 1995. p. 15

interviews conducted in the Persian language, is that it is essential to be clear as to what *millī* (national), *millīyat* (nationhood or nationality) or *millat* (nation) mean in that context. When talking about national identity, the term *huvīyat-i millī* is used; *huvīyat* meaning ‘identity’ and *millī* meaning ‘national’. However, to consider the Persian *huvīyat-i millī* to be a direct translation of what is understood in English as national identity is inaccurate, as Homa Katouzian explains:

In its classical use the word *millat* referred to peoples of given religions, *millat-i Islam* [people of Islam], *millat-i Masih* [people of Christianity/Christ], etc. ... In the nineteenth century, while still retaining its classical sense, the term began to be used to mean ‘the people’ as opposed to ‘the state’ [*dawlat*]. ... *Millat* did not therefore have the same socio-historical meaning as the European ‘nation’, although later in the twentieth century this European term and concept was translated as *millat* at least in part because no equivalent for it existed in Persian language or society. *Millat* is separate from *dawlat* and is contrasted with it, whereas the European ‘nation’ includes the state.

The term *millī* was almost certainly coined around the turn of the century as an adjective: *millat* meant the people; *millī*, popular. ‘Democracy’ was then translated into ‘*hukūmat-i millī*’, or popular (though not *populist*) government, and has retained this sense ever since. However, later in the [twentieth] century when *millat* began to be used in translation for ‘nation’, *millī* was likewise used for the European ‘national’ as opposed to ‘international’. Yet, in the division of firms and industries into private and state-owned, *millī* persists as meaning non-state ... and *dawlatī* as meaning state-owned.⁶⁴

Kashani-Sabet translates *millat* as citizenry⁶⁵, which coincides with the definition given by Katouzian above.

Therefore, when deconstructing Iranian national identity, the relationship between the identity of the people of Iran and the identity the state prescribes for them needs to be considered. It must also be taken that any state aspirations for the identity of the nation, or *millat*, has some sort of popular following. However, the extent of the popular following is another issue of discussion that cannot be dealt with in detail here. Nonetheless, since the individuals within the state apparatus are also essentially part of the *millat*, the distinction between *huvīyat-i millī* and *huvīyat-i dawlat* are not so clearly defined.

A closer look at *millī* shows that in some contexts *millī* is used in opposition to *dīnī*, meaning religious. Thus, *millī* refers to aspects of identity that are not to do with religion. For example, Ahmadi, in his discussion on the role of religion and nationhood in the Middle East, states: ‘the national [*millī*] element among the Arabs and Turks was

⁶⁴ Katouzian, Homa. *Musaddiq and the Struggle for Power in Iran*. 2nd edn. London & New York: I. B. Tauris, 1999. pp. 258-259

⁶⁵ Op. cit. **Kashani-Sabet 2000, p. 7**

unprecedented; their identity search was more of a religious nature'.⁶⁶ In other words, *millī* in this sense is used to refer to that which is not associated with religion. Connected with this is the term *millīyat*, which can be translated as 'nationhood' or 'nationality'. Ahmadi states: 'the relationship between religion (*dīn*) and nationhood (*millīyat*) or *Īrānīyat* and *Īslāmīyat*'.⁶⁷ At another point, *millīyat* and *dīn* are interchanged with *nasionalism* and Islam respectively.⁶⁸ This usage of *millī* and *millīyat* does not refer to the *millat* as defined above – the people, as opposed to the state. Rather, it refers to Iranian identity without Islam, or prior to Islam; in other words it is Iran's pre-Islamic culture. Related to this discussion is the term *nasionalist*. *Nasionalist*, the Persianised form of the French *nationaliste*, is not synonymous with the general term of 'nationalism' in the English language. Rather, it is a particular type of nationalism, one based on the prioritisation of Iran's pre-Islamic culture, such as the nationalism of Mirza Fath 'Ali Akhundzadah (1812-1878) or Mirza Agha Khan Kermani (1854-1896) and the Pahlavi regime (1921-1979). In relation to Mohammad Reza Shah, Katouzian argues that this was considered as *nasionalist-i musbat* (positive nationalist).⁶⁹ These will be examined in more detail in the following chapter. The meanings attached to *nasionalist* are also similar to those of the Iranist discourse of national identity, which will be dealt with in Chapter Four.

Katouzian notes that when Mohammad Reza Shah in the 1950s used the term *nasionalist*, it was not, however, used by the former Iranian Prime Minister Dr Mohammad Musaddiq and the Popular Movement. He also argues that *millī* has never been used to refer to nationalist.⁷⁰ However, during the research trip to Iran between September and December 2005, it was evident that the term *millī garāyī* (literally, 'tendency towards the national') was being used to refer to a sentiment of putting one's nation or national interests first, or pride in the nation and wanting the best for the nation. In this sense, the meaning is more akin to how nationalism is understood in its broadest sense in the English language. This understanding can be related to Musaddiq's discourse, as reflected in the reasons behind the nationalisation of Iran's oil industry. In this case, *millī garāyī* is to be differentiated from *nasionalist*. *Nasionalist* is often heard in conjunction with, or perceived by some, as

⁶⁶ Ahmadi, Hamid. 'Dīn va Millīyat dar Īrān: Hamyārī yā Kishmakish' ('Religion and Nationhood in Iran: Cooperation or Conflict) in Ahmadi, Hamid. (ed) *Īrān: Huvīyat, Millīyat, Qawmīyat (Iran: Identity, Nationality, Ethnicity)*. Tehran: Institute for the Research and development of Social Sciences, 1383 (2004/2005). p. 52-114, p. 63

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 96

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 77

⁶⁹ Op. cit. Katouzian 1999, p. 259

⁷⁰ Ibid. p. 259

being similar to *nizhād parast*, literally ‘race worship’. This might be equated with racism and the sense of nationalism that considers one’s own nation as more superior in racial terms than others. This is not necessarily the meaning associated with *millī garāyī*.

However, *millī garāyī* is also used in opposition to *Īslāmī garāyī* (literally, ‘tendency towards the Islamic’). In this context, *millī garāyī* can be understood in terms of the idea of the prioritisation of Iran’s pre-Islamic culture and *Īslāmī garāyī* can be understood in terms of the prioritisation of Iran’s Islamic culture. The discourse that uses *millī garāyī* in this sense is referred to as Iranist in this thesis. The discourse that is *Īslāmī garāyī* is referred to as Islamist. The Islamist and Iranist discourses, along with the relationship between *millīyat* and *dīn*, or *Īrānīyat* and *Īslāmīyat* will be explored in more detail in Chapter Four in relation to the meanings attached to Iranian national identity. Nonetheless, it is crucial to briefly address these terms here because how they relate to the English language needs to be clarified. To avoid confusion, unless specifically stated in a quote, the terms *Īrānīyat* and *Īslāmīyat* will be used.

Having illustrated the complexity of the idea of *millat*, this chapter now turns to the scholarship on nation in the English language. This will be done by outlining how nation is defined in this thesis. The idea that nation is a construction is a key factor in Benedict Anderson’s argument. He contends that nation is an ‘imagined political community’; it is imagined because its members imagine the image of communion even though they cannot ever know the other members.⁷¹ In his analysis of Anderson’s work, Umut Özkirimli points out that Anderson stresses that “‘imagining’ does not imply ‘falsity’”. This point is made when he ‘accuses Ernest Gellner for assimilating ‘invention’ with ‘fabrication’ and ‘falsity’, rather than with ‘imagining’ and ‘creation’”.⁷² However, as will be illustrated, how the political community is imagined is contested.

While nation is an ‘imagined political community’, the basis on which it is constructed is contested. Anthony Smith provides two types of nation: ethnic and civic. The former’s ‘distinguishing feature is its emphasis on a community of birth and native culture’. The latter is based on ‘historic territory’ and a ‘common civic culture and ideology’.⁷³ Civic nation can be further clarified by Smith’s analysis of national identity. He contends that nation has ‘some common institutions and a single code of rights and duties for all members of the community’.⁷⁴ For example, the role of institutions is considered in

⁷¹ Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities*. London & New York: Verso, 1983. p. 66

⁷² Özkirimli, Umut. *Theories of Nationalism: A Critical Introduction*. London: Macmillan, 2000., p. 144

⁷³ Smith, Antony D. *National Identity*. Reno, Nevada: University of Nevada Press, 1991. p. 11

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 9

Brown's construction of national identity. He outlines institutions, such as the army, monarchy, the National Health Service and the British Broadcasting Corporation, as a symbol of the 'real Britain' and as 'founded on the core value of fairness'.⁷⁵ However, it must be noted that the 'single code of rights and duties' is often contested. Furthermore, as will be illustrated, both the 'native culture' and 'historic territory' are constructed and also contested.

The focus of this thesis is not a discussion or analysis of ethnicity and ethnic identity in Iran.⁷⁶ However, since nation can be constructed on the basis of ethnicity, it is concept that needs to be addressed. Furthermore, as will be illustrated, it is argued that Iranian national identity is also sometimes constructed on the basis of the idea of an ethnic nation as opposed to a civic one. With regard to the definition of ethnicity, Max Weber contends:

We shall call, 'ethnic groups' those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs or both, or because of memories of colonisation and migration; this belief must be important for the propagation of group formation; conversely, it does not matter whether or not an objective blood relationship exists.⁷⁷

In other words, ethnic groups are constructed on the basis of constructed myths of common descent and shared values and/or memories.

However, it must be pointed out that it is also argued by some that ethnicity is innate and primordial as opposed to constructed. Furthermore, those belonging to an ethnic group may not perceive this identity as constructed. Rather, it is for them a matter of birth. This is alluded to by Ali Banuazizi and Myron Weiner, in their discussion of ethnic groups:

Ethnic [refers] to the way individuals and groups characterise themselves on the basis of their language, race, place of origin, shared culture, values and history. Ethnicity is generally but not always a matter of birth. Central to the notion of ethnicity is a conception of a common descent, often of mythic character.⁷⁸

This definition of ethnicity and ethnic group demonstrates that such a group of people are 'characterised' in a certain way. They also argue that it can be a 'matter of birth', which suggests it is perceived by some as primordial as opposed to socially constructed.

⁷⁵ Op. Cit., Brown

⁷⁶ For discussions on ethnicity and ethnic groups in Iran see Higgins, P. J. 'Minority-State Relations in Contemporary Iran' in Banuazizi, A. and Weiner, M. (eds) *The State, Religion and Ethnic Politics: Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1986. pp. 167-197; Keddie, Nikki 'Religion, Ethnic Minorities, and the State in Iran: An Overview' in Banuazizi, A. and Weiner, M. (eds) *The State, Religion and Ethnic Politics: Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1986. pp. 157-166; and Ahmadi, Hamid. *Qawmīyat va Qawm Garāyī dar Īrān: Afsānih va Vaqīyat (Ethnicity and Ethnicism in Iran: Myth and Reality)*. Tehran: Nasharni, 1378 (1999/2000).

⁷⁷ Weber, Max. *Economy and Society*, Vol. I. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press. 1978

⁷⁸ Op. cit. Banuazizi and Weiner, p.2

In addition to these arguments, that provided by Smith must also be taken into consideration. His concept of *ethnie* acknowledges the historicity of such a social grouping. Smith's aim is to provide 'an analysis that will bring out the differences and similarities between modern national units and sentiments' and *ethnie*: the collective units and sentiments of previous eras.⁷⁹ In other words, the idea of *ethnie* implies a pre-modern existence. Smith identifies the 'concepts of 'form', 'identity', 'myth', 'symbol' and 'communication' codes' as key to his analysis.⁸⁰ The characteristics of the *ethnie* are collective name, a common myth of descent, a shared history, a distinctive shared culture, an association with a specific territory and a sense of solidarity.⁸¹ Smith argues that there are two types of *ethnie*: the 'lateral *ethnie*' and the 'vertical *ethnie*'. Whereas the 'lateral *ethnie*' are 'aristocratic, though usually clerical and scribal strata are included, along with wealthier urban merchants', the 'vertical *ethnie*' are:

urban-based, priestly, trading and artisan in their composition, with their ruling strata often thrown up from the wealthy and powerful factions in the towns; alternatively, they are loose coalitions of tribesmen under their clan chiefs.⁸²

Of particularly interest to this thesis is Smith's use of Iran as an example of the 'lateral *ethnie*' because it shows that Iran, as a nation, has pre-modern roots. Smith contends that the Persian Achaemenids, who ruled over the largest empire in the ancient Near East, formed a dual *ethnie* providing Court, bureaucracy, nobility and clergy. However, Smith argues that the Achaemenids were not successful and their dynasty collapsed; they failed to socially penetrate the local peasantry and reduce their sacred traditions to scriptural canons. It must be asked, however, what is to be understood by successful; surely the every existence of the empire alludes to some sort of success. Nonetheless, according to Smith, it was the Sasanians who were more successful in stabilising an ethnic state through religious reform under Kartir.⁸³

As mentioned above, although this thesis is not a deconstruction of the various constructions of ethnic identity in Iran, ethnicity or ethnic group needs to be clarified because it is used in the construction of Iranian national identity. Thus, in summary, it is argued that ethnicity and is fluid and socially constructed. It is also acknowledged, however, that those constructing it may not perceive it as a construction, but as static and

⁷⁹ Smith, Anthony. D. *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*. Oxford & Malden, Massachusetts, 1988. p. 13

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 14

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 22-31

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 76

⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp. 81-82

innate. Finally, social groups with the characteristics of ethnic groups, as outlined above, existed in pre-modern times.

Considering the definitions of ethnicity and nation are indeed quite similar, the question of how ethnicity and nation differ needs to be addressed. As Banuazizi and Weiner point out, ‘the presence of an ethnic identity does not in itself imply that the group is politically articulate and assertive’.⁸⁴ Thus, it is the political nature of nation that differentiates it from ethnicity; essentially nation is a politicised ethnicity and therefore constitutes a political unit. As mentioned above, nation is an ‘imagined *political* community’.

Due to the political nature of nation, the relationship between nation and state also needs to be addressed. It is argued that nation is synonymous with the state or that one cannot exist without the other.⁸⁵ However, this is problematic; state and nation are not always synonymous. For example, England, Wales and Scotland are all nations within a state, the United Kingdom, but without their own states. In addition to these identities, there also exists the idea of Britain as a national identity. However, as addressed in Chapter one, there are parts of the Welsh and Scottish nations that will contest Britain as their nation and *vice versa*. The examples of the Palestinians and the Kurds, who are stateless nations, also prove that nation is not necessarily congruent with a state. Nevertheless, this does not mean the identity of a nation cannot be constructed as synonymous with the state.

As has been illustrated, the concept of culture is integral to the construction of both ethnicity and nation - in both its civic and ethnic forms. It can be argued that it is culture that differentiates one ethnicity from another or one nation from another. Thus, it is necessary to address briefly the notion of culture here. However, it will be explored in more detail in Chapter Four in relation to the meanings attached to culture in the constructions of Iranian national identity. Generally speaking, culture can be understood in terms of the notion of shared values, norms or knowledge among a group of people or in a community that distinguishes it from another group or community.⁸⁶

With regard to the relationship between nation and culture, it is Gellner’s contention that industrial society is one of cultural homogeneity.⁸⁷ This, however, is problematic. Rather, society, and therefore nation, is culturally heterogeneous. To consider society or nation in terms of one culture is simplistic. Furthermore, if the nation is made up of more than one

⁸⁴ Op. cit. Banuazizi and Weiner, p.3

⁸⁵ Gellner, Ernest. *Nations and Nationalism*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1983., pp. 1-6

⁸⁶ For a list of references which define culture along these lines, see <http://www.carla.umn.edu/culture/definitions.html> - date accessed 23 June 2006.

⁸⁷ Op. cit. Gellner, p. 35

ethnic or religious group, it is one of cultural heterogeneity. Nonetheless, this does not mean that there are not attempts to construct nation on the basis of an ideology that prescribes that there is only one “true” and “authentic” culture. In this case, it is the contention here that the construction can only be considered as an aspiration for the identity of the nation. As will be illustrated with the case of Iran, culture is contested and indeed what is considered to be the “authentic” culture is contested. For example, although this thesis makes the assumption that there is an Iranian nation, albeit contested; Iran is clearly a culturally *heterogeneous* nation because it is inclusive of the cultures of several religious and ethnic groups, such as Kurds, Arabs, Azeris, Baluchis, Bahai, and Jews. Furthermore, the existence of multiple constructions of national identity also implies cultural heterogeneity.

Although the state, as we know it today, is a modern phenomenon, the idea of a nation can have pre-modern roots. Thus, modernist approaches such as that of Gellner are problematic. Gellner argues that it is the age of industrialisation that is the age of nationalism; because it is only under these conditions, rather than those of agrarian society, that the components for nation – will, culture and political units - converge and become the norm. Furthermore, ‘It is nationalism which engenders nations, not the other way around’ and therefore, the nation can only exist in the age of nationalism.⁸⁸

Anderson also has a modernist approach to the notion of nation. He argues that the nation is sovereign because the concept came about in an era when ‘Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm’.⁸⁹ He also argues that nation, nation-ness and nationalism are ‘cultural artefacts’, which were created towards the end of the eighteenth century.⁹⁰ Furthermore, as far as he is concerned, the decline in ‘three fundamental cultural conceptions’ of antiquity helped the evolution of the imagined community of nation. The first is ‘the idea that a particular script-language offered privileged access to ontological truth, precisely because it was an inseparable part of that truth’. The second is ‘the belief that society was naturally organised around and under high centred monarchs ... who ruled by some form of cosmological (divine) dispensation’. The third is the ‘conception of temporality in which cosmology and history were indistinguishable, the origins of the world and of man essentially identical’.⁹¹ Again, Anderson argues that it was under these conditions, which

⁸⁸ Ibid, pp. 54 & 55

⁸⁹ Op. cit. Anderson, pp. 6-7

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 2

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 36

were provided by the Enlightenment, when a fundamental change was taking place in modes of apprehending the world, which, more than anything else, made it possible to ‘think’ the nation’.⁹²

However, to his credit, Anderson does acknowledge that ‘nation-ness’ can have pre-Enlightenment roots. He argues that in fact the concept of nation-ness developed in the Creole communities of America well before it did in Europe. Although Anderson accepts the popular reasons for the Creole resistance – ‘the tightening of Madrid’s control and the spread of liberalising ideas of the Enlightenment’ - he does not accept them as sufficient explanation for how Chile, Venezuela and Mexico came to be plausible political and emotional entities. Rather, he argues, it is the fact that these communities had been administrative units from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries that developed economically, politically and geographically over time.⁹³

Despite the shortcoming of a modernist approach, there are aspects of Anderson’s modernist argument that are beneficial if put into context. To his credit, unlike Gellner, in his analysis of how nation, nation-ness and nationalism came into ‘historical being’ he differentiates between European nations and those of the ex-colonies. It is with reference to the European context that he develops his argument that print-capitalism (the convergence of capitalism and print technology) was fundamental in the popularisation of the idea of ‘nation’.⁹⁴ It is his contention that the ability to ‘think’ the nation was aided by ‘print-capitalism’ (the convergence of capitalism and print technology) because it was a fundamental tool by which people were able ‘to think about themselves, and to relate themselves to others, in profoundly new ways’.⁹⁵

It cannot be denied that the conditions outlined above in the Enlightenment period and print capitalism aided the proliferation of nationhood and the nation. However, it cannot also be argued that nation did not have pre-modern roots. To this regard, Smith provides a credible argument. Smith finds the modernist approach problematic because they argue that nation and nationalism are purely modern phenomena and products of modern developments such as capitalism, bureaucracy and secular utilitarianism.⁹⁶ It is in response to the perennialist, primordialist and modernist explanations of nation, which he considered to be insufficient that Smith develops his ‘*ethnie*’ argument, outlined above.

⁹² Ibid., p. 22

⁹³ Ibid., pp. 50-52

⁹⁴ Ibid., Chapter 3

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 36

⁹⁶ Op. cit. Smith 1988, pp. 8-13

Another issue that is contested with regard to the notion of nation is whether or not nation includes the diaspora. While acknowledging that the term 'diaspora' was originally used to refer to the dispersing of the Jewish community after the fall of the Temple, Spencer and Wollman draw attention to Cohen's definition, who argues that the common features of diaspora include:

a variety of reasons for original dispersal; a collective memory and myth about the homeland; a distinctive popular ethnic group consciousness involving an idealised view of the supposed ancient homeland, and sometimes popular movement of return; and a commitment to its well-being, or even to its creation or recreation if it no longer exists; a difficult and insecure relationship with the host society; and a 'sense of empathy and solidarity with co-ethnic members in countries of settlement'.⁹⁷

Cohen also argues that with regard to national identity 'diasporas point to alternative forms of identification' because identity becomes deterritorialised as the nation-state also includes citizens who are no longer within its territorial boundaries. Nevertheless, they maintain their social, political, cultural and often economic ties with the nation-state of the ancestors.⁹⁸

While a nation is based on territorial borders it is not confined to them. Anderson argues that nation is limited because it has boundaries beyond which are other nations.⁹⁹ However, Smith argues:

[Nation] also suggests a definite social space, a fairly well demarcated and bounded territory, with which members identify and to which they feel they belong.¹⁰⁰

Of particular importance here is the notion of belonging. Those outside the physical territorial boundaries of the nation also have a sense of belonging to the nation. The diaspora therefore is also considered part of the nation and so nation can also be transnational. For example, many among the diasporas of Iran, Iraq and Palestine among others, continue to consider themselves part of the Iranian, Iraqi and Palestinian nations respectively and contribute to discussions on the articulation and construction of national identity. The contention here is that the Iranian diaspora is part of the Iranian nation and therefore has its role to play in the articulation and construction of national identity.

⁹⁷A summary of Cohen, R. *Global Diasporas: An Introduction*, London: UCL Press, 1997. p. 26 cited in Spencer, P. & Wollman, H. (eds) *Nationalism: A Critical Introduction*. London: Sage Publications, 2002. p. 164

⁹⁸ quote from Cohen, 1997, p. 136 in Spencer & Wollman 2002, p. 165

⁹⁹ Op. cit. Anderson, p. 7

¹⁰⁰ Op. cit. Smith 1991, p. 9

In support of this argument is that of Spencer and Wollman. They illustrate the complexity of the issue of implications of diaspora communities on national identity by highlighting the fact that there are a variety of both diasporic conditions and political and identity responses. They provide the cases of Zionism and the support of Irish Americans for the IRA as two examples. With regard to Zionism, the point made is that the nationalist movement grew out of the diaspora. Although the nationalist movement emphasises the desire to return to the homeland as an integral part of Jewish identity, in reality many had no intention of leaving the host country. Spencer and Wollman draw a parallel with the support of Irish Americans for the IRA; although there is financial, cultural and physical support, there is no desire to return to Ireland.¹⁰¹

The construction of nation is also historically contextual.¹⁰² For example, as will be discussed further in Chapter Three, the state construction of the Iranian nation in the Pahlavi period differed greatly to that following the 1979 Revolution. The construction of Britain as a nation has also evolved through its history and is therefore fluid, which is indicated in the extract from Brown's speech at the beginning of the previous chapter. He wants to move away from the idea of British national identities being associated with race and ethnicity towards a construction based on shared values in order to be better positioned to deal with reality of the 'modern world'.¹⁰³ These two cases also show 'nations are situated in specific historical moments and are constructed by shifting nationalist discourses promoted by different groupings competing for hegemony.'¹⁰⁴

The construction of nation is also culturally contextual. Özkirimli identifies the scholars Partha Chatterjee and Ranajit Guha for their contribution in providing 'a 'non-Westocentric' interpretation of anti/postcolonial nationalisms'.¹⁰⁵ Chatterjee argues:

anti/postcolonial nationalism ... was never totally dominated by Western models of nationhood. It could not imitate the West in every aspect of life, for then the very distinction between the East and West would vanish and 'the self-identity of national culture would itself be threatened'.¹⁰⁶

Both Chatterjee and Guha, according to Özkirimli, attempted an analysis of South Asian history from the view of the 'subordinated', rather than the 'hegemonic discourses of the

¹⁰¹ Op. Cit. Spencer & Wollman, p. 168

¹⁰² Yuval-Davis, Nira. *Gender and Nation*. London: Sage Publications, 1997. p. 4

¹⁰³ Op. cit. Brown

¹⁰⁴ Op. cit. Yuval-Davis, p. 4

¹⁰⁵ Op. cit. Özkirimli, p. 194

¹⁰⁶ Özkirimli, p. 194 paraphrases and quotes Chatterjee 'The Nationalist Revolution of the Women's Question', in Sanghari, K. & Vaid, S. (eds) *Recasting Women: Essays in Indian Colonial History*. 1990 New Brunswick, N.J : Rutgers University Press

West'.¹⁰⁷ In the case of Iran, however, as Ali Gheissari and Vali Nasr point out, neither European nor colonial/post-colonial patterns of state-building apply to that of Iran.¹⁰⁸ Although it is 'anti/postcolonial nationalisms' that Chatterjee and Guha discuss, it is still of relevance to Iran because of the importance of anti-imperialism in Iranian nationalisms and discourses of national identity. The point here is that it must not be assumed that nations world-wide are constructed in the same way. However, while an analysis of nation and national identity must not be entirely based on theories that have been made based on the Western or post-colonial experience, a comparative approach can be beneficial.

Not only is the construction of nation historically and culturally contextual, but it must not be assumed that the state has a monopoly on its construction. Although this is not an argument addressed in detail by Anderson, he does acknowledge, through his analysis of Creole nationalism, that the 'imagination' of nation is not restricted to the state or elite levels. He argues that the American states of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries are of interest because nationalism was tied to the politicised lower classes, rather than to the intelligentsia.¹⁰⁹ He argues that the Creole were made to feel part of a community through religious pilgrimages and through the pitmen's newspapers.¹¹⁰ It was the combination of these two factors that enable the people to be imagined as a nation.

The non-state construction of nation is dealt with by Nira Yuval-Davis in more detail. In her critique of Gellner and Smith, she argues it is women in the private sphere that 'reproduce nations biologically, culturally and symbolically', rather than the intelligentsia and the bureaucracy of the public sphere. Yuval-Davis' differentiation between the public and private spheres draws on the argument provided by Pateman and Grant to explain why it is the case that the role of women is excluded from the discussion of nationhood. They argue that women are located in the private domain, rather than the public domain, whereas theories of nation tend to be restricted to the public domain.¹¹¹ As Billing and McIntock contend, it is actually in every day life where it can be seen how 'ordinary people continue to imagine themselves as an abstract community'.¹¹² To this regard, as has been mentioned before, sometimes the construction of Iranian national identity by some can really only be considered as aspirations.

¹⁰⁷ Op. cit. Özkirimli, p. 194

¹⁰⁸ Gheissari, Ali and Nasr, Vali. *Democracy in Iran: History and the Quest for Liberty*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006. p. 3

¹⁰⁹ Op. cit. Anderson, pp. 47-48

¹¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 53-64

¹¹¹ Op. cit. Yuval-Davis, p. 2

¹¹² An analysis of Billing McIntock is carried out by Özkirimli, p. 195

In accordance with this, Özkirimli argues that the ‘orthodox or classical’ conceptions of nationalism and national identity are challenged because of their ‘involvement in the reproduction of dominant discourses’. That is they do not take into account ‘the experiences of the ‘subordinated’, for example the former European colonies and their postcolonial successors, or women, ethnic minorities and the oppressed classes’.¹¹³ While Iran is not strictly speaking an ex-colony, it is essentially part of the ‘other’ in the dominant Anglo-Saxon discourse reflected in many discussions of nation. Bearing this in mind, it is necessary to look at how nation is constructed from the view of those constructing it.

1.11 Identity

Having established that discourse is a means of articulating ideology and nation is a socially constructed political unit, attention is now directed at the notion of identity. The meanings attached to the term *huvīyat* in the Persian language will first be considered, followed by how identity is to be understood in this thesis.

As mentioned above, the term *huvīyat-i millī* is used in the Persian language in discussions on national identity. However, just as *millī* and *millat* are not directly synonymous with the national or nation in English, nor, strictly speaking, is *huvīyat* synonymous with identity. The meaning attached to *huvīyat* is more spiritual and is more in line with the English term essence. This is possibly why identity appears to be such an emotive issue in Iran. While accepting the roots of *huvīyat*, for the sake of analysis and ease when *huvīyat* is mentioned in texts it has simply been translated as identity.

Hall effectively and clearly outlines three main concepts in relation to his discussion on cultural identity: the Enlightenment subject, the sociological subject and the post-modern subject.¹¹⁴ The Enlightenment notion of the subject was an ‘individualist’ notion of identity that argued that the self remained the same throughout its existence. The sociological notion of subject, however, was an ‘interactive’ notion that saw that the self was ‘formed in relation to significant others’. Finally, the post-modern notion of the subject saw the self as ‘having no fixed, essential, or permanent identity’.¹¹⁵ The following contention provided by Hall in his discussion on cultural identity and the Afro-Caribbean diaspora adds to the debate:

¹¹³ Op. cit. Özkirimli, p. 192

¹¹⁴ Hall, Stuart. ‘The Question of Cultural Identity’, 1995, in Hall, Stuart, Held, David, Hubert, Don, & Thompson, Kenneth. (eds) *Modernity: An Introduction to Modern Societies*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996. pp. 595-634, p. 597

¹¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 597-8

Identity is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think. Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact ... we should think, instead of identity as a 'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside representation.¹¹⁶

In other words identity is in a constant state of evolution and reconstruction. Bearing this in mind, the contention here is that identity is a combination of the sociological notion of subject and the post-modern subject that provides the most accurate picture of the nature of identity. It is by no means permanent or static and the case of the identity of the Iranian nation illustrates this. Nonetheless, this does not mean that those constructing the identity of the nation understand identity in this way. Indeed, for some it is quite to the contrary. As will be illustrated, identity is understood more in terms of the Enlightenment notion mentioned above; the self is thought to remain the same throughout its existence. In other words, identity is perceived to be static and what is perceived to be the 'true' or 'authentic' identity is sought.

It can now be contended that national identity can be understood as how the nation can be identified. It is often the case that national identity is often constructed in relation to 'significant others'. In other words, an important aspect of identity that must also be acknowledged is that identity is also a means of differentiating oneself from the 'other'. Like the subject or the self, the significant other is also fluid and thus identity is repeatedly reconstructed in relation to this. The interactive nature of identity is evident in Ahmad Ashraf's contention as outlined in his examination of Iranian ethnic and national identity:

Identity has a meaning of existence; it is a means of knowing an individual that is a collection of individual properties and behavioural characteristics by which the individual is distinguished from the group and the other. National and ethnic identity is a type of collective identity and has sentiments connected with the greater national and ethnic society, and has an awareness of sentiments of loyalty and devotion. National and ethnic identity is similar to individual identity in terms of our struggle to identify ourselves in terms of the other: Iran compared to Iran, Greece compared to the Barbarians ... Persia compared to the Arabs and the Turks compared to the Tajiks. Therefore, self-awareness of our existence, as well as awareness of the existence of the 'other', come together. The 'self' and the 'other' are two sides of the same coin; and one without the other is meaningless.¹¹⁷

This extract is also interesting because not only does it refer to the 'other' as an external foreigner, but also within Iran. This is a theme that will be developed in Chapters Four

¹¹⁶ Op. cit. Hall 1990, p. 222

¹¹⁷ Ashraf, Ahmad, 'Iranian Identity' *Goft-o-Gu (Dialogue)*, Favardin 1373 (March/April 1994/1995), pp. 7-23, pp. 7-8

and Five. In other words, the identity of the nation is constructed in terms of how it identifies both internally within the nation and externally.

In sum, the definition of national identity contended here is that first of all it is a socially constructed phenomenon. Secondly, the articulation of national identity is how the individual or a group of individuals articulate the nation or how they can identify with the nation. Therefore, taking into consideration the arguments outlined above, how the nation is identified with depends greatly on how the nation is defined in the first place. The third point follows on from the previous point; the articulation of national identity is not restricted to the state level; other groups within society can have their own articulation of national identity.

Although the definition of national identity has been established, further clarification is needed. The term 'Iranian identity' is not synonymous with the term 'Iranian national identity'. Since nation is a political unit, Iranian national identity is a political identity. However, the cultures that are considered as part of Iranian identity are also part of Iranian national identity in some cases, but in the case of the latter they have been politicised. The difference between 'Iranian national identity' and 'national identity in Iran' also needs clarification. The latter allows for the perception that there can, in fact, be more than one national identity within the territorial boundaries of the state of Iran, such as Kurdish national identity. The phrase 'Iranian national identity', on the other hand, makes the assumption that there is an 'umbrella' identity that incorporates into it and celebrates the diversities of religion, ethnicity and language within the confines of the territorial boundaries of Iran. This thesis is based on the second term, that is, it is assumed that there is an Iranian national identity inclusive. However, as mentioned before, Iranian national identity is contested.

1.12 Discourse of National Identity

Having established how discourse, nation and identity are to be understood, these parallel parts can now be brought together in the notion 'discourse of national identity'. By looking at the constructions of Iranian national identity in terms of discourses it is possible to gain a deeper understanding of the multiple and often conflicting meanings attached to the idea of Iran as a nation and its identity. Thus, the 'complexities of political identity and difference'¹¹⁸ are addressed.

¹¹⁸ Op. cit. Howarth, p. 6

Since discourse is to be understood here as the means by which ideology is transferred, articulated or communicated, by looking at the construction of national identity it is possible to see that how the identity of a nation is constructed reflects a particular ideology or ideologies. This is based on the contention that ideology is articulated through the construction of national identity. In other words, ideology is embedded in the construction of national identity. For example, it can be argued that there are two important factors that define the Islamist articulation of Iranian national identity: anti-imperialism and Islam. This is embedded in the discourse of Khamene'i's discourse. For example, he states, 'Islam is the most important pillar of our national culture'¹¹⁹. In addition to this, it becomes apparent from the murals that have been painted on the walls of the old American Embassy, which call for 'Death to America', how the relationship with the United States is perceived; a power that must be resisted at all costs in order to maintain Iran's independence. The latter example also illustrates that discourse is not limited to language for it is not only through language that meaning is transmitted, but also through behaviour, clothes and art among other things.

As mentioned above, by looking at the articulation of national identity as a discourse it allows us to explain the power relations between the different discourses of national identity. Thus, not only does the notion of discourse of national identity enable a deconstruction of the ideologies embedded in the construction of Iranian national identity, but also to explore how the different discourses of national identity relate to each other and also to external forces in terms of power relations. Indeed, it is contended that there is a hegemonic and counter-hegemonic dimension to their relationships.

This contention is made possible because on the one hand, a discourse approach enables the identification of 'the construction of hegemonic formations'¹²⁰ in the articulation of national identity. However, while some discourses may be hegemonic, there is also resistance; the identity of a discourse is dependent on 'differentiation from other discourses'.¹²¹ Therefore, the construction of Iranian national identity is not only examined in terms of discourses, but also in terms of counter-discourses that resist the perceived hegemony of other discourses. Furthermore, it is possible to uncover the unargued assumptions and internal contradictions¹²² and power relations within and between the

¹¹⁹ Khamene'i, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali. *The Cultural Viewpoints of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution of Iran*. Tehran: Centre for Cultural and International Studies, Islamic Culture and Relations Organization, 2000. p. 7

¹²⁰ Op. cit. Howarth, p. 6

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 102

¹²² Op. cit. Phillips and Jørgensen, p. 24

discourses. For example, as has been outlined above, Khamene'i's articulation of national identity is part of a discourse that prescribes Islam as a fundamental aspect of Iran as a nation. However, there are groups in both the Iranian government and Iranian society that reject the perceived hegemony of this discourse and have created their own counter-discourse in which their articulation of national identity is embedded.

By deconstructing the constructions of Iranian national identity in terms of discourses it is also possible to contextualise them historically and intellectually. In other words, it is possible to explore how the ideas and meanings attached to Iranian national identity change, relate to their historical context and also relate to each other. For example, having established the ideologies embedded in the constructions of Iranian national identity in the Khatami period, it is possible to turn to Iran's historical experience and see how and whether or not the same or similar ideologies are used at other stages in Iran's history. For example, a factor that has been used and continues to be used is the issue of what is perceived to be authentic Iranian culture, which has been and continues to be contested.

Through a positioning of the discourses of national identity in a historical and intellectual context, it can also be contended that there is a continuous process of reconstruction. Furthermore, by drawing parallels in this way with earlier periods in Iran's history not only can it also be argued that the construction of the identity of the Iranian nation, or what Iranian national identity means, is contested during the Khatami period, but that it has always been contested. Thus, since the construction of Iranian national identity is contested, there is no single permanent national identity; identity is fluid, rather than fixed or permanent. Furthermore, not only is it the case that there are competing discourses at different stages in Iran's history, but also on different levels within state and society. In other words, not only have different groups within state and society contributed to the construction of the articulation of Iran's national identity at different times in its history for different purposes, but also within a single period. Thus, Iran is an ideal example of how the idea of nation of Iran shifts according to the nationalist discourses competing for hegemony.

Finally, it must be noted that the notion discourse of national identity is not synonymous with the notion of nationalism. If nationalism is a political movement that places nation at the centre of its ideology, then, as is the contention here, nationalism reflects a discourse of national identity.

1.13 State

The notion of state is contested, as will be shown below. Nevertheless, the aim of this thesis is not to explore and discuss various definitions of the state. Rather, the aim is to consider the empirical findings of this thesis regarding the nature of the Islamic Republic and relate them to the concept of the state. Alan Finlayson and James Martin provide a useful discussion largely based on the understanding of Laclau and Mouffe of the state.¹²³ It is argued here that this poststructuralist understanding of the state fits most appropriately with the empirical findings of this thesis. Conclusions to this regard will be provided in Chapter Seven, 'Conclusions'.

A common definition of the state in the literature is that provided by Weber:

A compulsory political organisation with continuous operations will be called a "state" insofar as its administrative staff successfully upholds the claim to the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force on the enforcement of the legitimate use of physical force in the enforcement of its order.¹²⁴

However, contrary to Weber's definition of the state, poststructuralists understand 'the state not as a 'thing' but as a practice or ensemble of practices.'¹²⁵ Furthermore, as was mentioned in Chapter One, a poststructuralist understanding of the state 'draws attention to the way in which the state itself is politically contested'.¹²⁶ Thus, taking these factors into consideration, Weber's definition is somewhat restrictive; it does not allow for the fluid nature of the state, and it assumes that the state is a monolithic entity.

A less restrictive approach is one based on a poststructuralist understanding of society and politics as a whole. Finlayson and Martin argue that poststructuralism:

insists that we cannot establish fixed rules of thought or language, tradition and community that underpin all or some political institutions or groups. ... They are systems of meaning that are the object and the mechanism of social control and contestation. For poststructuralists all actions and objects are meaningful but derive their meaning from their relationship to other actions and objects: which is to say from traditions and institutions but also from the ways in which political (or other) actors make use of activate them. Furthermore, for poststructuralists, the 'actor' does not exist independently of 'frameworks' or systems of meaning and the action it carries out within or against it¹²⁷

¹²³ Finlayson, Alan and Martin, James. 'Poststructuralism' in Hay, Colin, Lister, Michael and Marsh, David. (eds) *The State: Theories and Issues*. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006, pp. 155-171

¹²⁴ Weber, Max. *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press. 1978, p. 54

¹²⁵ Op. cit. Finlayson and Martin 2006, p. 155

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 163

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 159

Naturally, the understanding of the state is based on these assumptions. Thus, as Finlayson and Martin conclude, the state, therefore, can be understood as:

not a single ‘institution’ or even a number of ‘institutions’ tied together, but, rather, a series of practices, of actions and reactions that draw from ‘traditions’ and ‘habits’ but also redraw them – rearticulate them – in every action.

As will be revealed throughout the thesis, and especially with regard to Khamene’i’s Islamist discourse of national identity and Khatami’s Islamist-Iranian discourse of national identity, this aptly defines the nature of the Islamic Republic. For example, it is clear that the factors that underpin the Islamic Republic’s state apparatus are contested and fluid. This is demonstrated in the fact there is more than one state discourse of Iranian national identity, each advocating a different political system.

Not only is the notion of state contested, but also the nature of the relationship between the nation and the state and indeed between nationalism and the state. For example, it has been demonstrated that Gellner’s argument that nation is synonymous with the state or that one cannot exist without the other¹²⁸ is somewhat problematic. The poststructuralist approach to the concept of the state is also ‘to understand the sort of reasoning that constitutes it and that is constituted by it, that defines the parameters within (and without) which legitimacy can be established.’¹²⁹ In the case of Iran, it becomes very clear, as will be demonstrated, that it is national identity and what is perceived to be authentic that gives legitimacy to the particular state systems advocated in the various discourses of national identity. To this regard, Anthony Giddens’ argument regarding the relationship between the state and nation is very apt. It is his contention that essential to the process of state formation is nationalism because it supplies the state’s ‘myths of origin’.¹³⁰ The reference to ‘myths of origin’ is of great significance here; for it is these, articulated in the construction of national identity, that give legitimacy and authenticity and provide the basis of the desired state apparatus. However, this is very fluid; as will be demonstrated in Chapters Four, Five and Six, what is perceived to be Iran’s *authentic* national identity is contested.

1.14 Method

The method of the research has been to deconstruct a number of sources, by determining how discourse emerges out of the ‘text’. Chapters Four, Five and Six are based on an analysis of primary sources. These include speeches and articles on Iranian identity in

¹²⁸ Op. cit. Gellner 1983, pp. 1-6

¹²⁹ Op. cit. **Finlayson and Martin 2006, p. 158**

¹³⁰ Giddens, Anthony. *The Nation-State and Violence*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1985, p. 221

general or nation identity in particular. In addition to these, informal discussions with academics, friends and family both within Iran and outside of Iran have contributed to a deeper understanding of issues surrounding the construction of Iranian national identity.

The two state discourses, Islamist and Islamist-Iranian, are primarily based on the speeches of Khamene'i and Khatami respectively. Khatami's speeches are usually collected in an edited volume organised according to subject matter. Most of these have an introduction by his former vice-president Seyyed Mohammad Ali Abtahi. An interview was also carried out with Abtahi by the author in November 2005. Many of Khamene'i sermons have been published as booklets and pamphlets.

The non-state discourses, the Iranist discourse of national identity and the discourses of civic and cosmopolitan national identity, are based on a number of sources. Various articles, newsletters and academic works on Iranian identity or Iranian national identity form a major part. With regards to academic articles, it is often the case that Iranian national identity is discussed in terms of what their perception of Iranian national identity is, rather than a discussion of various approaches to national identity. For this reason they can be identified as being part of a particular discourse. Two interviews were also carried out with two individuals in their official capacity: former vice-president Seyyed Mohammad Ali Abtahi (as mentioned above) and Hamid Severi, the head of the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art's Research Department at the time the research was carried out.

The historical and intellectual analysis of Iranian nationalism and national identity addressed in Chapter Three is based on secondary sources that have addressed these issues. This essentially forms a review of the literature, which tends to deal with different Iranian 'nationalisms'. In light of this an attempt has been made to deconstruct what has been defined as Iranian nationalism in terms of 'discourses of national identity'.

Chapter Three: The Construction of Iranian National Identity: Historical and Intellectual Context

The previous chapter provided the theoretical and methodological framework for the thesis by demonstrating the benefits of a discourse approach to national identity. This was done by establishing that ‘discourse of national identity’ is a means of determining the ideology or ideologies used in constructing national identity. Furthermore, it also allows for an explanation of the power relations between the different discourses of national identity in terms of a hegemonic and counter-hegemonic dynamic. It is now necessary to apply the notion of ‘discourse of national identity’ to how national identity in Iran is constructed. While the aim of this thesis is to consider the constructions of Iranian national identity in the Khatami period in terms of discourses of national identity, the aim of this chapter is to provide the historical and intellectual context and background for this period.

This historical approach is necessary not only because of the need to contextualise the discourses of national identity in the Khatami period, but also to illustrate the complexity of the issue of Iranian national identity in general. As Ansari contends, unlike the emergent nationalism of the rest of the Third World, the ‘resources’ of Iranian nationalism were much deeper; not only the identity of Iran, but also the idea of Iran was based on a ‘rich, complex tapestry of historical experience and myth’.¹³¹

The aim of this chapter is to deconstruct the various Iranian nationalisms during the twentieth century through a discourse approach. In other words, the aim is to present the various nationalisms as discourses of national identity that are concurrent and competing with each other for hegemony. This will be done, on the one hand, by illustrating the ideologies embedded in the construction of the Iranian nation; and, on the other hand, by highlighting the hegemonic and counter-hegemonic relationship between the different nationalisms or discourses.

It is contended that one of the recurring ideologies embedded in the construction of Iranian national identity is the need for the nation to be independent, or in other words, anti-imperialism. In support of this argument, Ansari contends that it was ‘the struggle against perceived imperial powers’ that shaped nationalism in Iran.¹³² This is further strengthened by Hamid Enayat’s discussion of nationalism:

¹³¹ Op. cit. Ansari 2003, p. 16

¹³² Ibid., p. 16

In the history of political thought, the term *nationalism* sometimes refers to a movement for guarding a nation's independence and freedom in the face of an external aggressor, and at others to an intellectual assertion of a nation's separateness and identity – or, in its extreme form, of superiority over other nations.¹³³

It is the contention here, however, that the first two understandings of nationalism are indeed interlinked; one cannot really exist without the other. On the one hand, if there is no independence, a sense of separateness and identity cannot really be achieved. On the other hand, the question must be raised: can independence be achieved without ‘an intellectual assertion of a nation's separateness and identity’? In the case of Iran, as will become evident, these two understandings of nationalism often go hand in hand. In some cases, there is also the notion of ‘superiority over other nations’, albeit subtle.

In addition to anti-imperialism, the contention here is that there are different sets of values or ideologies being used to achieve independence; these are cultural authenticity - *Īrānīyat* (being Iranian) and/or *Īslāmīyat* (being Islamic) - democracy and the idea of national “progress”. These issues are of particular interest because of their relevance to the discourses of national identity in the Khatami period under discussion in this thesis. It must be stressed that these are by no means the only factors considered in the construction of Iranian national identity. The position of religious and ethnic minorities and language among others are also often dealt with in the literature and considered as crucial to Iranian national identity, and/or its contestation. However, due to the restrictions of space, these will not be addressed in detail here.

The multiple concurrent discourses of national identity will be analysed within a chronological and intellectual framework, primarily during Iran's twentieth century history. This historical and intellectual contextualisation will illustrate that there has been a continuous construction and reconstruction of Iranian national identity and that there is a hegemonic and counter-hegemonic dimension between the different discourses. The subsequent chapters will illustrate that the construction of Iranian national identity continues to be renegotiated during Khatami's presidency.

However, before proceeding with the ‘historical experience’, the first section of the chapter, ‘Theoretical Considerations’, will address the notions of anti-imperialism and authenticity, in addition to the role intellectuals play in transmitting ideas. The focus of the rest of the chapter is primarily on Iran's twentieth century discourses of national identity. However, the end of the nineteenth century is also taken into consideration. For

¹³³ Enayat, Hamid. *Modern Islamic Political Thought*. London & New York: I. B. Tauris, 1982. pp. 111-112

the benefit of analysis, the remaining part of the chapter is divided into four periods largely based on what Ansari considers as crucial in Iran's political development.¹³⁴ The first is the 'Late Qajar Period and Constitutional Period of 1906-1921'. Here, the events of the tobacco protest movement and the Constitutional Revolution, and the ideas of individuals such as Seyyed Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Mirza Fath 'Ali Akhundzadah, and Mirza Agha Khan Kermani will be discussed in terms of the construction of Iranian national identity. This will be followed by 'The Rise and Rule of Reza Shah, 1921-1941', which focuses on the nationalism of Reza Shah. The following section 'The Rule of Mohammad Reza Shah, 1941-1979' considers the ideas espoused by Dr Mohammad Musaddiq, Mohammad Reza Shah, Jalal Al-e Ahmad, and Ali Shari'ati. The final section of the chapter 'Religious Nationalism and the Islamic Republic' focuses on how Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini articulates national identity and how this translates into the Constitution of the Islamic Republic. Finally, the section addresses how the articulation of the Iranian nation changes during the Iran-Iraq War.

1.15 Theoretical Considerations

This section will first determine what is to be understood by the notion of anti-imperialism. This will be followed by the notion of authenticity, and finally, the role of intellectuals.

In order to understand anti-imperialism, it is first necessary to clarify imperialism. Robert Young points out, 'the words 'empire', 'imperial' and 'imperialism' have different histories and different political resonances.'¹³⁵ Imperialism covers 'a wide range of relationships of domination and dependence'.¹³⁶ In part imperialism can be understood as:

a political system of actual conquest and occupation ... [and/or] in its Marxist sense of a general system of economic domination, with direct political domination being a possible but not necessary adjunct.¹³⁷

These definitions do not include the notion of cultural imperialism. Edward Said argues that it is culture that has a privileged role in the 'modern imperial experience'.¹³⁸ Thus, imperialism can also be understood as cultural imperialism. At different times in Iran, imperialism is understood in different ways. Anti-imperialism, thus, is the rejection of

¹³⁴ Ansari, Ali. *Islam, Iran and Democracy: The Politics of Managing Change*. London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2000. p. 25

¹³⁵ Young, Robert J. C. *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*. Malden, MA & Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2001. p. 25

¹³⁶ Baumgart 1982, p. 1 as cited in Young 2001, p. 26

¹³⁷ Williams 1988 as cited in Young 2001, p. 26

¹³⁸ Said, Edward. *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993. p. 3

imperialism – whether military, socio-economic, political or cultural form - in its fullest sense. Therefore, in order for a nation to be independent, it must rid itself of anything that is perceived to be imperialism.

The relationship between imperialism and anti-imperialism is similar to that between hegemony and resistance or counter-hegemony. As mentioned in the previous chapter, hegemony is to be understood as political, cultural and moral leadership. Counter-hegemony, therefore, is to be understood as the resistance to what is perceived as hegemony. The important point here is that what is *perceived* as hegemonic is what is resisted. Whether or not it is hegemonic is another matter.

As will be illustrated, the hegemonic discourse is often an elite discourse and not that of the popular masses. Indeed, if imperialism is *perceived* as hegemonic, then any discourse that resists it, namely one of anti-imperialism, is counter-hegemonic. However, as will be demonstrated in this chapter and the following chapters, it is not just imperialism or what is perceived as imperialism that is considered as the hegemonic discourse. The hegemonic and counter-hegemonic dynamic reveals a complex relationship between discourses of national identity essentially competing for hegemony.

In the case of twentieth century Iran, a number of different ideas and factors have been advocated in the struggle against imperial powers and for independence from what is perceived as imperialism. After all, what constitutes imperialism is contested. Since imperialism is contested, then so too is nationalism. It is not surprising therefore, that Iran has been and continues to be a country of multiple nationalisms:

Nationalism remained an essentially contested concept in both theory and practice in Iran, and secular nationalism found itself competing with religious and dynastic forms of nationalism, each appealing to particular sections of Iranian society.¹³⁹

Thus, how independence is achieved or how it is thought it should be achieved and how anti-imperialism is expressed is contested. This is largely to do with what is considered as “authentically Iranian”.

The idea of authenticity implies original, indigenous or true. However, the question that has to be asked is what the “original”, “indigenous” or “true” Iran is. Furthermore, the notion of “authenticity” implies that if a nation adheres to its “authentic” identity and culture then it will be in a better position to resist imperialism and achieve independence. Thus, the quest for authenticity can be considered in terms of nativism. In

¹³⁹ Op. cit. Ansari 2003, p. 15

his deconstruction of Iranian intellectuals during the period of the 1950s to the early 1990s, Mehrzad Boroujerdi defines nativism as:

[a] doctrine that calls for the resurgence, reinstatement or continuation of native or indigenous cultural customs, beliefs and values. Nativism is grounded on such deeply held beliefs as resisting acculturation, privileging one's own "authentic" ethnic identity and longing for a return to "an unsullied indigenous cultural tradition".¹⁴⁰

However, just as nationalism and imperialism are contested, so are notions of what are perceived to be Iran's "authentic" and "indigenous" culture. Boroujerdi's discussion of nativism is in relation to the post-colonial Third Worldist trend of the post-World War II period. In this framework it is largely Islam that is perceived to be Iran's authentic heritage and culture. However, if the idea of nativism is understood as the "return to authenticity", then the concept can be applied to earlier stages in Iran's history when it is not necessarily Iran's Islamic culture, or *Īslāmīyat*, that was perceived as the indigenous culture. Rather, in some cases it was *Īrānīyat*, Iran's pre-Islamic culture. Therefore, *Īslāmīyat* and/or *Īrānīyat* can be considered as among the factors that are used to construct Iranian national identity. A more in-depth discussion of the relationship between culture, *Īslāmīyat* and *Īrānīyat* and the meanings attached to these labels in the Khatami period will be provided in Chapters Four and Five.

Within the framework of the historical periods outlined below, an intellectual context will also be provided. The intellectual contextualisation of Iran's discourses of national identity is based on the premise that intellectuals and/or thinkers have a crucial position in society because of their dissemination of ideas. As mentioned in Chapter Two, the concern of this thesis is the relationship between discourse, ideology and national identity. Since ideology is reflected in discourse and nationalism itself is an ideology, how ideology is constructed, reconstructed and used is of importance. One such way is through the intellectual activity of certain individuals. Van Dijk argues that it is the micro level where 'ideological production and reproduction is actually being achieved by social actors in social situations.'¹⁴¹ Intellectual context can be determined through the ideas espoused by political activists, intellectuals and thinkers.

The purpose here is not to determine who is an intellectual or not, rather to illustrate that both those who can be called intellectuals and the intellectual activity produced by certain members in Iranian society is of importance to the construction and reconstruction of

¹⁴⁰ Williams and Chrisman 1994, p. 14 cited by Boroujerdi, Mehrzad. *Iranian Intellectuals and the West: The Tormented Triumph of Nativism*. Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1996. p. 14

¹⁴¹ Op. cit. van Dijk, p. 191

Iranian national identity in the twentieth century. Ultimately, of importance here is the dissemination of ideas.

1.16 The Late Qajar Period and Constitutional Period(1906-1921)

The aim of this section is to illustrate different articulations of Iranian national identity during the late Qajar period and the Constitutional period. One of the motivating factors for nationalism in Iran at this time was the need to resist imperialism. However, the responses to imperialism were varied, which resulted in various concurrent nationalisms. In order to understand the dynamics at this time, it is necessary to first consider certain events at the end of the Qajar period (1796-1925). Imperialism during this period was evident in the increasing involvement in Iranian affairs from foreign powers, primarily Britain and Russia.¹⁴² Whether the Qajar state was a pawn of European hegemony, or was proactively seeking European influence in Iran is not for debate here. The issue is, however, that the end product was that Qajar Iran was heavily influenced by the West, which would have intellectual, political and socio-economic ramifications.

An event that reflects resistance to the perceived imperialist hegemony of the West, and Britain in particular, is the tobacco protest movement. In 1890 a British company was given a monopoly over Iran's tobacco production, sales and exports and in 1891 Iran witnessed mass protests against the concession.¹⁴³ The importance of the tobacco concession and resultant mass protest is in the significance to Iranian political mobilisation. The following statement sums up the event:

The tobacco protest movement had several features found again in subsequent nationwide mass movements in Iran – the constitutional revolution of 1905-1911, the Musaddiq nationalist movement of 1951-53, and the Islamic Revolution of 1978-79. In all of these there was an involvement of the bazaar (and later other middle class elements), of part of the ulama, and of intellectuals – reformist, revolutionary, and nationalist.¹⁴⁴

Katouzian argues that the tobacco protest movement 'was the first time a *popular* movement had succeeded in defeating the arbitrary state on a major issue'; essentially *dawlat* was challenged by *millat*.¹⁴⁵ Furthermore, this led to the beginning of the Popular Movement of Iran, which later formed the National Front (*Jibhi-yi Millī -yi Īrān*). The perceived hegemony of the West was not only met with popular resistance, but also with intellectual resistance, which in turn would influence the masses.

¹⁴² Keddie, Nikki. *Qajar Iran and the Rise of Reza Khan 1796-1925*. Costa Mesa, California: Mazda Publishers, 1999. p. 44

¹⁴³ Ibid., p. 47

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 48

¹⁴⁵ Op. cit. Katouzian 1999., p. 3 & 42

One of the responses to what was perceived by many as imperialism at the end of the Qajar period was the conviction that Islam was the most appropriate means for resistance. Nationalist sentiment based on anti-imperialism was reflected in the ideas and intellectual contribution of certain individuals. Such an individual was Seyyed Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, known as 'al-Afghani' or 'Afghani'.¹⁴⁶ Indeed, Afghani cannot be excluded from any discussion of anti-imperialism during this period. As Keddie points out, he was the champion of 'Muslim independence against foreign, and especially British, encroachments'.¹⁴⁷ His reaction to these was his call for pan-Islamic unity under the rule of the Ottoman sultan-caliph; a political reaction against the presence of Western imperialism in the Muslim world.¹⁴⁸ Essentially, Islam was politicised and being used as a basis of national identity and as a means of combating imperialism.

Not only does the significance to Iran's intellectual heritage lie in Afghani's anti-imperialist sentiment, but also in his approach to Islam. According to Ansari, Afghani, who was not adverse to Western intellectual achievements despite his resistance to Western imperialism, profoundly influenced subsequent thinkers in their endeavour to reconcile Islam and the challenges of the modern age. Ansari argues that Afghani's understanding of Islam was not necessarily incompatible with secularism. Of significance to this thesis is his contention that 'it is the continuing existence of this intellectual ferment which allows for the possibility of a synthesis between Islam and democracy'.¹⁴⁹ The relationship between Iranian national identity, Islam and democracy will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Five. It is these concepts that form an essential part of Khatami's discourse of national identity.

As mentioned above, it was not only resistance to the perceived imperialism of the West that was a fundamental part of Iranian nationalism, but also the notion of national "progress". For many, Iran was believed to be in a state of decline. In reaction to this, it was thought by some that nationalism based on pre-Islamic ideas of Iran, or *Īrānīyat*, to be the most appropriate means of achieving "progress" in Iranian society. It was perceived that Iran's recent decline was partly attributed to Islam and Arab rule; in

¹⁴⁶ for an in depth analysis of contradictions evident in al-Afghani's works see Keddie, Nikki. *Iran: Religion, Politics and Society*. London: Frank Cass and Co., 1980. pp. 28-33 and Keddie, Nikki. *Sayyid Jamal ad-Din "al-Afghani": A Political Biography*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972. pp. 36-45

¹⁴⁷ Op. cit. Keddie 1999, p. 46

¹⁴⁸ Keddie, Nikki. *Modern Iran: Roots of Revolution*. 2nd edn. New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2003. p. 175

¹⁴⁹ Op. cit. Ansari. *Iran, Islam and Democracy*. 2006, p. 17. This is part of a wider discussion whereby Ansari discusses the ambiguity of the terms such as 'Islam' and 'secularism' and argues that they are contested.

contrast to this Iran's pre-Islamic practices were considered as a source for modern institutional reform.¹⁵⁰ In this case, the desire for national "progress" is an essential part of nationalist discourse; *Īrānīyat* is associated with "progress", while *Īslāmīyat* is associated with decline.

This Iranian nationalism was advocated by the nineteenth century intellectual Mirza Fath 'Ali Akhundzadah, referred to as a 'radical critic of religion'. He called for a 'modern political order that limited the powers of the shah and reduced European domination of Iran'.¹⁵¹ In his discussion of the 'Hazards of Nationalist Extremism', Abdolkarim Soroush contends that Akhundzadah was among those who

believed that all the problems of Iranian society – which lagged far behind the caravan of civilisation – originated in the Arabs' influences and the remedy would be to return to our pure national pre-Islamic culture. This group insisted that a foreign thought is foreign regardless of its origins. Thus Islam, being the product of foreigners and belonging to Arabs, is an unbecoming patch sewn on our culture.¹⁵²

This stress on 'the virtues of the pre-Islamic past, [and] seeing Islam as a cause of Iran's decline' is also advocated by Mirza Agha Khan Kermani. Kermani was influenced by Akhundzadah and was a devoted follower of Afghani. Ansari argues that he was among those thinkers who 'argued in favour of a vigorous Iranian nationalism, stripped of the deviations of Arabism, and to a certain extent, Islamism'.¹⁵³ In Keddie's opinion, this represented the adoption of 'western racial views that saw Iranian "Aryans" as superior to Semitic Arabs'.¹⁵⁴ She also argues that Kermani was among those anti-clerical nationalist intellectuals who believed in copying the West and was 'rather hostile to the ulama as a backward force'.¹⁵⁵ Kermani's Iranian nationalism, rather than being based religion, was based on the notion of Iran's pre-Islamic culture and 'Aryan' past. His anti-Arab and anti-Islamic ideas would influence the intellectual Ahmad Kasravi, who, according to Keddie, 'developed the trend of an anti-Shi'i Iranian nationalism'.¹⁵⁶ However, it is also argued that Kasravi's aim was to rid Islam of Mystical Islam.

Here, anti-imperialism, pre-Islamic culture, or *Īrānīyat*, and the desire for national "progress" are being used in the construction of national identity; *Īrānīyat* is perceived as

¹⁵⁰ Op. cit. Keddie 1999, p. 6

¹⁵¹ Afary, Janet. *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution 1906-1911*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996. p. 25

¹⁵² Op. cit. Sadri & Sadri, p. 158

¹⁵³ Op. cit. Ansari. *Islam, Iran and Democracy*. 2000, p. 27

¹⁵⁴ Op. cit. Keddie 1999, p. 46

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 45

¹⁵⁶ Op. cit. Keddie 2003, p. 178 & 185

the means of attaining progress and restricting European dominance. However, in the case of Kermani, imitation of the West can also be understood as a means of combating the West. For this type of Iranian nationalism, the perceived hegemony is not only that of the West, but also that of the Arabs and Islam, both of which are being resisted.

Iranian nationalism that is based on *Īrānīyat* as an essential factor in the construction of national identity is often associated with idea of land and territory. Mustafa Vaziri argues that territorial boundaries were the basis for development of the secular perception of national identity, which developed at the end of the Qajar era and into the Pahlavi era.¹⁵⁷ This is reflected in the aspirations of the notable Malkum Khan among others. His aspirations to bring unity, mobilise the masses and modernise the state were reflected in his newspaper, *Qānūn* (laws). As Vaziri argues, the importance of the territory of Iran was reflected in his use of terms such as *khalq-i Īrān* (people of Iran), *khāk-i Īrān* (soil of Iran), and *Īrān khān-i māst* (Iran is our home). Also integral to Malkum's nationalism was the rejection of Islam and the Arabs. This is reflected in his call for the de-Arabisation of the Persian language; Arabic words were to be taken from Persian and the alphabet was also to be changed. The aim was 'Pure Persian'.¹⁵⁸

Worthy of comment here is the reference to 'secular'. Ansari advocates a clarification of 'secular' in the Iranian context. For example, with regard to 'secular' intellectuals such as Kermani, it was not necessarily the case that they were irreligious. He argues that, while in the West 'secular intellectuals' are characterised as leaning towards atheism or agnosticism, in the case of Iran it is not 'irreligious'.¹⁵⁹ In other words, while Islamism, or Islam in its political form, might have been rejected, it was not Islam that was rejected. Ansari contends that 'many arguably viewed the state of Islam in much the same way as ... al-Afghani – namely, as in need of fundamental reform which would free it from reactionary dogma.'¹⁶⁰

Thus far, it is clear that nationalism has been constructed in several ways. In addition to these discourses, however, there is also one whereby nationalism based on either religion or ethnicity is rejected. This is articulated in the *Iran-i Naw Journal*:

¹⁵⁷ Vaziri, Mustafa. *Iran as Imagined Nation the Construction of National Identity*. New York: Paragon House, 1993, p. 169

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 180-183

¹⁵⁹ *Op. cit.* Ansari 2003, p. 15

¹⁶⁰ *Op. cit.* Ansari. *Islam, Iran and Democracy*. 2000, p. 27

a new concept of nationalism that was neither exclusionary nor based on religion or ethnicity but rather on a broad secular humanist concept of nationalism in the tradition of Enlightenment.¹⁶¹

This is the discourse of the Democrat Party. This party was among the new political parties that were formed in August 1909 in the run-up to the second *Majlis* by Seyyed Hassan Taqizadeh, one of the early important leaders of the Constitutional Revolution, and colleagues.¹⁶²

For many, imperialism was not only represented by the growing interference in Iran's affairs from external forces, but also by the Qajar establishment. One of the means of establishing an end to this imperial influence over Iran was the attempt to establish more democratic practices. Several groups in Iranian society including some among the secular intelligentsia and *bazārīs* advocated a constitution similar to that of Belgium along with the establishment of a *Majlis*, or national assembly. It is argued that this *Majlis* was considered 'as a guardian against certain foreign encroachments' and a means of holding the Shah to account.¹⁶³ The establishment of the constitution came to be known as the Constitutional Revolution of 1906/1907.

It is argued that the constitution was a means of creating some sort of unity in Iran. Vaziri contends that with the end of the Qajar period Iran had to make a transition from empire to modern nation-state. In order to do this, the constitution and democratic practices provided the 'legal bond of national identity'.¹⁶⁴ He also argues that the constitutional reforms 'carried an inseparable message of territorial consciousness. Thus, the various inhabitants of Iran, regardless of their particular denominations, were now territorially and constitutionally termed Iranians.'¹⁶⁵ It is not surprising, therefore, that the constitutional period of 1906-1921 has been described as 'a pivotal moment in the formation of the modern Iranian identity'.¹⁶⁶ Furthermore, it was also during this period that nationalism was born 'as a viable tool of political action'.¹⁶⁷

This period in Iran's history is interesting not only because it illustrates the existence of concurrent nationalisms, but also because it shows certain themes evident in the discourses of national identity in the Khatami period. To differing degrees, these nationalisms are based on anti-imperialism, democratic practice, *Īslāmīyat*, *Īrānīyat* and

¹⁶¹ Op. cit. Afary, pp. 282-283, see pp. 273-283 for more on the ideological approach of *Īrān-i Naw*.

¹⁶² Ibid., pp. 258 & 261

¹⁶³ Op. cit. Keddie 2003, p. 71

¹⁶⁴ Op. cit. Vaziri, p. 177

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 178

¹⁶⁶ Op. cit. Ansari. *Islam, Iran and Democracy*. 2000, p. 29

¹⁶⁷ Op. cit. Ansari 2003, p. 16

the desire for national “progress”. In other words, these different nationalisms illustrate different ideologies that were embedded in the construction of Iranian national identity. Therefore, they can be considered in terms of concurrent competing discourses of national identity.

The events and the ideas of the individuals portrayed here illustrate that there was a strong anti-imperialist sentiment among many groups in society. This is reflected in the contention that anti-imperialism was perceived as an important part of Iranian nationalism. Anti-imperialism, however, was articulated in several ways. Nonetheless, all the articulations express the desire to change the status quo. Thus, they can be considered as counter-hegemonic discourses. While the Constitutional period sees Iranian nationalism, in its many forms, being articulated on the non-state level, the reign of Reza Shah is dominated by nationalism as a state discourse.

1.17 The Rise of Reza Shah (1921-1941)

In terms of Iranian nationalism, the period of 1921 to 1941 is essentially defined by the ‘dynastic nationalism’ of Reza Khan, later Reza Shah. This nationalism can be considered partly as a reaction to imperialism and partly as an attempt to make Iran strong so as to make the country one of national “progress”.

Imperialism in this period is reflected in the occupation of Iran by Russian and British troops during World War I when the country ‘largely disintegrated as an independent entity’.¹⁶⁸ The occupation was further exacerbated by the Anglo-Persian Treaty of 1919, which gave Britain virtual military and financial control. It is argued that these events would be the trigger for ‘a new direction’ in Iranian nationalism¹⁶⁹, which was to take form under the leadership of Reza Khan. Iran was to be ‘rescued’ by Reza Khan by developing ‘the myth of the saviour’.¹⁷⁰ As commander of the Cossack Brigade, he initiated a coup in February 1921 that overthrew the government. By 1923, he was Prime Minister and in 1925 the Pahlavi dynasty was established with Reza Khan, now Reza Shah Pahlavi, as its king.

It was thought that a strong centralised state could resist external pressure from Britain and Russia characteristic of earlier periods. Thus, integral to Reza Shah’s nationalism, were policies of modernisation and centralisation.¹⁷¹ On the one hand, a strong centralised

¹⁶⁸ Ghods, M. R. ‘Iranian Nationalism and Reza Shah’, *Middle Eastern Studies* 27 (1), 1991, pp. 35-45, p. 35

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 37

¹⁷⁰ *Op. cit.* Ansari 2003, p. 32

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 32

government was needed to consolidate the country and create unity¹⁷² and on the other, modernisation would strengthen the nation.¹⁷³ Part of Reza Shah's notion of a strong state and national progress was the emancipation of women; 'for the first time women became a focus of state policy.'¹⁷⁴ Modernisation was also reflected in his use of nationalism to create a modern army. Iran's national integrity would be enforced through the elimination of that which could harm the authority of the state.¹⁷⁵ The anti-imperialist aspect of Reza Shah's nationalism was also reflected in the establishment of Bank Milli (National Bank of Iran), in 1928, in an attempt to break down British economic dominance.¹⁷⁶

Nonetheless, Reza Shah's nationalism cannot only be thought of in terms of anti-imperialism. With the establishment of the Pahlavi Dynasty, Reza Shah redefined Iranian nationalism by centring it on himself and so began 'dynastic nationalism'.¹⁷⁷ As Ansari contends, this nationalism 'was an exclusive nationalism in which 'patriotism' was defined as much as by one's loyalty to the dynasty as to the nation.'¹⁷⁸ In other words, the nation was synonymous with the dynasty. Also integral to this construction of Iranian national identity was Iran's pre-Islamic culture, or *Īrānīyat*.

As mentioned above, the idea of pre-Islamic Iran, or *Īrānīyat*, as the basis of Iranian nationalism was popular with intellectuals in the Qajar period. This increased in dominance during the Pahlavi period when the Pahlavi shahs, along with many intellectuals, 'glorified pre-Islamic Iran'.¹⁷⁹ It should be stressed that it was specifically the Persian aspect of Iran's ancient culture that was of particular interest. While Iran's cultural and political decline was associated with the Arab-Islamic conquest, for many a strong independent Iran became linked with pre-Islamic Iran.¹⁸⁰ As Ansari points out, 'appeals to a sense of Aryan ethnicity and pre-Islamic Zoroastrian culture were echoed in the sentiments and actions of Reza Khan'.¹⁸¹ Parallels can be drawn here between the nationalism of Reza Shah and that of the likes of Mirza Fath 'Ali Akhundzadah and Mirza Agha Khan Kermani.

¹⁷² Op. cit. Ghods, p. 37

¹⁷³ Op. cit. Ansari 2003, p. 17

¹⁷⁴ Paidar, Parvin. *Women and the Political Process in Twentieth-century Iran*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. p. 103 For more see pp. 103-105

¹⁷⁵ Op. cit. Ansari 2003, p. 17

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 55

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 32

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 59

¹⁷⁹ Op. cit. Keddie 1999, p. 6

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 6

¹⁸¹ Op. cit. Ansari 2003, p. 32

During the reign of Reza Shah, the Persianisation of the state became a fundamental part of government policy, which was reflected in the insistence of Persian titles such as *Shāhanshāh* and the attempt by the Persian Language Academy to rid the Persian language of Arabic words.¹⁸² Another important aspect of this nationalism and later that of Mohammad Reza Shah, was the importance of land, or *Iranzamin*. It is Kashani-Sabet's contention that the 'land carried solemn connotations in a world of empires'. She also argues that 'it symbolised the monarch's might and verified illusions of grandeur and superiority.' Thus, ultimately, it was the land of Iran that was 'the most powerful embodiment of the nation' for the Pahlavi shahs.¹⁸³ Also worthy of note here, is the relationship between Persia, Persianisation and *Īrānīyat*. In 1935, Reza Shah insisted that foreigners refrain from using the name 'Persia' in favour of 'Iran'. Vaziri argues that the West was 'unaware of the complexity of the socio-cultural components of what they called Persia, simply called everything in the region Persian; whereas this crude perception failed to distinguish the areas of culture, language and ethnicity.'¹⁸⁴ Ansari notes through an extract from a memorandum from the Iranian Foreign Ministry, the significance of this is that 'Persia' and 'Persians' were introduced by ancient Greek historians and do not correlate with 'Iran'.¹⁸⁵

These sentiments reflect a hegemonic and counter-hegemonic dimension that is common today both in Iran and among the diaspora. In one sense, the insistence of *Īrānīyat* as part of Iranian national identity reflects a distinct discourse of separateness from Arabs and resistance to their perceived hegemony. In another sense, the insistence of 'Iran' as opposed to 'Persia' as the country's official name reflects resistance to the perceived hegemony of the West with its Greek heritage. Finally, the desire for national progress and determination for a strong independent Iran also reflects a resistance to imperial presence in Iran. Thus, in more ways than one, the Persianist 'dynastic nationalism' of Reza Shah is a counter-hegemonic discourse. However, it is also a hegemonic discourse because it asserts a certain moral, political and cultural leadership. In addition to it is ultimately Persian identity that is considered more superior to others in Iran, which gives it its exclusive nature.

This exclusivity of 'dynastic nationalism' is reflected in the issues surrounding the policy to establish Persian as the *lingua franca*. Vaziri argues that the Persian language was a

¹⁸² Ibid., p. 61 & 65

¹⁸³ Op. cit. **Kashani-Sabet 2000, pp. 3-4**

¹⁸⁴ Op. cit. Vaziri, pp. 67-68

¹⁸⁵ Op. cit. Ansari 2003, p. 65

tool for carrying out the nationalists' secular programmes. It was hoped that a common language would be a means of linking the diverse groups, which was essential in ensuring that they could share the same myths, history and heritage to enable the creation of a common bond within the territory.¹⁸⁶ However, it is Cottam's contention that the existence of a common language is not essential for a common sense of national identity. Although a common language is a necessity in several definitions of nationalism, Cottam argues that, in the case of Iran, language was not a particularly unifying force in Iran's nationalism at the beginning of the twentieth century. He identifies two reasons for this. First of all, he argues that when the people of a country speak a diversity of languages it is a difficult task to persuade them that they are unique. Secondly, he argues that because a large proportion of the population was illiterate they were even less likely to be exposed to or learn Persian. He concludes, therefore, that illiteracy, along with the isolating nature of the geography, tended to make nationalism the 'property of the educated elite'.¹⁸⁷

Reza Shah was considered as 'a modernising reformer who could give Iran national unity and restore the country's pride and independence'; 'a strong government that could restore economic and political stability to the nation ... would benefit all strata of society'¹⁸⁸. However, ultimately his dynastic nationalism grew increasingly elitist and hegemonic. A possible flaw in the success of Reza Shah's nationalism was the integral nature of modernisation and its dependence on the incorporation of foreign ideas. He 'alienated not only the ulama, who still enjoyed considerable support among the mass of the people, but (arguably more importantly) the intellectual pillars of his support'.¹⁸⁹ The exclusivity of Reza Shah's Persianist 'dynastic nationalism' was also reflected in the persecution of all those that did not subscribe to his idea of Iran. He grew intolerant of anyone who did not approve of his articulation of national identity; 'ethnic, political, and religious 'deviants' were all targeted', which included the Shi'a ulama.¹⁹⁰

Reza Shah and his 'dynastic nationalism' sees a continuation of several of the themes in the nationalist discourses during the Constitutional period, namely anti-imperialism, the importance of *Īrānīyat*, and the desire for national "progress". However, his espousal of 'Western' policies and approaches brings into question his anti-imperialism since it is modernisation, often conflated with westernisation, which is used as the framework for an anti-imperialist approach. Nonetheless, this is also used as a means of resistance; in order

¹⁸⁶ Op. cit. Vaziri, p. 176

¹⁸⁷ Op. cit. Cottam, pp. 30-31

¹⁸⁸ Op. cit. Ghods, p. 37

¹⁸⁹ Op. cit. Ansari. *Islam, Iran and Democracy*. 2000, p. 30

¹⁹⁰ Op. cit. Ansari 2003, p. 70

to beat them you have to beat them within their discourse. Thus, Reza Shah's tools for anti-imperialism are different to those of the likes of Afghani, for whom a political approach to Islam is integral to the construction of national identity is, as opposed to Iran's pre-Islamic culture.

1.18 The Rule of Mohammad Reza Shah (1941-1979)

Many of the themes espoused in the construction of nationalism in the first half of the twentieth century continue to be articulated throughout the rule of Mohammad Reza Shah. The intellectual activity during this period, which includes discussions on the nature of Iran and its identity, is phenomenal. Indeed, as Ansari points out, 'the concept of nationalism and the definition of patriotism were hotly contested'.¹⁹¹ However, due to the restrictions of space this section can only provide an overview. This will be done by focusing on Dr. Mohammad Musaddiq and his liberal nationalism, the dynastic nationalism of Mohammad Reza Shah, Jalal Al-e Ahmad and his discourse of *gharbzadagi* and finally Ali Shari'ati and the discourse of *bāzgasht bih khīshān*. A natural progression from the ideas espoused by Al-e Ahmad and Shari'ati are those of Ayatollah Khomeini. However, these will be dealt with in the following section, 'Religious Nationalism and the Islamic Republic'.

The nationalism of Musaddiq, along with the discourses of Al-e Ahmad and Shari'ati, can be understood in terms of resistance to imperialism. The perceived imperialism during the rule of Mohammad Reza Shah can be equated with the increased Western presence in Iran that coincided with the end of Reza Shah's reign and the end of World War II. As was the case with earlier periods in Iran's history, the western presence was that of the Russians and the British. These two powers divided Iran into three zones with the Russians in the north and the British in the south.¹⁹² Ansari contends that the inability to resist this Allied occupation of 1941 reflects the failure of nationalism and the weakness of Reza Shah's 'dynastic nationalism'.¹⁹³ Furthermore, the fact that in 1941, Reza Shah was forced to abdicate and was succeeded by Mohammad Reza Shah, his son, under the pressure of the Allies,¹⁹⁴ also illustrates continued involvement from external powers in Iranian affairs. In addition to British and Russian presence, Iran experienced, for the first time, considerable American presence. For many Iranians, the Allied Occupation was the first encounter

¹⁹¹ Op. cit. Ansari 2003, p. 82

¹⁹² Op. cit. Keddie 2003, p. 105

¹⁹³ Op. cit. Ansari 2003, p. 76

¹⁹⁴ Op. cit. Keddie 2003, p. 105

with Westerners and Western culture.¹⁹⁵ This exposure and the perception of some Iranians that it was corrupting traditional Iranian values contributed to ‘the growth of a popular and distinctive ‘national’ consciousness’.¹⁹⁶ As will be illustrated, the impact of this encounter with the West was to be profound.

Susan Siavoshi refers to the nationalism of Dr Mohammad Musaddiq as ‘liberal nationalism’, the aims of which were an ‘independent and democratic Iran’.¹⁹⁷ As Katouzian points out: ‘given the continuing domination of Iran by foreign powers, the interrelated issues of independence and democracy became the overriding political objectives of the Popular Movement in the twentieth century.’¹⁹⁸ Musaddiq’s nationalism also advocated a more inclusive counter-nationalism based on being Iranian, as opposed to being Persian. In other words, by popularising nationalism, he ‘Iranianised’ the Persianist nationalism of Reza Shah.¹⁹⁹ As Ansari contends, ‘Musaddiq was able to capture a moment in Iranian history when nationalism emerged from its intellectual and elitist cocoon and became a force for political action.’²⁰⁰ This more popular nationalism was reflected in the activities of the Popular Movement, whose roots were born in the nineteenth century struggle against the foreign domination of the tobacco industry.

As with the issue of tobacco, the issue of oil was also met with the desire for independence and democracy.²⁰¹ The 1933 Oil Agreement ensured that the concessionary period for the British was extended for another thirty years. This agreement was perceived by many to be the product of a British plot. It is not surprising, therefore, as is pointed out by Katouzian, that

[Iran’s] most fundamental grievance was that the company had not only turned an important part of the country into an almost autonomous colony, but that it indirectly ran the country as well.²⁰²

Thus, for many, the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company was a symbol of British imperialism. For the Popular Movement, many of whose members formed the National Front, the means of resisting this imperialism and achieving independence was democracy. Therefore, in this

¹⁹⁵ Op. cit. Ansari 2003, p. 98

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 99

¹⁹⁷ Siavoshi, Sussan. *Liberal Nationalism in Iran: The Failure of a Movement*. Boulder, San Francisco & London: Westview Press, 1990. p. 53

¹⁹⁸ Op. cit. Katouzian 1999, p. 42

¹⁹⁹ Op. cit. Ansari 2003, p. 77, footnote 2

²⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 107

²⁰¹ Op. cit. Katouzian 1999, p. 43

²⁰² Ibid., p. 64

case, democracy can be considered as a fundamental factor in the construction of Iranian national identity.

The National Front, a coalition of parties, was established on 23 October 1949. Those involved were described as *millīyūn*. Katouzian considers the meanings attached to *millī*, from which *millīyūn* derives:

Millī did not mean ‘nationalist’: it meant both ‘popular’ or ‘democratic’, as well as ‘national or non-foreign’. And it neatly described the Movement’s aim to attain the country’s full independence in order to be able to establish and extend democratic government.²⁰³

In other words, as Ansari puts it, the National Front was motivated by ideas of ‘self-determination, nationhood, and anti-imperialism’²⁰⁴ that were to be achieved by the people through democracy.

However, worthy of note here is that ‘democratic’ mentioned in the above explanation of *millī*, seems to ignore women. While the concept may be more inclusive than the dynastic perception of Iranian national identity, it still remains exclusive. A letter from the feminist Sediqeh Dowlatabadi (1882-1961) to Musaddiq written on 11 April 1951 illustrates this. She states:

Despite the fact that the government attaches great importance to the progress and maturity of the Iraniannation, it is limited to men only and no share is given to women.²⁰⁵

This letter draws Musaddiq’s attention to the fact that women are yet to have suffrage.²⁰⁶ Parvin Paidar argues that Dowlatabadi opened a new era of women’s feminist and nationalist activities, which pre-dated Musaddiq. For example, in her newspaper *Women’s Language (Zabān Zanān)* she published letters criticising the 1919 Anglo-Persian Treaty.²⁰⁷ This proves that women were also involved in the construction of Iranian national identity; it was not just the domain of men.

In 1951 Iran’s oil industry was nationalised under the leadership of Musaddiq, now Prime Minister, and the National Front. However, he was overthrown in August 1953 in a coup orchestrated by the American Central Intelligence Agency.²⁰⁸ The impact of the 1953 coup

²⁰³ Ibid., p. 73

²⁰⁴ Op. cit. Ansari 2003, p. 114

²⁰⁵ Ettehadieh, Mansoureh. ‘Sediqeh Dowlatabadi: An Iranian Feminist’ in Ridgeon, Lloyd. (ed) *Religion and Politics in Modern Iran: A Reader*. London: I. B. Tauris, 2005. pp. 71-98, p. 91

²⁰⁶ Women were eventually granted suffrage in 1963. For the involvement of gender issues in national reform see Paidar 1997. p. 132-134

²⁰⁷ Ibid., pp. 93-94. For more on Sediqeh Dowlatabadi’s activities see Paidar, pp. 93-94 and Ettehadieh, 2005, pp. 71-98

²⁰⁸ Ansari, Ali M. *Confronting Iran: The Failure of American Foreign Policy and the Next Great Crisis in the Middle East*. London: Hurst & Company, 2006. p. 27

on the Iranian sense of nationhood cannot be ignored. It is Ansari's contention that the 'myth of 1953' continues:

It is impossible to underestimate the importance to the Iranian political consciousness of the oil nationalisation crisis and the coup that followed. The anniversary of the passing of the oil; nationalisation bill remains a national holiday and is perhaps the closest things to an Iranian independence day.²⁰⁹

Despite the coup, the ideas of the National Front continued with the National Resistance Movement (*Nahzat-i Muqāvimat-i Millī*) as it became in 1954, but repression and internal conflict were to lead to its collapse.²¹⁰ Nonetheless, Mehdi Bazargan and Hujjat al-Islam Mahmud Taleqani, two of its members, created the Liberation Movement (*Nahzat-i Āzād-i Īrān*), which joined with the second National Front, in the period between 1960 and 1963. Their main goals were to 'serve the people's religious, social and national needs'.²¹¹ This is reflected in the following statement chosen by Ervand Abrahamian:

We are Muslims, Iranians, constitutionalists, and Mossadeqists: Muslims because we refuse to divorce our principles from politics; Iranians because we respect our national heritage; constitutionalist because we demand freedom of thought, expression, and association; Mossadeqists because we want national independence.²¹²

The significance of this statement is that it illustrates the complexity of the construction of Iranian national identity and the meanings attached to it.

Musaddiq, the Popular Movement, National Front and the nationalisation of the oil industry also represent an alternative nationalist discourse to the Pahlavis' 'dynastic nationalism'. It is essentially a more inclusive counter-discourse of national identity that rejects the perceived hegemony of the Pahlavis; anti-imperialism and the desire for democratic progress are the basis for their construction of national identity. These ideals, symbolised here by Musaddiq and the nationalisation of oil, are significant in the Khatami period because, as will be illustrated in Chapters Five and Six, for some it is democratic aspirations that constitute the basis of Iranian national identity.

After the fall of Musaddiq, dynastic nationalism became a 'deeply personal affair' based on a narrative that connected the Iranian monarchy intimately with the nation, which was perceived to stretch back to the Achaemenids' Cyrus the Great. Indeed, Cyrus the Great was believed to be the 'founding father of the Iranian nation'. It can be argued that the

²⁰⁹ Ibid., pp. 236-37

²¹⁰ Abrahamian, Ervand. *Iran between Two Revolutions*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982. p. 457

²¹¹ 'The Liberation and National Front', *Nahzat-i Āzād-i Īrān*, 11 June 1961 cited in Abrahamian 1982, p. 460

²¹² Cited in Abrahamian 1982, p. 460

ultimate expression of Mohammad Reza Shah's dynastic nationalism was the celebration in 1971 for the 2,500 years of Persian monarchy, which took place at Persepolis and Pasargadae. The link with the Achaemenids was accentuated by Mohammad Reza Shah's eulogy at the tomb of Cyrus the Great. This was followed, in 1976, with the changing of Iran's calendar to an 'imperial calendar'. Thus, rather than it being 1355, it was in fact 2535, which included the 35 year reign of Mohammad Reza Shah.²¹³ In this case it is clear that the pre-Islamic culture that is being aspired to and used is that of Achaemenid Iran rather than that of any other pre-Islamic period. The use of Achaemenid Iran in Mohammad Reza Shah's nationalism is significant in relation to the construction of national identity in Khatami's Iran. As will be illustrated, while there continues to be a construction of Iranian national identity based on pre-Islamic culture, it is Sasanian Iran rather than Achaemenid Iran.

Ansari argues that the importance of monarchy to the 'religious and spiritual well-being of the nation' defined Mohammad Reza Shah's dynastic nationalism. As he points out, this is articulated in the following extract from Mohammad Reza Shah's book, *Toward the Great Civilisation*.²¹⁴ It states:

In Iranian culture, the Iranian monarchy means the political and geographic unity of Iran in addition to the special national identity and all those unchangeable values which this national identity has brought forth. For this reason no fundamental change is possible in this country unless it is in tune with the fundamental principles of the monarchical system.²¹⁵

This extract shows how the political system is intrinsic to national identity. In this case it is monarchy. However, as will be illustrated it is monarchy, seen as a symbol of the use of Iran's pre-Islamic culture, that is resisted and continues to be rejected by some.

Despite the re-invigoration of 'dynastic nationalism' under Mohammad Reza Shah²¹⁶, the notion that to be Iranian was to show loyalty to the Pahlavi state and to prioritise Iran's 'Aryan' heritage was rejected.²¹⁷ Not only did 'dynastic nationalism' face resistance from Kurdish and Azeri nationalism²¹⁸, it was also met with a discourse of national identity that placed Islam at its base. This resistance to the perceived hegemony of Mohammad Reza Shah's linking with Achaemenid Iran is represented by Jalal Al-e Ahmad's use of Shi'ism as articulated in his book *Gharbzadagi (Occidentosis or Westoxification)*, published in

²¹³ Op. cit. Ansari 2005, pp. 326-327

²¹⁴ Ibid., p. 327

²¹⁵ M. R. Pahlavi, *Be Sooye Tamadun-e Bozorg*, Tehran, undated, p. 244 as cited in Ansari 2005, p. 327

²¹⁶ Op. cit. Ansari 2003, p. 76

²¹⁷ Ibid., p. 82

²¹⁸ For more information on Kurdish and Azerbaijani separatist movements see Ansari 2003, pp. 88-98. See also Keddie 2003, p. 111

1962. In the first chapter, 'Diagnosing an Illness', Al-e Ahmad explains that *gharbzadagī* has two poles. One is the Occident, which includes the Soviet Union, Europe and North America, and the other is the East, developing countries, of which Iran is one. The division is made on economic grounds; 'The West comprises the sated nations and the East, the hungry nations'. This polarised world is also given binary identities: 'wealth and poverty, power and impotence, knowledge and ignorance, prosperity and ruin, civilisation and savagery'.²¹⁹ *Gharbzadagī* is compared not only with an infestation of weevils, but also with tuberculosis. His point is that *gharbzadagī* is a disease that requires a diagnosis and hopefully a cure.²²⁰ He concludes the chapter by arguing:

If we define occidentosis as the aggregate of events in the life, culture, civilisation, and mode of thought of a people having no supporting tradition, no historical continuity, no gradient of transformation, but having only what the machine brings them, it is clear that we are such a people.²²¹

In other words, as far as Al-e Ahmad is concerned, Iran has lost its sense of history, culture and civilisation and only has what the machine of the West has brought.

Much attention has been given to *Gharbzadagī* in the literature with regard to its significance and the reasons for it. One argument is that *gharbzadagī* represents a resistance to westernisation in Iran. This is not surprising since following the 1953 Coup, westernisation and Western presence was intensified. It is Yann Richard's contention that for many this was associated with 'Western politico-economic domination'. As mentioned above, this was met with an anti-imperialist counter-discourse. However, the discourse of Al-e Ahmad was somewhat different to that of Musaddiq. He also comments that 'anti-Westernism and anti-regime ideas turned increasingly to the masses' Shi'i outlook'.²²²

This reference to a 'Shi'i outlook' raises the issue of the significance of Shi'ism in Iranian national identity. Integral to this is the role played by the Safavid rulers, who adopted Shi'ism as the official state religion in 1501. It is Keddie's contention that these territorial (relative territorial stability was established) and religious 'accomplishments were important for Iran's future identity and territorial integrity'.²²³ She argues that the adoption of Shi'ism by the rulers was an attempt to distinguish Iran from the Sunni Ottomans and

²¹⁹ Al-i Ahmad, Jalal. *Occidentosis: A Plagued from the West*. trans. by R. Campbell, Annotations and Introduction by Hamid Algar, Berkeley, CA: Mizan Press, 1984. p. 28

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 27

²²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 34

²²² Richard, Yann. 'Contemporary Shi'i Thought' in Keddie, Nikki. *Modern Iran: Roots of Revolution*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2003. pp.188-212, p. 189

²²³ *Op. cit.* Keddie 2003, p. 318

Uzbeks.²²⁴ Furthermore, most of the population was converted to Shi'ism from Sunni Islam.²²⁵ Consequently, Shi'ism was the principle by which most Iranians were unified despite the existence of non-Shi'i minorities.²²⁶ It is argued that adherence to Shi'ism was likely to have reinforced a feeling of independence.²²⁷

The idea of independence and differentiation from the external 'other' brings up the perceived 'Iranian' nature of Shi'ism. It is not uncommon to hear in Iran the theory that the Safavids essentially Iranianised Islam. Cottam argues that part of the Shi'i belief is indicative of the historical strength of Iranian particularism.²²⁸ For example, it is argued that the line of imams were symbolically Aryanised through the belief they were the descendents of Ali following the marriage of his son Hussain to the last Sasanian monarch Yazdgerd III. To this regard, Henry Corbin suggests that the 'idea of the Twelfth Imam presents a remarkable affinity with the Saviour of Saoshyant of ancient Zoroastrian Persia'.²²⁹ Thus, as the title of his book suggests, *En Islam Iranien*, the Shi'ism of Iran is essentially *Iranian* Islam. The difference here between *Īslāmīyat* (being Islamic) and *Īrānīyat* (being Iranian) is, therefore, not so clear-cut and the interrelated nature of these identities needs to be taken into consideration when discussing Iranian national identity.

The relationship between Shi'ism and a feeling independence is particularly evident in the case of the *gharbzadagī* discourse. Shi'ism was to be the vaccine that could cure Iran from *gharbzadagī*, and the clergy were the doctors who could prescribe the cure as they were the only group that had not surrendered to western domination.²³⁰ Richard argues:

[Al-e Ahmad's] struggle was for the identity of the Shi'i Iranian. What he asked of Islam, at the moment (ca. 1963) when it again became a symbol of national struggle against monarchy, was to raise politics to its just position. ... Then Islam might again be a liberator as it was for the seventeenth-century Iranians.²³¹

It is clear, therefore, as Boroujerdi points out, that 'Al-e Ahmad adopted an instrumentalist view of Shi'ism as a mobilising political ideology'.²³² Thus, not only does

²²⁴ Keddie, Nikki 'Religion, Ethnic Minorities, and the State in Iran: An Overview' in Banuazizi, A. & Weiner, M. (eds) *The State, Religion and Ethnic Politics: Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1986. pp. 157-166, p. 158

²²⁵ Op. cit. Keddie 2003, p. 318

²²⁶ Op. cit. Keddie 1986, p. 158

²²⁷ Op. cit. Cottam, p. 134

²²⁸ Ibid., p. 134

²²⁹ Corbin, Henry. *En Islam Iranien: Aspects Spirituel et Philosophiques: Le Shi'isme Duodécimain*. Vol. 1, Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1971. pp. 4-5

²³⁰ Boroujerdi, Mehrzad. *Iranian Intellectuals and the West: The Tormented Triumph of Nativism*. Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1996, p. 72

²³¹ Op. cit. Richard, p. 190

²³² Op. cit. Boroujerdi 1996, pp. 75-76

gharbzadagī illustrate the Islamisation of the anti-imperialist counter-discourse, but also the politicisation of *Īslāmīyat*. With Al-e Ahmad, there is the turn to a discourse that emphasises the role of Islam in the articulation of national identity and the rejection of secular notions of Iranian national identity.

While *gharbzadagī* can be considered as a response to the westernisation of Iran and the Pahlavi regime, it seems it is not quite that simple. Ali Mirsepassi argues that ‘Al-e Ahmad’s critique of *gharbzadagī* is a complex and contradictory concept that cannot simply be reduced to an anti-Western polemic.’ Rather, Mirsepassi contends, his ‘return to Islam was a quest to realise a national modernity in Iran’.²³³ It must be mentioned that Al-e Ahmad was writing at a time when many believed that ‘modernisation and westernisation are identical concepts, and that Islam must be abandoned in the name of progress.’²³⁴ Thus, while *Īslāmīyat* is part of a search for an “authentic” Iranian identity, it can by no means be considered in isolation.

Perhaps, most important of all is the legacy of Al-e Ahmad’s *gharbzadagī*; it gave birth to a discourse, of the same name, which was ‘the modern Iranian articulation of nativism’.²³⁵ Boroujerdi argues: ‘It has been almost impossible for Iranian intellectuals to speak of their cultural conflict with contemporary Western civilisation without paying homage in some way to his theory of *gharbzadagī*.’²³⁶ He illustrates well the anti-imperialist discourse in his outline of the mood and sentiment that Al-e Ahmad symbolised:

Al-e Ahmad was part of a generation that was at once inspired by the West yet politically opposed to it; a generation xenophobic toward the West, yet drawing inspirations from the thoughts of its leading thinkers; a generation dodging religion and traditionalism, yet pulled toward them; a generation aspiring for such modernist goals as democracy, freedom, and social justice, yet sceptical of their historical precedents and contemporary problems. As Iran’s leading intellectual of the 1960s, Al-e Ahmad epitomized this state of mental torment. He was representative of a generation of Iranian intellectuals who became disillusioned with both liberalism and socialism as political alternatives. Al-e Ahmad’s disillusionment with liberalism was caused by the fact that despite its vow to safeguard democracy all that the West provided for Iran was (neo)colonialism and support for autocratic rulers.²³⁷

²³³ Mirsepassi, Ali. *Intellectual Discourse and the Politics of Modernization: Negotiating Modernity in Iran*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. p. 101. For an interesting and insightful discussion on Al-e Ahmad and the relationship between Islam, modernization and westernisation see Mirsepassi 2000, pp. 104-108

²³⁴ Ibid., p. 107

²³⁵ Op. cit. Boroujerdi 1996, p. 53

²³⁶ Ibid., p. 74

²³⁷ Ibid., pp. 74-75

The influence of *Gharbzadagī*, therefore, is a clear illustration of the common and perhaps dominant anti-western discourse in Iran at the time. In this case, Iranian national identity was to be constructed on what was perceived to be authentically Iranian: *Īslāmīyat*. Furthermore, of particular interest here, as will be illustrated in Chapter Four, is that the Islamist discourse of national identity as reflected in the rhetoric of Ayatollah Khamene'i is very much reminiscent of the *gharbzadagī* discourse.

Ali Shari'ati is said to have continued where Al-e Ahmad left off. Like Al-e Ahmad he was part of an anti-imperialist counter-discourse. According to Mirsepassi, Shari'ati 'considered himself a modern Shi'i ideologue of the future, fighting for technological advancement and national independence'.²³⁸ As was the case for Al-e Ahmad, for Shari'ati *Īslāmīyat* was politicised, but it also had secular tone, as will be illustrated below. Developing Al-e Ahmad's ideas, his focus was on constructing and popularising Shi'ism as an authentic alternative ideology to secular ideologies, which would enable the liberation of the Iranian nation.²³⁹ This was reflected in his discourse of *bāzgasht bih khīshātān* (return to the self), an Iranianised replica of Frantz Fanon's 'return of the oppressed', which complemented Al-e Ahmad's *gharbzadagī*. These two discourses came to be interrelated discourses and popular in intellectual circles.²⁴⁰

The discourse of *bāzgasht bih khīshātān* can be considered as a reaction to a particular perception of the West. According to Boroujerdi, Shari'ati viewed the Orient and the Occident as culturally and ontologically different. The Occident was characterised by 'rationalism, materialism, objectivism, and profit-seeking'; where as the Orient was characterised by 'ecclesiastical, collectivist, subjectivist and moral traits'.²⁴¹ Furthermore, according to Mirsepassi, as far as Shari'ati was concerned, Western domination in Iran was not simply economic and political; it was more a case of Iranian society 'suffering from Western infestations'.²⁴² His response to this was Islam, which is articulated in one of Shari'ati's major works, *Return to Self*. He states:

Now I want to address a fundamental question raised by intellectuals in Africa, Latin America, and Asia: the question of 'return to one's roots' ... Since the Second World War, many intellectuals in the Third World, whether religious or non-religious, have stressed that their societies must return to their roots and rediscover their history, culture and popular language. I want to stress that non-religious intellectuals, as well as religious ones have reached this conclusion. In

²³⁸ Op. cit. Mirsepassi, p. 118

²³⁹ Ibid., p. 114

²⁴⁰ Op. cit. Boroujerdi 1996, p. 106, 112

²⁴¹ Ibid., p. 106

²⁴² Op. cit. Mirsepassi, p. 118

fact, the main advocates of ‘return to roots’ have not been religious – Fanon in Algeria, Julius Nyerere in Tanzania, Jomo Kenyatta in Kenya, Leopold Senghor in Senegal ... When we say ‘return to one’s roots’, we are really saying to one’s cultural roots. ... Some of you may conclude that we Iranians must return to our racial roots (Aryan) roots. I categorically reject this conclusion. I oppose racism, fascism, and reactionary returns. What is more, Islamic civilisation has acted like scissors and has cut us off completely from our pre-Islamic past. The pundits, such as archaeologists and ancient historians, may know much about the Sassanids, the Achaemenids and even older civilisations. But our people know nothing about such things. They do not find their roots in these civilisations. They are left unmoved by the heroes, myths, and monuments of these ancient empires. They remember nothing from this distant past and do not care to learn about these pre-Islamic civilisations ... Consequently, for us to return to our roots means not a rediscovery of pre-Islamic Iran but a return to our Islamic roots.²⁴³

As far as Mirsepassi is concerned, this illustrates Shari’ati’s conviction that it is only Islam that can be used as a revolutionary ideology and a means of creating political unity in order ‘to mobilise the masses to fight for social change and a new society’.²⁴⁴ Thus, Islam can be considered as a means of creating political unity and consequently as the basis of national identity. However, according to Ashraf, Shari’ati ‘conceived Iranian national identity as stemming from the two equally important bases of Iranian nationhood and Shi’ism’.²⁴⁵

Although Islam was used as the basis of national identity, Shari’ati advocated a particular Islam. He believed that Islam needed theoretical and organisational reform:

Theoretically, it had to undergo a transformation process from a culture to an ideology, from a collection of assorted learning into an organised body of social thought. He maintained that Islam was neither a scientific specialisation nor a culture but instead an idea, a belief system, and a feeling about how societies must be governed.²⁴⁶

The result of this was a reinterpretation Shi’ism’s ‘historic-victim’ discourse of martyrdom, historical persecution and the promise of eternal salvation for those who confronted the “unjust”, ‘in a modernist vein’. This was embedded with a call for resistance. Thus, the Shah’s political and economic injustices were met with the ‘historic-victim’ discourse of Shi’ism ‘impregnated with nativism’.²⁴⁷

²⁴³ Abrahamian, Ervand. *Radical Islam: The Iranian Mojahedin*. London: I. B. Tauris, 1989, p. 116. This extract is also quoted in part in Boroujerdi 1996, pp. 112-113 and Mirsepassi 2000, p. 122

²⁴⁴ Op. cit. Mirsepassi, p. 122

²⁴⁵ Ashraf, Ahmad. ‘The Crisis of National and Ethnic Identities in Contemporary Iran’ in *Iranian Studies*, 26, (1-2), 1993. pp. 139-165, p. 162

²⁴⁶ Op. cit. Boroujerdi 1996, p. 111

²⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 109-110

Not only was Shari'ati's interpretation of Islam based on the martyrdom of Hussein at the battle of Kabala, it was also the Islam of the masses. This is reflected in the following extract from one of his works. Shari'ati states:

Islam has two separate Islams. The first can be considered a revolutionary "ideology". By this, I mean beliefs, critical programmes and aspirations whose goal is human development. This is true religion. The second can be considered scholastic "knowledge". By this I mean philosophy, oratory, legal training, and scriptural learning. The second can be grasped by academic specialists, even reactionary ones. The first can be grasped by uneducated believers. This is why sometimes true believers understand Islam better than *faqīh* (religious jurists), and *ālim* (scholars), and the philosophers.²⁴⁸

In other words, "true Islam" is that of the masses. Even though Marxism and class struggle are integral aspects of Shari'ati's ideology, Marxism was also an 'objective phenomenon to be taken by Iran and "Islamicised" from its Western roots.²⁴⁹

Shari'ati's ideas reflect a discourse where Islam, as an ideology, is embedded in the construction of Iranian national identity. Furthermore, there are certain meanings attached to this understanding of Islam: 'Islamic reformism granted a sense of self-respect, collective and national identity, and cultural authenticity.'²⁵⁰ It is worth noting that Shari'ati 'is nowadays regarded as the ... "main ideologue" of the 1979 revolution'.²⁵¹

This period illustrates how nationalism in Iran continued to be contested. On the one hand, there was the state discourse of 'dynastic nationalism', and on the other hand there were non-state discourses resisting this state nationalism. These are reflected in the liberal nationalism of Musaddiq and the discourses of Al-e Ahmad and Shari'ati, which advocated *Īslāmīyat*, and specifically Shi'ism as the base of Iranian national identity. Although the discourses of Musaddiq, on the one hand and Al-e Ahmad and Shari'ati, on the other hand, are very different, their commonality is the expression of anti-imperialism. This reflects a resistance to perceived imperialism, which is represented not only in the actions of external forces, but also in Mohammad Reza Shah himself. Thus, this period demonstrates a hegemonic and counter-hegemonic dynamic which is reflected in the meanings attached to the various constructions of Iranian national identity.

1.19 Religious Nationalism and the Islamic Republic

The aim of this section is to explore how Iranian nationalism and national identity have been constructed by the Islamic Republic. This will be done by first considering

²⁴⁸ Taken by Mirsepassi 2000, p. 125 from Abrahamian 1989, p. 119

²⁴⁹ Op. cit. Mirsepassi, p. 120

²⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 116

²⁵¹ Farhang 1979, p. 31; Richard 1981, p. 215 in Boroujerdi 1996, p. 105

Khomeini and his discourse of ‘religious nationalism’. Although much of Khomeini’s rhetoric took place whilst in exile prior to the 1979 Revolution, it is included here because of his integral role in the Revolution and the establishment of the Islamic Republic. This will be followed by a look at how national identity is constructed in the Constitution of the Islamic Republic, and finally how it is expressed during the Iran-Iraq War.

Existing alongside Mohammad Reza Shah’s dynastic nationalism and Musaddiq’s liberal nationalism, there was also a discourse of ‘religious nationalism’. Ansari describes this as a hybrid construction based on the notion of ‘national resurrection’, which can only be ‘achieved through a return to cultural authenticity, of which Shi’ism was an integral part.’²⁵² Thus, similarities can be drawn with the *gharbzadagī* discourse of Al-e Ahmad and the *bāzgasht bih khīshhtān* discourse of Shari’ati. However, according to Ansari, it was Ayatollah Ruhollah Musavi Khomeini who ‘symbolised the force of ‘religious nationalism’’.²⁵³

Khomeini’s resistance to the Pahlavi regime is evident in his vocal opposition to the granting of diplomatic immunity to American military personnel and the commitment to a \$200 million loan from the United States to buy military equipment in 1964. Khomeini’s response to this was to force him into exile. On October 27 1964, Khomeini gave a speech from Qom entitled *The Granting of Capitulatory Rights to the US*. He states:

If the religious leaders have influence, they will not permit this nation to be the slaves of Britain one day, and America the next. If the religious leaders have influence, they will not permit Israel to take over the Iranian economy; If the religious leaders have influence, they will not permit the government to impose arbitrarily such a heavy loan on the Iranian nation. ... If the religious leaders have influence, they will not permit a handful of individuals to be imposed on the nation as deputies and participate in determining the destiny of the country. If the religious leaders have influence, they will not permit some agent of America to carry out these scandalous deeds; they will throw him out of Iran.²⁵⁴

Khomeini’s discourse in this extract from the speech is clear here. There is a strong sense of anti-imperialism and the belief that if there were a religious government Iran would not fall to being a pawn of the West. Thus, Islam, in a political sense, is perceived as the means of combating imperialism.

Also during this period, Khomeini began to develop a new understanding of the state. Although the intellectual background for this development is not clear, it is suggested that he may have been influenced by Al-e Ahmad’s *gharbzadagī*, and also by Shari’ati among

²⁵² Op. cit. Ansari 2003, p. 201

²⁵³ Ibid. p. 201

²⁵⁴ Khomeini, Ruhollah. *Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declarations of Imam Khomeini*. trans. and annotated by Hamid Algar, London and Melbourne: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985. pp. 181-188

others.²⁵⁵ In the 1970s, while in exile in Najaf, Khomeini's ideas evolved into something more concrete. He gave a series of lectures entitled *Vilāyat-i Faqīh: Hukūmat-i Īslāmī* (The Jurist's Guardianship: Islamic Government). Abrahamian comments:

In these lectures, he [Khomeini] declared in no uncertain terms that Islam was inherently incompatible with all forms of monarchy (*saltanat*). ... and that Imam Hosayn had raised the banner of revolt in Karbala because he rejected hereditary kingship on principle.²⁵⁶

Khomeini is also said to have stated:

The Prophet Mohammad had declared *mālik al-mulūk* (king of kings) to be the most hated of all titles in the eyes of the Almighty – Khomeini interpreted this to be the equivalent of shah of shahs.²⁵⁷

This rejection of monarchy reflects Khomeini's aversion to a particular political system. This was obviously radical, since prior to the 1979 Revolution Iran had not experienced any other form of government. Khomeini legitimises his rejection of monarchy through his references to Imam Hussein and the Prophet Mohammad. The rejection of monarchy also symbolises a rejection of Iran's pre-Islamic culture in favour of its Islamic culture. As will be illustrated in Chapter Four, this discourse of rejecting monarchy continues to be used in the Islamist discourse of national identity, as articulated by Ayatollah Khamene'i. The ideas articulated in these lectures were to later form the foundation of the Islamic Republic and *vilāyat-i faqīh*, the basis of Iran's new political system.

The rejection of monarchy also reflects the populist nature of Khomeini's discourse. Abrahamian contends that 'Khomeinism, despite its religious dimension, in many ways resembles Latin American populism.'²⁵⁸ This resemblance was evident in the middle-class nature of the movement, which 'mobilised the masses with radical-sounding rhetoric against the external powers and the entrenched power-holding classes'. It also 'claimed to be a "return to native roots" and a means for eradicating "cosmopolitan ideas" and charting a noncapitalist, noncommunist "third way" toward development.'²⁵⁹ The populism of Khomeini's discourse is also recognised by Ansari. He states:

... it took religious nationalism to free Iranian nationalism from its elite pretensions and make it popular. Indeed, religious nationalism, the politicisation of Iranian identity as it had formed in the nineteenth century, reflected the

²⁵⁵ Abrahamian, Ervand. *Khomeinism: Essays on the Islamic Republic*. London: I. B. Tauris, 1993. p. 22

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 24

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 24

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 37

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 38

successful synthesis of an elite imposed ideology and the Islamic realities of popular politics.²⁶⁰

It must be stressed that although anti-imperialism and populism were integral to Khomeini's discourse, it was Islam, and particularly Shi'ism, that was considered as the overriding ideology and the means of achieving Khomeini's aims – independence and what he perceived to be a more “just” society. For this reason, ‘Khomeinism’ and religious nationalism can be considered in terms of an Islamist discourse of national identity. It must also be emphasised, however, that Islamist here does not simply mean political Islam. The meanings attached to this term are more complicated. As was the case with Al-e Ahmad and Shari'ati, Islam was seen as the only “authentic” Iranian identity and the most appropriate means of resisting the imperialism evident both directly and indirectly.

Khomeini's Islamist discourse of national identity is also both hegemonic and counter-hegemonic. It is counter-hegemonic in many of the same ways that the other ideas and discourses articulated during the reign of Mohammad Reza Shah are, as illustrated above. First of all, Khomeini's discourse, like those of Musaddiq, Al-e Ahmad and Shari'ati, is resisting not only the perceived hegemony of imperialism, but also that of the Pahlavi government and its dynastic nationalism. However, unlike Musaddiq, and like Al-e Ahmad and Shari'ati, it is Islam that is used as the most appropriate means of resistance. The discourse is hegemonic in that it is prescribing a particular set of values as the dominant values, culturally, morally and politically, which are to be achieved through *vilāyat-i faqīh*.

The aim of this section is not to discuss Iran's revolution of 1979. Rather, it is to illustrate how the Iranian nation is officially constructed once the Revolution has taken place and the Islamic Republic established. This is evident in the Constitution of the Islamic Republic. Many of the themes articulated here are reminiscent of Khomeini's discourse. The opening statement of the ‘Preamble’ to the Iranian Constitution makes this very clear. It states:

The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran advances the cultural, social, political, and economic institutions of Iranian society based on Islamic principles and norms, which represent an honest aspiration of the Islamic Ummah.²⁶¹

²⁶⁰ Op. cit. Ansari 2003, p. 17

²⁶¹ ‘Preamble’, *Iran – Constitution*, http://www.servat.unibe.ch/law/icl/ir00000_html - date accessed 12 June 2007

The use of Islam as the basis of not only the Constitution, but also as society as a whole, is unmistakable. Furthermore, the reference to ‘Islamic Ummah’ is also of particular interest. It represents an understanding of Iranian identity in transnational terms. As will be illustrated in Chapter Four, this is also the case in the discourse of the current Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamene'i.

The populist nature of Khomeini's discourse is also evident in the Constitution. The following extract is taken from ‘The Form of Government in Islam’. It states:

In the view of Islam, government does not derive from the interests of a class, nor does it serve the domination of an individual or a group. Rather, it represents the fulfilment of the political ideal of a people who bear a common faith and common outlook, taking an organised form in order to initiate the process of intellectual and ideological evolution towards the final goal, i.e., movement towards Allah. Our nation, in the course of its revolutionary developments, has cleansed itself of the dust and impurities that accumulated during the past and purged itself of foreign ideological influences, returning to authentic intellectual standpoints and world-view of Islam. It now intends to establish an ideal and model society on the basis of Islamic norms.²⁶²

The claim here is that the government is not one that is based on a particular group in society or class. Rather, it is implied that it is the government of the people who share a ‘common faith and outlook’. However, bearing in mind the several discourses of national identity prior to the 1979 Revolution and during the Khatami period, this is clearly not the case. Nonetheless, this does not deny the enormous support that the Revolution did have. The issue of authenticity is also raised. In this case, it is specifically Iran's Islamic culture, or *Īslāmīyat*, to which Iran has “returned” having rid itself of all that is perceived to be foreign, including Iran's pre-Islamic culture or *Īrānīyat*. Having “restored” authenticity to Iran, it is perceived that Islam, as Iran's all-encompassing ideology, can provide the basis of society, morals and government. Thus, in this sense the discourse of the Constitution is hegemonic.

However, while the discourse here is hegemonic, it is also counter-hegemonic. This is not only expressed in the rejection of the previous government and state articulated national identity, but also in the endeavour to achieve and maintain the independence of Iran as a nation. The importance of independence is reflected in Articles 152 (Principles) and 153 (No Foreign Control) in ‘Chapter X Foreign Policy’ of the Constitution. Article 152 states:

The foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran is based upon the rejection of all forms of domination, both the exertion of it and submission to it, the

²⁶² ‘The Form of Government in Islam’, *Iran – Constitution*,
http://www.servat.unibe.ch/law/icl/ir00000_.html - date accessed 12 June 2007

preservation of the independence of the country in all respects and its territorial integrity, the defence of the rights of all Muslims, non-alignment with respect to the hegemonist superpowers, and the maintenance of mutually peaceful relations with all non-belligerent states.²⁶³

The discourse articulated here is very similar to that which continues to reverberate from certain elements of the Islamic Republic. It is also reflected in Iran's ties with international organisations such as the Non-aligned Movement and the Organisation of the Islamic Conference.

The resistance to imperialism and the attempt to assert Iran's independence is further elaborated in the subsequent article of Chapter X. Article 153 states:

Any form of agreement resulting in foreign control over the natural resources, economy, army, or culture of the country, as well as other aspects of the national life is forbidden.²⁶⁴

As mentioned above, it is also cultural imperialism that is resisted. Furthermore, taking into consideration Iran's experience in the tobacco and oil industries, it is not surprising that the Constitution of the Islamic Republic also stresses Iran's independence from foreign interference in economic affairs. Indeed, it has been argued that:

In this new Islamic-nationalist economic system, it was hoped that nationalisation of a wide range of industries and services would reduce the scope for interference of the domestic private sector and their foreign partners in the economy.²⁶⁵

There is some debate as to whether or not following the 1979 Revolution Islam has replaced nationalism as the dominant ideology on the basis that 'Islam does not recognise national boundaries, [and] it would be incompatible with nationalism'.²⁶⁶ This is clearly not the case. If nationalism is to be understood as a 'movement for guarding a nation's independence and freedom in the face of an external aggressor, and ... an intellectual assertion of a nation's separateness and identity'²⁶⁷, this is precisely the aim of Khomeini's discourse. However, it is Islam, perceived as an all-encompassing ideology, which is considered to be the most appropriate way of achieving an independent Iranian nation and the "authentic" identity.

²⁶³ Article 152 (Principles) in 'Chapter X Foreign Policy', *Iran – Constitution*, http://www.servat.unibe.ch/law/icl/ir00000_.html - date accessed 12 June 2007

²⁶⁴ Article 153 (No Foreign Control) in 'Chapter X Foreign Policy' *Iran – Constitution*, http://www.servat.unibe.ch/law/icl/ir00000_.html - date accessed 12 June 2007

²⁶⁵ Pesaran, Evaleila. *Business-State Contestations and the Shifting Approach to Foreign Investment in Post-Revolutionary Iran*. PhD Thesis unpublished. section 2.2 of Chapter 2

²⁶⁶ Op. cit. **Siavoshi, p. 185**

²⁶⁷ Op. cit. Enayat, pp. 111-112

It is essential to note that although it is only religious nationalism that has been addressed in this section, it does not mean that there are not co-existing competing discourses of national identity. It must not be assumed that with the Revolution in 1979 all other discourses ceased to exist. The ideas articulated throughout this chapter continued to exist, either in exile among the diaspora, or simply just in private. As will be illustrated in the coming chapters, the ideas espoused by the Reza Shah, Mohammad Reza Shah and Musaddiq continue to be articulated during Khatami's presidency.

Although the Islamic Republic and its Constitution places a strong emphasis on Islam, with the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988) the situation somewhat changed. According to Shahram Chubin and Charles Tripp, both sides of the war attempted to 'universalise' the war: 'Iraq by "Arabising" it and Iran by "Islamicising" it'. However, in the case of Iran, the Islamisation was not without an emphasis on *Iranian* nationalism.²⁶⁸ To this regard, Ansari argues that by the end of the war 'the tensions implicit in religious nationalism were being resolved in favour of nationalism'. It is his contention that this was 'encouraged by Iraqi propaganda portraying the war against Iran as an extension of historic Persian/Arab antipathies.'²⁶⁹ Shireen Hunter also attributes official acknowledgement of both Islamic and Iranian identity; she contends that in order 'to rally popular support for the war effort, the government had to appeal not only to Islam, but also to Iranian nationalism.'²⁷⁰ Although the invasion of Iran by Iraq and the subsequent threat to territorial integrity were reasons for the government to adopt rhetoric that no longer excluded Iran's pre-Islamic culture, there was also pressure from Iranian society. To this regard, Ansari contends that there was 'recognition that for much of the Iranian population, their distinctive [Iranian] identity remained important.'²⁷¹

Following the war, the idea of building on both Iran's cultures continued to be part of the government discourse in some circles. According to Hunter, in the late 1980s and early 1990s there was a subtle change in the government's approach to cultural issues and the "Iranian" aspect of the country's culture.²⁷² She contends:

once in power, the Islamists no longer felt seriously threatened by Iranian nationalism as an ideological revival. As a result, the religious establishment began reverting to its more traditional attitude toward Iran's pre-Islamic culture and its relationship to Islam, as well as to the post-Islamic Iranian culture, with

²⁶⁸ Chubin, Shahram and Tripp, Charles. *Iran and Iraq at War*. London: I. B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 1988. p. 9

²⁶⁹ Op. cit. Ansari 2003, p. 240

²⁷⁰ Hunter, Shireen. *Iran after Khomeini*. New York & London: Praeger, 1992. p. 93

²⁷¹ Op. cit. Ansari 2003, p. 240

²⁷² Op. cit. Hunter 1992, p. 92

its delicate blending of Islamic principles, pre-Islamic Persian concepts, and other non-Islamic Philosophies.²⁷³

This argument is supported by Ashraf. He contends that an Islamic-Iranian conception of Iranian identity has been adopted, presumably in the early 1990s when his article was written, by Iran's 'leadership and the lower echelons of the Islamic regime'.²⁷⁴ In 1992, Hunter stated that 'The regime has now accepted the notion of an 'Iranian nation', and it has also concluded that the nature of the Iranian culture is 'Iranian-Islamic'.²⁷⁵ To this regard, writing in 1995, Hooshang Amirahmadi argues that there is a "new nationalism" in Iran. He describes this new nationalism as follows:

The new nationalism is neither anti-Islamist nor anti-Western; rather it is an attempt to reconcile the contradictions between Iran and Islam, modernity and tradition, globalism and political isolation. ... it is imperative for the new nationalists to strike a balance between Iranianism, Islamism and globalism.²⁷⁶

Despite these contentions, it must be highlighted that the government of the Islamic Republic is by no means homogeneous when it comes to the articulation of Iranian national identity. This is certainly apparent during the Khatami period when there is a clear difference between the discourses of Khamene'i and Khatami. As will be illustrated in Chapters Four and Five, while Khamene'i may be accepting Iran as a nation he still asserts that *Islam* as synonymous with the nation. Furthermore, Khatami's criticism of Islamism alludes to the continuation of a trend of prioritising Islam over Iran's pre-Islamic culture. Nonetheless, an issue that must also be raised here is with regard to the nature of Islam in Iran. As has been addressed above, there is the argument that Shi'ism in Iran is essentially 'Iranianised Islam'. If this is the case, then the boundaries between *Īslāmīyat* and *Īrānīyat* are not so distinct. Furthermore, it is Islam that is being used to defend the *nation* from imperialism. Thus, despite the association between Islam and the *'ummah*, the *nation* still remains all important.

1.20 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to historically and intellectually contextualise the discourses of Iranian national identity in the Khatami period. This is necessary in order to illustrate that the roots of national identity construction during Khatami's presidency are based on a complex 'historical experience'. The contextualisation has been done by illustrating how Iranian nationalism, in its various forms, has been articulated on an

²⁷³ Ibid., p. 93

²⁷⁴ Op. cit. Ashraf 1993, p. 162

²⁷⁵ Op. cit. Hunter 1992, p. 95

²⁷⁶ Amirahmadi, Hooshang 'Emerging Civil Society in Iran' in *SAIS Review*, 16, 2, Summer/Fall 1996. pp. 87-108, p. 100

intellectual level though the ideas of certain individuals and groups, and in practice, through the actions of certain groups in society. These ideas and actions have shown that there is a continuous construction and reconstruction of Iranian nationalism, on both the state and non-state levels.

This intellectual and historical contextualisation has demonstrated several factors crucial to an understanding of Iranian national identity and nationalism. First of all, the issue of imperialism is a common theme. An important aspect in the construction of Iranian nationalism throughout Iran's twentieth century history has been resistance to imperialism and the goal of achieving an independent Iranian nation. For example, the ideas of Afghani reflect a resistance to Western imperialism. In his case, Islam was perceived to be the most appropriate means of achieving an independent nation. Existing alongside Afghani's approach is the 'secular' nationalism of Akhundzadah, Kermani and Kasravi. In their case, they advocate the values of Iran's pre-Islamic culture as the most the appropriate means of resisting imperialism. Part of this, is the idea that the decline of the Iranian nation is due to the foreign interference from Arabs and/or Islam. The late Qajar period and the Constitutional period also bore witness to the roots of liberal nationalism as reflected in notion that democracy is the most appropriate means of achieving independence. Taking into consideration that more than one notion of Iranian nationalism existed in this period, it can be contended that there are concurrent nationalisms competing for hegemony.

This trend continues throughout the rest of Iran's history until the present day. Many of the ideas of 'secular' nationalism are reflected in the 'dynastic nationalism' of Reza Shah. It was his belief that a strong Iranian united nation based on Iran's pre-Islamic culture would be a means of resisting British and Russian presence. Thus, what was a non-state discourse during the Qajar era becomes a hegemonic state discourse; the leadership is based on a particular culture and ideology. 'Dynastic nationalism' evolved under Reza Shah's son, Mohammad Reza Shah. However, Mohammad Reza Shah came to be perceived as a pawn of the West rather than as a means of combating it.

The notion of democracy as the most appropriate means of resisting imperialism also continued during the Pahlavi era with the liberal nationalism of Musaddiq, among others. Alongside 'dynastic nationalism' and liberal nationalism, the notion of Islam as the most appropriate means of resisting imperialism also continued. This was evident in the *gharbzadagi* discourse of Al-e Ahmad, Shari'ati's discourse of *bāzgasht bih khīshān*, and also the 'religious nationalism' as articulated in the ideas of Khomeini. It can be

contended that it was a combination of these last three discourses, along with other factors, that culminated in the establishment of the Islamic Republic.

This illustrates that while anti-imperialism is a common theme, the most appropriate way of dealing with imperialism and asserting the independence of Iran as a nation is contested. Thus, Iranian nationalism and national identity are contested. As has been demonstrated, to varying degrees the notions of cultural authenticity (*Īrānīyat* and/or *Īslāmīyat*), democracy and the idea of national “progress” have been used as a means of resisting imperialism or what is perceived as imperialism. In the case of secular and dynastic nationalism it is Iran’s pre-Islamic culture, or *Īrānīyat*, that it perceived as Iran’s “authentic” culture and most appropriate means of dealing with resistance. In liberal nationalism it is democracy; and for the religious discourses it is Islam or *Īslāmīyat*. However, not only is the contestation in some cases based on whether or not it is Iran’s Islamic culture or pre-Islamic culture that is used as the basis of national identity construction, but also Islam or *Īslāmīyat* itself is contested. Thus, Islam in the context of Iran cannot be considered as a monolith; there are different interpretations culturally and historically. There is also contestation with regard to how Islam is used politically. The way in which these the ideas are used and embedded in the construction of Iranian national identity can be understood as a discourse of national identity. This illustrates the ‘complexities of political identity and difference’²⁷⁷ in Iran’s discourses of national identity.

These different constructions of Iranian nationalism also reflect different representations of political systems. On the one hand, dynastic nationalism is based on monarchy. On the other hand, the political system advocated and also realised by Khomeini and religious nationalism is an Islamic government. In addition to these, liberal nationalism and the calls for democracy reflect the desire for a system based entirely or partly on the notion of democracy. Thus, it can be contended that the different notions of Iranian national identity also translate into different types of political system.

It is also clear that the attitude towards and relationship with the West, the source of imperialism in this case, was important in how the nation was to be constructed. These dynamics can be understood in terms of a ‘self-other’ relationship. Throughout Iran’s twentieth century constructions of national identity, and also prior to this period, as the Safavid example shows, demonstrate that identity is constructed in relation to the ‘other’. This ‘other’ is often the foreign ‘other’. Thus, the relationship with the ‘other’, namely

²⁷⁷ Op. cit. Howarth, p. 6

the West, is crucial in constructing the identity of the 'self'. However, it is essential to mention, that the 'other' is not always the West. In the case of the Iranian nationalism of Akhundzadah, Kermani and Kasravi and the 'dynastic nationalism' of both Reza Shah and Mohammad Reza Shah, the 'other' is also Arabs and/or Islam. Furthermore, as the difference between Iran's different nationalisms are exacerbated by politics; those who represent a particular nationalism can also be considered as the 'other' of those who represent an alternative nationalism. For example, the 'other' for the discourses of Al-e Ahmad, Shari'ati and Khomeini are not only the external West, but also the internal represented in the discourse of Mohammad Reza Shah. Thus, the 'other' is both internal and external.

The coexistence of these nationalisms and the resistance to the West or to the internal 'other' reflects a hegemonic and counter-hegemonic dynamic. On the one hand, the different nationalisms are counter-hegemonic, which is demonstrated on more than one level. The perceived hegemony of the imperial powers is being resisted by the various approaches. On the other hand, the anti-imperialist discourses are also hegemonic as they all prescribe political, cultural and moral values that are prescribed as the *only* way of bringing the Iranian nation out of "decline". They are also expected to be adopted by the nation. In this sense, many of the nationalisms are exclusive. It is clear, therefore, that the relationship between the multiple nationalisms reflects a complex set of dynamics: imperialism and anti-imperialism; hegemony and counter-hegemony; and exclusivity and inclusivity.

The final and concluding point is that many of the themes articulated in Iran's multiple nationalisms or discourses of national identity are reflected in the discourses of national identity in the Khatami period. A number of factors are used to construct Iranian national identity and these are influenced by both internal and external factors. As has been mentioned before, five discourses have been identified for discussion: the Iranist and Islamist discourses (Chapter Four), the Islamist-Iranian (Chapter Five) and finally a discourse of civic Iranian national identity and a discourse of cosmopolitan Iranian national identity, both of which reject the politicisation of culture (*Īslāmīyat* and/or *Īrānīyat*) on which the other three discourses are essentially based (Chapter Six). Anti-imperialism continues to be a major issue in the construction of national identity, particularly in the state Islamist and Islamist-Iranian discourses. Both of these also have an external 'other', however the way in which they deal with it, namely the West, varies. The Iranist discourse's external 'other' is the Arab world in much the same way as the discourse of Kermani or Kasravi. Finally, the idea of 'democracy' also continues to be a

basis for the construction of Iranian national identity. In the case of the Islamist-Iranian discourse it is within the framework of Islam and in the case of the discourse of civic Iranian national identity, it is a secular understanding of democracy.

Chapter Four: Islamist and Iranist Discourses of National Identity: The Polarisation of Politicised “Authentic” Culture

The previous chapters have contextualised the discourses of national identity in the Khatami period. This has been done by first establishing that ‘discourse of national identity’ can be understood as the means by which ideology is articulated in the construction of national identity. This was followed by a deconstruction of Iran’s twentieth century historical experience whereby themes evident in the construction of Iranian national identity during the Khatami period were identified. These earlier expressions of Iranian nationalism and national identity were considered in terms of discourses of national identity. A hegemonic and counter-hegemonic dynamic between the discourses was also demonstrated. This thesis now turns to the first of three chapters that focuses on the Khatami period. As mentioned in Chapter One, there is a plethora of discussion, both in private and public spaces, regarding the nature of Iranian national identity. This chapter will focus on two of the discourses of national identity identified for analysis: the Iranist and Islamist discourses.

By using discourse analysis it is possible to deconstruct the meanings attached to the terminology used to construct how the Iranian nation is perceived and described. In other words, it is possible to determine the sets of values or ideologies embedded in the construction of Iranian national identity. The first contention of this chapter is that the ideology used in the construction of Iranian national identity of both the Islamist and Iranist discourses is based on what is perceived to be “authentic” culture. On the one hand, the Iranist discourse is based on the prioritisation of Iran’s Islamic culture, or *Īrānīyat*. At the other end of the spectrum, the Islamist discourse prioritises Iran’s Islamic culture, or *Īslāmīyat*. What is perceived as “authentic” is clearly contested; for one it is *Īrānīyat*, whereas for the other it is *Īslāmīyat*. The aim of the chapter, therefore, is to illustrate that the basis of contestation is a perceived dichotomy between two cultures. Ironically, the difference between these two discourses is also their similarity; they are both based on the notion of what is considered Iran’s “authentic” culture.

The second contention is that culture is politicised; this is to be understood as culture being used as the basis of or justification for a particular political system. Furthermore, it can also be argued that the adoption of a particular “authentic” culture – *Īrānīyat* or *Īslāmīyat* - as the main factor of national identity is part of a quest for legitimacy. For the Islamist discourse *Īslāmīyat* is used to justify or is integral to Islamist theocracy. For the Iranist discourse *Īrānīyat* is used to justify or is integral to the political systems of pre-

Islamic Iran, namely monarchy. These political systems have been experienced in Iran; the Islamic Republic is currently based on Islamist theocracy and prior to the Revolution in 1979 the Pahlavi regime was a monarchy.

A discourse approach to national identity also allows for the construction of national identity to be examined in terms of power relations. Thus, the third contention is that there is a hegemonic and counter-hegemonic dynamic between the two discourses of national identity. This is reflected in how the two discourses are competing for hegemony, in cultural, political and moral terms, and control of the government apparatus in order to implement their notion or construction of national identity and their discourse as the identity of the nation. Furthermore, they are constructed in relation to their 'other'. Thus, both discourses are at once hegemonic and counter-hegemonic. Since national identity is fluid and constructed so are these discourses, they are not rigid monolithic categories; they are fluid and evolve, often in reaction to their 'other'. There is no means of telling exactly how representative the discourses are. However, it is fair to say that they exist and have strong emotional and political attachments, in addition to popular followings.

This chapter is divided into three sections: 'Theoretical Considerations', 'Islamist Discourse of National Identity', and finally 'Iranist discourse of National Identity'. The first section will first provide a theoretical discussion of notions that are integral to the meanings attached to the constructions of Iranian national identity under discussion. The first two are the closely linked notions of culture or *farhang* and civilisation or *tamadun*. This will be followed by further explanation of *Īrānīyat* and *Īslāmīyat*: the two cultures that are perceived by some to be in total opposition to each other and irreconcilable. Finally, the section will address the issue of tradition and modernity as these concepts are also brought up in relation to *Īrānīyat* and *Īslāmīyat*.

The second section of the chapter outlines and deconstructs the Islamist discourse of nation of identity. This is done through a discourse analysis of primarily Khamene'i's speeches and also an article from *Kayhān* newspaper. Three contentions will be made with regard to the Islamist discourse of national identity. The first is that it is based on the politicisation and prioritisation of *Īslāmīyat*. However, it is also argued that although *Īslāmīyat* is prioritised, it is still 'Iranianised Islam'. The second contention is that the discourse is typical of Occidental discourse. The third and final contention is that the Islamist discourse of national identity is at once hegemonic and counter-hegemonic, which will be addressed throughout the section.

In the third section of the chapter, attention is turned to the Iranist discourse of national identity. Here the discourse will be outlined and deconstructed through a discourse analysis of texts taken from an organisation called Afraz. It is contended that *Īrānīyat* is used as the basis of Iranian national identity and that it is specifically Sasanian Iran culture and heritage that is used in the construction of Iranian national identity.

1.21 Theoretical Considerations

In this section the concepts of culture and civilisation will be defined. This will be followed by an examination of the notions of *Īslāmīyat* and *Īrānīyat*. Finally, the section turns to the concepts of tradition and modernity.

1.21.1 Culture and Civilisation

The contention that the above-mentioned discourses of national identity are based on what is perceived as “authentic” culture and civilisation is based on a recurring theme in discussions of Iranian national identity. As will be illustrated, speeches and academic texts on Iranian identity, repeatedly stress the importance of and pride in *farhang* (culture) and *tamaddun* (civilisation). Furthermore, in many academic discussions on Iranian national identity, national identity is considered only in terms of Iran’s culture and/or civilisation. In discussions on political identity and on identity in general culture and civilisation are often interchanged. Due to the importance of culture and civilisation in the construction of Iranian national identity, it is necessary to determine what these notions mean.

Culture in both the English and Persian languages can be understood in several ways.²⁷⁸ On the one hand, culture refers to ‘all those practices, like the arts of description, communication, and representation ... that often exist in aesthetic forms, one of [whose] ... principal aims is pleasure’.²⁷⁹ This will be referred to as high culture. The other notion of culture can be understood in terms of shared values. The use of *farhang*, in the Iranian context, often implies a set of shared values, which are based on the importance of and the endeavour to attain high culture, which is coupled with civilisation, or the advancement and progress of society towards a more civilised situation. Thus, not only is high culture an important part of Iran’s culture, but also civilisation and everything attached to it, such as progress. In the context of this thesis, therefore, this is how the notion of culture is to be understood.

²⁷⁸ See Sarangi, Srikant. ‘Culture’ in Verschueren, Jef, Östman, Jan-Ola and Blommaert, Jan. (eds) *Handbook of Pragmatics*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publ. Co., 1995. pp. 1-30 for a survey of the different approaches to the concept of culture.

²⁷⁹ Op. cit. Said 1993, p. xii

Fernand Braudel argues that ‘the word ‘civilisation’ ... emerged in eighteenth-century France. It was formed from ‘civilised’ and ‘to civilise’, which had long existed and were in general use in the sixteenth century.’ In the eighteenth century understanding of the term it ‘meant broadly the opposite of barbarism. On one side were the civilised peoples: on the other were the other, primitive savages and barbarians.’²⁸⁰ For Braudel, civilisation also has a geographic understanding:

Every civilisation ... is based on an area with more or less fixed limits. Each has its own geography with its own opportunities and constraints, some virtually permanent and quite different from one civilisation to another.²⁸¹

Indeed, Braudel’s geographic understanding of Western civilisation demonstrates this. For Braudel, Western civilisation is ‘the ‘American civilisation’ of the United States, and the civilisations of Latin America, Russia and ... Europe’, which in turn ‘contains a number of civilisations – Polish, German, Italian, English, French’, which he refers to as ‘national civilisations’.²⁸² However, it must be mentioned that what is included in ‘Western civilisation’ is largely subjective. For many, Western civilisation would also include Australia, New Zealand and even Japan and Israel. Nonetheless, this geographic understanding of civilisation is of interest because, as will be illustrated, the notion of civilisation on many occasions in the sources deconstructed conjures up the idea of a specific geographic space.

Braudel also contends that ‘society and civilisation are inseparable’. As far as he is concerned, ‘the two ideas refer to the same reality’; ‘the idea of ‘society’ implies a wealth of content’ and therefore resembles the idea of civilisation.²⁸³ To explain this point, he uses the example of ‘industrial society’, which he argues is the driving force of Western civilisation. In this context, as he contends:

it would be easy to characterise Western civilisation simply by describing that society and its component parts, its tensions, its moral and intellectual values, its ideals, its habits, its tastes, ... in other words by describing the people who embody it and who will pass it on.²⁸⁴

It is natural that Braudel’s starting point for his analysis of civilisation to be the West, and Europe in particular. However, this is a rather Eurocentric approach.

²⁸⁰ Braudel, Fernand. *A History of Civilizations*. trans. by Richard Mayne. New York: Penguin Books. 1993, pp. 3-4

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 11

²⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 12

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 16

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 16

This discussion of civilisation in the Western context is all very well; an understanding of the term in the Iranian context must also be considered. The use of civilisation, or in the Persian language *tamaddun*, brings up all sorts of connotations and questions. According to *Farhang-i Farsī-yi 'Umīd*, *tamaddun* is defined on the one hand as being of a town-like or urban disposition and on the other hand as the collaboration of people in matters of living and the constructing of its tools for progress.²⁸⁵ Part of that process is high culture, which is believed to be only achievable in urban settings. In this sense, the definition of high culture is very close to that of civilisation.

This definition is not unlike that of Ibn Khaldun. Furthermore, even though the term may not have occurred until the eighteenth century in the West, it does not necessarily mean that this was the case in Iran. To this regard, it is worth considering how the fourteenth century scholar of Arab lineage, Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406), writing in the Mediterranean part of the Muslim World²⁸⁶, dealt with the concept of 'civilisation'. Ibn Khaldun begins his first book of the *Kitāb al-'Ibar* in *al-Muqaddimah* with the following statement: 'It should be known that history ... is information about human social organization, which itself is identical with world civilisation.'²⁸⁷ Thus, it is clear the notion of civilisation (*hadārah* in Arabic) is central to his analysis of society. In fact, he states that civilisation is indeed one of the four aspects that distinguishes 'man' from other beings and he defines it thus:

[Civilisation] means that human beings have to dwell in common and settle together in cities and in hamlets for the comforts of companionship and for the satisfaction of human needs, as a result of the natural disposition of human beings toward cooperation in order to be able to make a living ...²⁸⁸

This definition is not dissimilar to Braudel's association of civilisation with society. It should also be noted that Ibn Khaldun observes that civilisation occurs in different contexts: human civilisation in general, desert or Bedouin civilisation, and sedentary civilisation.²⁸⁹ Furthermore, he observes that there can be 'little', 'medium degree of' or 'great deal of' civilisation depending where on the globe one happens to be. This is due to geographic conditions.²⁹⁰

²⁸⁵ Umid, Hassan. *Farhang-i Fārsī*. Amir Kabir Publishers. 1384 (2005)

²⁸⁶ Lawrence, Bruce B. 'Introduction to the 2005 edition' in Ibn Kahldun. *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*. trans. by Franz Rosenthal; abridged and edited by N. J. Dawood. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press. 2005 (1st edn. 1967). pp. vii-xxv, p. vii

²⁸⁷ Ibn Kahldun. *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*. trans. by Franz Rosenthal; abridged and edited by N. J. Dawood. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press. 2005 (1st edn. 1967), p. 35

²⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 43

²⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 43

²⁹⁰ Ibid., pp. 54-57

What is of interest and significance here is that Ibn Khaldun's *al-Muqaddimah* was written at the end of the fourteenth century. Thus, the discussion of civilisation exists, in the Islamic world at least, somewhat earlier than in Europe as argued by Braudel. This alludes to Braudel's rather Eurocentric approach to the notion of civilisation and makes his approach problematic.

All the same, it is essential, however, to consider what the term 'civilisation' means to those using it. Thus, just as one must consider the meanings attached to the notion of nation, so it must be the case that one must consider the meanings attached to the notion of civilisation. As this thesis will illustrate, integral to the construction of nation is the *idea* of civilisation. Thus, even though the term may not have existed during the period that is being 'remembered' by Iranians does not take away from the meanings attached to the idea of Iran as an Islamic and/or Iranian civilisation. Robert Cox's article 'Thinking about Civilisations', Hall's discussion of culture and that of Said provide a helpful framework for deconstructing the meanings attached to the notions of civilisation and culture. This is largely to do with the 'self-other' dynamic and how the issue of authenticity relates to this.

Cox points out that 'the word "civilisation" – in the singular but also in the plural – has become common ... in the mouths of politicians and in the writings of international relations academics.' He argues that 'when politicians evoke civilisation, it is usually when they want to arouse their constituents against some demonised enemy.'²⁹¹ Since Cox's argument is in the context of international relations, presumably the 'demonised enemy' is another international actor, or another state. In the case of discourses of Iranian national identity, does this mean that there is also a process of demonisation? If so, who is the enemy?

Parallels can be drawn here with Said's *Orientalism* and how the "Orient" is 'Orientalised'. In his discussion about how Europe relates to the "Orient" Said argues:

A group of people living on only a few acres of land will set up boundaries between their land and its immediate surroundings and the territory beyond, which they call "the land of the barbarians." In other words, this universal practice of designating in one's mind a familiar space which is "ours" and an unfamiliar space beyond "ours" which is "theirs" is a way of making geographical distinctions that *can be* entirely arbitrary. I use the word "arbitrary" here because imaginative geography of "our land-barbarian land" variety does not require that the barbarians acknowledge the distinction. It is

²⁹¹ Cox, Robert W. 'Thinking about civilizations' in *Review of International Studies*, 26, 5. December 2000., pp. 217-234, p. 217; see pp. 217-219 for the historical context of 'civilisation' in the English language.

enough for “us” to set up these boundaries in our own minds; “they” become “they” accordingly and both their territory and mentality are designated as different from “ours”.²⁹²

By referring to what is “ours” or the “self” as civilisation and to what is “theirs” or the “other” as not civilised, or barbarian, the “other” is demonised. In the case of Iranian national identity, the ‘demonised enemy’ is not only an international actor, but also within Iran. The “enemy” or “other” in the Islamist discourse is the Iranist discourse and *vice versa*. Furthermore, a discourse that refers to one’s culture in terms of civilisation creates not only a ‘self-other’ dynamic internally, but also externally. In other words, the “other” is also that which is *not* Iran. Although the West is referred to in terms of civilisation, it is perceived to be not as advanced as Islamic/Iranian civilisation in cultural terms.

Similarly, how culture is used can also illustrate the ‘self-other’ dynamic. Said, in *Culture and Imperialism*, argues:

In time, culture comes to be associated often aggressively, with the nation or the state; this differentiates “us” from “them”, always with some degree of xenophobia. Culture in this sense is a source of identity, and a rather combative one at that, as we see in recent “returns” to culture and tradition. These “returns” accompany rigorous codes of intellectual and moral behaviours that are opposed to the permissiveness associated with such relatively liberal philosophies as multiculturalism and hybridity. In the formerly colonised world, these “returns” have produced varieties of religious and nationalist fundamentalism.²⁹³

While this definition is problematic because it assumes that a nation or state has one culture, it does reflect how national identity is articulated in the Islamist and Iranist discourses. In their claim to authenticity, both discourses can be considered as “‘returns’ to culture and tradition’. However, the ‘culture and tradition’ is contested; for one the “authentic” or “true” culture and civilisation is *Īrānīyat*, for the other it is *Īslāmīyat*. To this end, Cox argues:

Civilisation is something we carry in our heads which guides our understanding of the world; and for different peoples this understanding is different. The common sense of one people is different from that of another and their notions of reality differ.²⁹⁴

For those articulating the discourse, civilisation, and also culture, may be very much a reality, a truth. In the case of the discourses of national identity under discussion here, civilisation is constructed as part of the basis of ideology and is one of the guiding forces in the construction of the nation and its identity. However, what happens when a country like Iran is perceived to have two civilisations to say the least needs to be addressed.

²⁹² Said, Edward. *Orientalism: Western Perceptions of the Orient*. London: Penguin Books, 1978. p. 54

²⁹³ Op. cit. Said 1993, pp. xiii-xiv

²⁹⁴ Op. cit. Cox 2000, p. 220

Furthermore, how the two civilisations are negotiated also needs to be taken into consideration. As Cox asserts, ‘it may even be that a single individual has to reconcile within him or herself the perspectives and the claims of two different civilisations’.²⁹⁵ These issues will be explored in the coming chapters.

Crucial to the discussion of the meanings attached to culture and civilisation is whether it is perceived to be fluid or static. Hall raises this issue in his discussion of the Caribbean experience. On the one hand, culture is perceived, as Hall points out, but does not contend himself, as ‘one true self ... which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common’. He elaborates saying that this perception provides ‘unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning’.²⁹⁶ However, Hall also offers another approach to culture:

This second position [of cultural identity] recognises that, as well as the many points of similarity, there are also critical points of deep significant *difference* which constitute “what we really are”; or rather - since history has intervened – “what we have become”. We cannot speak for very long, with any exactness, about “one experience, one identity”, without acknowledging its other side – the ruptures and discontinuities ... Cultural identity in this ... sense, is a matter of “becoming” as well as “being”.²⁹⁷

In other words, while the previous reference describes culture as static, in the above reference, in contrast to this, culture is fluid. Although these approaches are in relation to the post-colonial experiences of the Caribbean community, they are relevant to the Iranian case. This is the approach adopted by both the Islamist and Iranist discourses to the role of culture and civilisation in the construction of national identity. Culture is perceived in terms of the static ‘one true self’, rather than something more fluid. The contestation occurs because there are different perceptions of the ‘one true self’; the “authentic” culture is contested. Despite the perception of culture, civilisation and nation as static in the context of the Iranist and Islamist discourses, it is necessary to assert that the contention here is that these notions are fluid and social constructions.

1.21.2 *Īslāmīyat* and *Īrānīyat*

While the similarity of the Iranist and Islamist discourses is the approach to culture and civilisation, the difference between them is based on what is considered Iran’s authentic culture and civilisation - *Īslāmīyat* or *Īrānīyat*. It is worth pointing out here that on occasion in the texts these terms will refer to civilisation and on others to culture. *Īrānīyat* literally means being Iranian, but is understood as being Iranian in terms of Iran’s pre-

²⁹⁵ Ibid. p. 220

²⁹⁶ Op. cit. Hall 1990, p. 223

²⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 225

Islamic culture. However, Iran's pre-Islamic existence was vast. Consequently, *Īrānīyat* can essentially be used to refer to Parthian, Sasanian or Achaemenid Iran, among others. *Īrānīyat*, as will be illustrated in the third section of this chapter, is not a monolith.

Īslāmīyat literally means being Islamic, or being Muslim. But, in Iran, as everywhere else in the world, being Muslim or *Īslāmīyat* means such different things to different people. The terms *Īslāmī* or *hizbullāhi* (literally 'of the party of God') are often used to refer to those who are or are or are suspected of being politically Islamic; in other words, associated with the government or following the Islamic principles of the government. They are *dawlatī* (of the state), or Islamic in a political way. This correlates with Islamist, rather than Muslim, in the English language. Those who are considered to be Muslim in a religious, rather than secular, sense are often referred to as *m'umin* (believer) or *bā 'itiqād* (with belief). These labels refer to those who have belief in Islam but do not consider Islam in political terms. Both groups may wear the chador²⁹⁸, but do not necessarily have the same attitude towards the role of Islam in society. The chador is often used in British media as the symbol of the Islamic Revolution and consequently has political connotations. This is an inaccurate image. While many who do wear the chador are considered to have or do have political allegiance with the government, many reject Islam as a political concept. Thus, just as the conceptualisation of Islam is contested²⁹⁹, so is *Īrānīyat* as will be explored in more detail below.

Comments such as 'Iran before Muslim'; 'We are only Muslim because we were born here; if we were born somewhere else we would be something else'; and 'Islam isn't our religion, it comes from the Arabs ... History is our identity', illustrate that there is a very real sense of the issue of *Īrānīyat* and *Īslāmīyat* in Iranian identity. The first two statements come from two Iranian women who pray regularly, go on pilgrimage, including to Mecca and would not wear hejab in public if they were not obliged to. The final statement is from an Iranian man who prays regularly and fasts. The point here is that there is an interesting combination of *Īrānīyat* and *Īslāmīyat*, the division between the two aspects of Iranian identity for many are not clear-cut, nor is it the case that being Muslim is necessarily political.

The perceived dichotomy of *Īrānīyat* and *Īslāmīyat* and how the two are balanced in the constructions of Iranian identity is by no means unique to the Khatami period and is an issue that has been somewhat discussed in both in the literature on the subject of Iranian national identity, but also in non-academic spaces. The discussion considers whether the

²⁹⁸ The chador is a traditional Iranian covering worn by women

²⁹⁹ Op. cit. Ansari. *Islam, Iran and Democracy*. 2000, p. 17

two are at all compatible and what it means to be Iranian. For example, Ahmadi has addressed the issue of *Īrānīyat* and *Īslāmīyat* in some detail. In his article ‘Religion and Nationhood in Iran’ he points out that the discussion of *Īrānīyat* and *Īslāmīyat* existed before the Islamic Revolution³⁰⁰; Afshin Matin-Asgari asks: ‘why should our understanding of Iran, or any society, be so contingent on its being Islamic?’³⁰¹ Boroujerdi critiques ‘heritage-ism’, which is similar to the Iranist construction used here, and the role of historians for helping its creation.³⁰² This critique will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Six. The aim of this chapter is to examine the meanings attached to *Īslāmīyat* and *Īrānīyat* in the Islamist and Iranist discourses during the Khatami period and how they are used to construct Iranian national identity.

In historical terms, the Pahlavi regime prioritised *Īrānīyat* at the expense of *Īslāmīyat*. The dominant discourse of the Islamic Revolution, at least until Khatami’s presidency, has been the prioritisation of *Īslāmīyat* at the expense of *Īrānīyat*. As Ahmadi argues, *Īrānīyat* was ‘made ideological’ at the expense of the ‘spiritual element of Iranian identity’, in other words *Īslāmīyat*. With the Islamic Revolution, he argues, *Īrānīyat* or in his words, *huvīyat-i millī* – national identity, rather than religious identity – was weakened.³⁰³ Furthermore, the polarisation of *Īrānīyat* and *Īslāmīyat* can be partly attributed to the restriction on the public articulation of national identity, whether by the Pahlavi regime or by the Islamic Revolution. This is a natural reaction and is reflected on more than one occasion in Iran’s history. For example, as was illustrated in the previous chapter, the work of Al-e Ahmad and Shari‘ati can be considered as reactions to the official or public exclusion of Islam by the Pahlavis among other things. Another example is the visible resistance to the Islamist regime by young women in urban areas, reflected in how they wear the *rū sarī* (headscarf) and *māntaw*. Thus, it is the hegemonic nature of the constructions that has caused a polarised clash between *Īslāmīyat* and *Īrānīyat*. Thus, the continued perceived clash between the two cultures can be partly attributed to the extreme nature of politics during the Pahlavi era *and* since the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

1.21.3 Tradition and Modernity

Another recurring theme in the discussion of national identity is the issue of tradition and modernity. How tradition and modernity are defined is a complex issue. While it is not the

³⁰⁰ Op. cit. Ahmadi. ‘Huvīyat-i Millī-yi Īrān’. 1383 (2004/2005), pp. 194-195

³⁰¹ Matin-Asgari, Afshin. ‘The Rise of Modern Subjectivity in Iran’ *Critique*, 14, 3, Fall 2005, pp. 333-337, p. 333

³⁰² Boroujerdi, Mehrzad. ‘Contesting Nationalist Construction of Iranian Identity’ *Critique*, 7, 12, January 1998, pp. 43-55, pp. 45-46

³⁰³ Op. cit. Ahmadi. ‘Dīn va Millīyat dar Īrān’. 1383 (2004/2005), p. 87

aim here to engage with the existing literature that addresses tradition and modernity in Iran, the aim is to illustrate how notions of tradition and modernity come up in relation to how national identity is constructed, often in contradictory ways.

A common assumption and one that is often perceived as a natural assumption would be to correlate tradition with Islam. However, this is an uncomfortable correlation. While there are certainly aspects of Islam that are traditional in the sense of original or old, this is not always the case. If a linear approach is adopted, that is to consider tradition as old and modern as new, the association between Islam and tradition does not follow. Following this argument would mean that the more modern you are the more you have taken on the new. With particular reference to the issue of national identity, this can be understood in terms of adopting characteristics that are new to your identity, such as taking on a new belief system, adapting language to accommodate new words, or adopting a new form of dress brought in from somewhere else. The problem with this approach is how far one goes back. According to this approach, in the case of Iran, traditional identity may be considered the aspects of identity from the time of the Medes or the Elamites of antiquity. An alternative approach considers modernity as synonymous with Western and modernisation as Westernisation. This is an approach often adopted by Islamist and anti-imperialist discourses. Finally, modernity is also seen in terms of “progress”.

1.22 Islamist Discourse of National Identity

The overarching ideology embedded in the Islamist construction of national identity is political Islam. As is the case with many other Islamist movements or ideologies, Islam represents an “authentic” culture and therefore identity. It is also perceived as a means of resisting imperialism and regaining “progress” or an “advanced” society. It must be noted, however, that Islamism here not only means political Islam, but also the prioritisation or tendency towards Islam as opposed to any other identity or heritage. Despite the different understandings of being Muslim in Iranian society, the *Īslāmīyat* of the Islamist discourse is a politicised approach to Islam that only accepts one understanding of Islam. In terms of the definitions outlined above, they are considered by many as *Īslāmī* and also by some as distorting Islam.

During Khatami’s presidency the Islamist discourse of national identity is embodied in and articulated through the sermons and speeches of the Islamic Republic of Iran’s Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamene’i, among other places. It could be argued that Khamene’i is the symbol the Islamist discourse. He represents the more

conservative elements of the Islamic Republic. Although the Islamist discourse is a state discourse, it would be inaccurate to argue that it does not have popular support. As will be reflected in the section on the Iranist discourse of national identity and in the following two chapters, there is considerable resistance to the Islamist construction of Iranian national identity.

It is the contention of Wilfried Buchta that the Islamic revolutionary leadership is divided into two main ideological factions. This is reflected in the main political factions: ‘the Islamic left (*chap-i Īslāmī*), the traditionalist right (*rāst-i sunnatī*), and the modernist right (*rāst-i mudirī*)’.³⁰⁴ However, with the creation of the Islamic Iran Participation Front who support Khatami, the label the modern left (*chap-i mudirī*) was added to refer to ‘its openness to all reform-orientated forces’. Ayatollah Khamene’i is positioned in the traditionalist right as a member of the Militant Clergy Association, the strongest group.³⁰⁵ The Militant Clergy Association takes its legitimacy from *vilāyat-i faqīh* and is more concerned with the continued existence of Islam and Islamic scholars than with the notion of the people’s will or constitution.³⁰⁶ It is worth mentioning that Khamene’i does not have the title of *ayatollah ‘uzma* (grand ayatollah) as was the case with his predecessor Khomeini. For this reason, Khamene’i is unable to be a proper *marja’-i taqlīd* and thus cannot lay claim to the Shi’i world’s highest religious authority. Buchta presents this as Khamene’i’s theological Achilles’ heel.³⁰⁷

This section is divided into two parts: ‘The Prioritisation and Politicisation of *Īslāmīyat*’ and ‘Occidentalism and Anti-imperialism’. The focus of the first is on the ‘self’ and how it is constructed. The way in which *Īslāmīyat* is embedded in the construction of Iranian national identity is demonstrated. The second turns to how the ‘other’ is constructed.

1.22.1 The Prioritisation and Politicisation of *Īslāmīyat*

The construction of the ‘self’ is reflected in how *Īslāmīyat* is both prioritised as the basis of Iranian national identity by excluding *Īrānīyat*, and also how it is politicised. Furthermore, as will be illustrated, the ‘self’ is also constructed in terms of civilisation. Thus, in many ways the Iranian nation is synonymous with *Īslāmīyat*, *nizām-i Īslāmī* (Islamic political system) and Islamic civilisation.

³⁰⁴ Buchta, Wilfried. *Who rules Iran? The Structure of Power in the Islamic Republic*. Washington DC: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy & Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2000. p. 11

³⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 13 See pp. 13-16 for more detail on significant members of this group and the several associations that form its membership.

³⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 15

³⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 53

Khamene'i is very clear about the relationship between Islam, nation and culture. In *The Cultural Viewpoints of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution of Iran* (published in English), culture is defined as encompassing the 'memories, mentalities, thoughts, beliefs, faiths, traditions, and intellectual, mental reserves of a nation.'³⁰⁸ Furthermore, 'the identity of every nation is determined by its culture.'³⁰⁹ Bearing these convictions in mind, it is possible to interpret the following extract as a definition of Iranian national identity:

Islam is the most important pillar of our national culture. Today, the Iranian nation is proud of the fact that after the passage of fourteen centuries its culture, language and customs intermingled with Islam. Islamic culture, customs and practices are part of our culture and in this regard, being national is tantamount to being Islamic and these two aspects never confront each other.³¹⁰

Here, Khamene'i outlines the relationship between Islam and Iran's national identity. Three points can be made with regard to this. First of all, it is evident that as far as Khamene'i is concerned, the nation is synonymous with Islam alone. Thus, this statement reflects the absolute prioritisation of *Īslāmīyat* and the exclusion of *Īrānīyat* in the construction of national identity. Secondly, this is precisely the type of culture Hall is criticising; the Islamist discourse of national identity is based on a perception of culture that is 'one true self'. Essentially, their way is the only way and to move away from that is simply a digression from the "true" and "authentic" Iranian national identity. If Fairclough's approach is used, the discourse of national identity can be considered to be effectively articulating or communicating an ideology in that it has established its assumptions about how the Iranian nation is constructed as common sense.³¹¹

The third point is that this statement also reflects the hegemonic nature of the Islamist discourse; the very exclusion of *Īrānīyat* in itself has a hegemonic nature. The following statement elaborates on the hegemony of the Islamist discourse. Khamene'i states: 'No strong system can create these values and ethical norms in society unless it succeeds in reforming and rectifying the culture and attitude of the people.'³¹² Since 'Islam is the most important pillar of [Iran's] national culture', it is assumed that society's 'values and ethical norms' are those of Islam. While the ideological nature of Islam is evident, it is also perceived as an all-encompassing system of ideas. Furthermore, the extract also suggests that *Īslāmīyat* must play a role in reforming the people. Thus, the hegemonic

³⁰⁸ Op. cit. Khamene'i 2000. p. 3

³⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 13

³¹⁰ Ibid., p. 7

³¹¹ Op. cit. Fairclough 1989, p. 77

³¹² Op.cit. Khamene'i 2000 , p. 4

nature of the discourse is also clear; Islam is the means of ‘political, cultural and moral leadership’³¹³ over other groups and identities.

However, it is worth mentioning here that while the Islamist discourse of national identity is hegemonic in its approach to the expected culture and values of the people or *millat*, it is also counter-hegemonic in more than one way. On one level, the Islamist discourse resists the Iranist discourse of national identity. On another, it resists the Islamist-Iranian discourse, and on a third level it resists the perceived hegemony of the West or Western civilisation. The issue of counter-hegemony will be dealt with in more detail below.

In addition to the hegemonic nature, the exclusive nature of Khamene'i's construction of Iranian national identity must be stressed. Not only does he impose Islam as a means of ‘reforming and rectifying the culture and the attitude of the people’, but he also uses it as the basis for the national culture. Iran is a multi-religious and multi-ethnic country and although the majority are Muslim, some are Jewish, Christian, Bahai and Zoroastrian. Khamene'i explicitly excludes these groups. For this reason, Khamene'i's construction can really only be considered as an aspiration of what the identity of the *millat* should be, regardless of whether the *millat* identifies itself as such.

As has been mentioned, the notion of civilisation is very important in the construction of Iranian nation identity. In the case of the Islamist discourse of national identity Iran as a nation is often perceived in terms of Islamic civilisation or even as synonymous with Islamic civilisation. There are several meanings attached to this idea of Islamic civilisation. The following extract is from a speech given by Khamene'i on 7 November 2000 at one of the Qom *huwzih*³¹⁴, Fayziyeh, to students, researchers, and professors. Fayziyeh, founded during the Safavid dynasty, is the focal point of the Qom *huwzih*. He states:

without doubt Islamic civilisation is able to enter the arena of mankind with that same method of the great civilisations of history and take possession of a region, small or large, and meet the needs of their blessing or hardship; Islamic civilisation is also able to overcome this complicated, long and difficult process to reach that point. Of course Islamic civilisation will only exist completely in the era of the appearance of the hidden imam. In the era of appearance, the true Islamic civilisation and the true Islamic world will come into existence.³¹⁵

³¹³ Op. cit. Forgacs, p. 194

³¹⁴ A *huwzih* is a religious centre that often has several theological colleges.

³¹⁵ **Khamene'i, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali.** ‘*Bayānat-i Rahbar-i Mu‘azam-i Inqilāb-i Īslāmī dar Ijtima‘a-i Tulāb, Pizhuhishgarān, va Asātīd-i Huwzih-yi ‘Ilmī-yi dar Madrisih-yi Qom*’ (‘**The Speech of the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution at a Meeting of Students, Researchers, and Professors of the Huwzih-yi ‘Ilmī-yi Qom at the Fayziyeh School**’) 14 Aban 1379 (7 November 2000). in **Khamene'i, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali, 1380 (2001).** *Kalām-i Vilāyat-i Tarīq-i Hidāyat: Bayānat-i Rahbār-i Mu‘azam-i Inqilāb-i Īslāmī Hizrat-i Ayatullah Aluzma Khamene'i.* (A Speech by the Supreme Leader of the

The reference to ‘the appearance of the hidden imam’ demonstrates that Islamic civilisation is essentially one of Shi‘ism rather than Islam as a whole. Thus, the discourse is not only exclusive in the sense that it is only *Īslāmīyat* that is considered as the base of Iranian national identity, but it is in fact only Shi‘ism. However, a point that must be raised here, taking into consideration the argument that the Safavids Iranianised Islam, as mentioned in Chapter Two, is the extent to which this Shi‘i *Īslāmīyat* is in fact Iranian. In this case, as was the case with the discourses of Al-e Ahmad and Shari‘ati, the division between *Īslāmīyat* and *Īrānīyat* are not so clearly defined. Furthermore, it is also evident that the aspirations of civilisation are not restricted to the current territorial boundaries of Iran. As will be illustrated in the following chapter, this is similar to the notion of civilisation articulated by Khatami. However, Khatami’s articulation of Iran as a civilisation is not explicitly based on *Īslāmīyat*. Ironically, neither is Khamene’i’s Islamic civilisation dissimilar to the notion of civilisation articulated by the Iranist discourse of national identity in the sense that it is not restricted to the current territorial boundaries of Iran.

The final point to be made here is with regard to the context of the speech. It must be mentioned that the audience here are those who attend the seminaries in Qom, thus the terminology and ideas are adapted accordingly. The link between Islamic civilisation and the return of the hidden imam are not necessarily views that would be accepted or tolerated by an audience in other contexts. It is also possible that Khamene’i is illustrating his legitimacy as the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which is significant since, as Buchta argues, there is ‘resistance to ... Khamene’i’s claim to religious autocracy’. He also argues that the *huwzih* in Qom is ‘one of the strongest bulwarks’ of this resistance.³¹⁶

Having illustrated how *Īslāmīyat* is prioritised, it will now be demonstrated how it is also politicised. In other words, *Īslāmīyat*, or Islamic culture and heritage, is politicised and it is this politicisation that is the basis of the Iranian nation, i.e. not only Islam in a non-political dimension. The political interpretation of *Īslāmīyat* is evident in the following extract from a speech given to a group of young people in Isfahan on 3 November 2001. Khamene’i states:

The countries of the world normally stress the concept of nationality (*millīyat*); some place stress on ethnicity. What is nationality? It is a collective identity that with its enjoyment, every country is able to use to its own ability for advancement and success. ... [The] national and collective identity in our

Islamic Republic, Ayatollah Khamene’i). Tehran: Zafar, 1380 (2001). pp. 7-52, pp. 13-14

³¹⁶ Op. cit. Buchta 2000, p. 86

country has an even higher [status] than nationality. ... [T]he collective and national identity of the nation of Iran is the Islamic system (*nizam-i Īslāmī*) which is even more ... attractive and influential than Iranian nationality. The importance of this collective identity is influential on the level of being Iranian ... , it is also influential on the Islamic level, also on the global scale it is influential; that is, it is something no other nations have; it is something transnational ... it is trans-Islamic. The circle of some transnational slogans is limited. For example Arabs stress Arab identity and nationalism or Arab ethnicity; but first of all this identity is limited to Arab circles and is not applicable beyond them; secondly, being Arab (*'arabiyyat*) is an existence that does not have a trans-nationality ideal that is attractive to the other nations of the world The Islamic system has a national application. It also has an Islamic application, and also a global application, that is, it is trans-Islamic.³¹⁷

This extract is particularly interesting because several values and ideologies are embedded in Khamene'i's use of language regarding the Iranian nation and therefore also in how he constructs Iranian national identity. The first point of interest is his reference to *nizām-i Īslāmī*. It is unambiguous that *nizām -i Īslāmī* or Islamic system is tantamount to national identity. Therefore, *Īslāmīyat* is political in the sense that it is synonymous with a particular political system. Not only is *Īslāmīyat* politicised, it is also superior to *Īrānīyat*. This is reflected in the discussion on *millīyat*. As has been mentioned in Chapter Two this has several meanings. Here it is translated as 'nationality' and it is to be understood as *Īrānīyat* as opposed to religion (*dīn*) or *Īslāmīyat*. This meaning is further clarified by Khamene'i's statement that 'this national and collective identity in our country has an even higher [status] than nationality'. Thus, it is clear that *millīyat* is not to be understood as nationality in the English language sense, or as citizenship. Therefore, *Īslāmīyat* is more superior to *Īrānīyat*.

Once again, the hegemonic nature of the Islamist discourse of national identity is shown in this extract. In this case, it is embedded in the construction of Iranian national identity as a transnational identity and its assumed superiority over Arabs and being Arab. Parallels can be drawn between the notions of 'trans-Islamic' and Islamic civilisation, as mentioned above. The Islamic identity of the Iranian nation is one based on that which goes beyond its current territorial borders. This also suggests that, in Khamene'i's eyes, the Iranian nation, as an Islamic nation, is superior to other nations because its identity transcends its borders. Khamene'i's reference to 'trans-Islamic' not only illustrates the perception that an Iranian national identity based on *Īslāmīyat* is more influential, but it is also superior to other Islamic identities. The final point is that it is evident that the identity of the Iranian nation is also constructed in relation to Arab identity, which is seemingly

³¹⁷ Khamene'i, Seyyed Ali. *Kalām-i Vilāyat-i Nūrhidāyat: Sukhanrānī-yi Muqām-i Mu'azam-i Rahbāri dar Jāmi'i Javānān-i Isfihān*, 12 Ābān 1380 (*The Supreme Leader's speech to a group of young people in Isfahan*, 3 November 2001) (no publisher given), 1380 (2001). pp. 12-13

less appealing and less powerful because it is not appreciated on the several levels mentioned previously.

As has already been mentioned, while the Islamist discourse of national identity has a hegemonic function it is also counter-hegemonic. This is reflected in the following extract from the same speech as those above, which illustrates resistance to the perceived hegemony of a system of government based on monarchy. Khamene'i states:

The importance of the Islamic system (*nizām-i Īslāmī*) is because it is the permanent system fixed system with roots that came into existence by the hand of the people themselves; it is not a system imposed on the people; it is against the ideology of monarchy. Monarchy has one ideology; the ideology of monarchy is that same thing that you witness among all the monarchies of the world in its [different] types; that is despotism.³¹⁸

In this speech Khamene'i is justifying the *nizām-i Īslāmī* to the youth of Isfahan by presenting it in such a way that shows that the system of government was that chosen by the people during the Islamic Revolution of 1979. Worthy of mention here, however, is that the ideals of the Islamic Revolution are contested, as will be illustrated in the analysis of Khatami's discourse. The resistance to monarchy not only illustrates a rejection of a particular system of government, but also a rejection of the what monarchy in the case of Iran symbolises – the Pahlavi regime and an Iranist interpretation of national identity. As has been addressed in the previous chapter, the Pahlavi regime was Iranist in the sense that it excluded *Īslāmīyat* in the construction of Iranian national identity.

In sum, *Īslāmīyat* represents a number of values that are embedded in the construction of Iranian national identity. These are reflected in how Iran as a nation is considered as synonymous with *nizām-i Īslāmī* and Islamic civilisation. To this end, an appropriate statement to end this section is one given by Khamene'i in the speech at the *Fayziyih* seminary in Qom: 'The general direction of the Islamic system is to achieve an Islamic civilization.'³¹⁹ Thus, the aim of the political apparatus, which gains its legitimacy from the meanings attached to *Īslāmīyat*, is to achieve Khamene'i's construction of Islamic civilisation which is loaded with the above mentioned values.

1.22.2 Occidentalism and Anti-imperialism

In the previous section it has been demonstrated that the 'self' in this Islamist discourse is largely constructed on the basis of ideas associated with a particular notion of Islamic civilisation. The purpose of this section, therefore, is to address how the 'other' is constructed. This is essentially the West. As will be illustrated, the way in which the West

³¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 13-14

³¹⁹ Op. cit. Khamene'i. Qom. 14 *Aban* 1379 (7 November 2000), p. 11

is constructed is typical of Occidental discourse. Furthermore, the attitude towards the West is based on anti-imperialist sentiment. Before deconstructing selected texts, it is first necessary to briefly address the notion of Occidentalism.

In his analysis of interviews carried out with four Islamist movements in the Arab Middle East, Sadiki discusses the notion of Occidentalism. Drawing on Ibrahim Abu-Lughod's *Arab Rediscovery of the West* and Keddie's *An Islamic Response to Imperialism*, Sadiki points out:

[there is a] strong contrast made between the "West" as a secular mechanistic, technological culture and the "East" as a culture dominated by "the spirit" of Islam. ... Just as the "West" defines the "East" as the exotic, seductive, magical "other", the "East" has defined the "West" as the material, mechanistic "other", completely lacking the vital spirit of Divine Revelation. Each considers the other through these stereotypes and defines them by what they do not possess.³²⁰

As will be demonstrated, this ideology is embedded in how Khamene'i constructs the West. Sadiki also suggests that 'Islamist representations of the West are not always derived from some Islamist discourse that constructs the West in the way Orientalism produced and continues to produce the Orient.' Rather, it is the case that 'many of the essentialist "Occidental" views ... are based on self-constructions and self-representations of and by the "West" to the "non-West"'.³²¹ This is a very interesting point. However, this is not addressed in relation to the Islamist discourse under discussion here. It would, nevertheless, be an interesting research subject for the future.

Just as the 'self' is constructed in terms of a civilisation, so is the 'other'. However, the characteristics attributed to the two civilisations are far from similar. The 'self' is spiritual, whereas the 'other' is materialistic. This is reflected on a number of occasions. The first extract is taken from Khamene'i's speech at the inaugural session of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) in December 1997. He states: 'The materialistic Western civilisation is leading mankind toward materialism, which portrays money, sensuality and voracity as the main goals of life.'³²² The West has been defined as the 'materialistic other' and therefore typical of Occidental discourse. The essentialisation of the West is unmistakable; the image of the West is simplified by representing it as a monolithic entity. Its overarching identity is that it is materialistic. The

³²⁰ Op. cit. Sadiki, p. 109

³²¹ Ibid., p. 96

³²² Khamene'i, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali. *Leader's speech at Inaugural Ceremony of 8th Summit of OIC. 9 December 1997*. <http://www.khamenei.ir/EN/Speech/detail.jsp?id=19971209A> – date accessed 7 May 2007

following extract from *The Cultural Viewpoints of the Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran* juxtaposes the identities of the ‘self’ and the ‘other’. Khamene’i states:

Iran lags behind the West in industry and modern technological know-how. But it does not lag behind it in culture. We are not behind the West in cultural heritage. Our literature, poetry, prose, and overall our culture – national culture – do not have any shortcoming.³²³

While there is recognition of Iran’s lack of progress in relation to the West, Iran remains superior because it has culture; the West only has ‘industry and modern technological know-how’.

The following extract, also from *The Cultural Viewpoints of the Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran*, provides the intellectual and historical heritage to this Occidentalist Islamist discourse. Khamene’i states:

If the culture, morality, beliefs and convictions of the enemies and aliens are spread among a nation, such a nation, despite independence in political and economic affairs, cannot claim to be independent. A human society can be considered independent only when it can immunise itself against the poisonous cultural waves created by aliens.³²⁴

Here, there is a clear rejection and essentialisation of the West. This approach to Iran is not unique to the Khatami period. Rather, it is reminiscent of Jalal Al-e Ahmad and his *Gharbzadagī* or *Westoxification* published in 1962. As mentioned in Chapter Three, in his first chapter entitled ‘Diagnosing an Illness’ Al-e Ahmad compares *gharbzadagī* (translated into the English as ‘occidentosis’) with tuberculosis and an infestation of weevils. His point is that *gharbzadagī* is a disease that requires a diagnosis and hopefully a cure.³²⁵ Al-e Ahmad’s Islamic discourse is also significant in that it was influenced by the belief that Shi‘ism, since the Safavid dynasty, ‘had become an indispensable component of Iranian identity’.³²⁶ It is also worth mentioning that the Occidentalist nature of the discourse is also reminiscent of that of Shari‘ati. This is evident in the binary nature of the perceived relationship between Iran and the West.

Also mentioned in Chapter Three and worthy of mention here, Boroujerdi identifies *Gharbzadagī* as a crucial point in the discussion by intellectuals of the ‘West as other’ and that it gave birth to a discourse, which he contends was ‘the modern Iranian articulation of nativism’.³²⁷ In other words, this is the re-establishment of what is perceived as

³²³ Op. cit. Khamene’i 2000, p. 7

³²⁴ Ibid., p. 7

³²⁵ Op. cit. **Al-i Ahmad** , p. 27

³²⁶ Op. cit. Boroujerdi 1996, p. 72

³²⁷ Ibid., p. 53

authentic culture. It is worth mentioning that Boroujerdi argues that ‘xenophobic nationalism, a conspiratorial mind-set, a garrison-state mentality, and unqualified anti-Westernism are come of the end products of the nativist discourse.’³²⁸ This has certainly been evident in the above extracts.

Both Khamene'i and Al-e Ahmad perceive any aspect of so-called Western culture as an illness being inflicted on the nation. Thus, what was previously, to a certain extent, a popular discourse, or that of part of the *millat*, or nation, became that of the *dawlat*, or state with the 1979 Revolution and continues to be so during Khatami's presidency. In the case of Khamene'i, it is the view of part of the state authority, whereas in Al-e Ahmad's case it is representative of a discourse resisting the state, namely that of the Pahlavi regime. The resistance to the ideals of the Pahlavi regime also continue with Khamene'i, this has been illustrated above in relation to the perception of monarchy.

A fundamental value attached to how the West is constructed is the notion of anti-imperialism. Thus, the trend of anti-imperialism as a crucial factor in the construction of Iranian national identity continues during the Khatami period. In the Islamist construction of Iranian national identity, an anti-imperialist attitude towards the West is essential in order to preserve the “authenticity” of the Iran nation, which is based on *Īslāmīyat*. In other words, anything that hinders or contaminates *Īslāmīyat* is considered an enemy because it endangers its authenticity and independence. Both the historical interaction outlined above and the essentialisation of the West have become a justification as well as a reason for an anti-imperialist discourse reflected both in the rhetoric and actions of parts of the Iranian government. An example of this is evident in the speech at the inaugural session of the OIC. Khamene'i states:

Unfortunately, during the past two centuries, the plots of the enemies and inefficiency and lack of competence of some Islamic states have brought the Islamic 'ummah to a deplorable condition. The global arrogance, motivated by its discriminatory and biased attitude toward mankind and using its political, military, economic and scientific capabilities, has played a major part in creating the present condition for Muslim nations. An instance of this neo-colonialism can be seen in the present political, economic and even military campaign of the global arrogance led by the United States against the Islamic 'ummah.³²⁹

In this case, through the reference to the Islamic 'ummah, Khamene'i is once again illustrating how Iran's national identity is transnational. However, unlike the construction reflected in the above speech in Qom, the idea here is more inclusive; it is the Islamic 'ummah as a whole, rather than those who follow Shi'ism. Clearly, since this speech is at

³²⁸ Ibid., p. 19

³²⁹ Op. cit. Khamene'i 9 December 1997.

the OIC, references to Islamic civilisation based on Shi'ism would not be welcome. Not only does Khamene'i justify legitimacy by referring to the Islamic 'umamah as a whole, but he also implies that they are all – the Islamic 'umamah - facing 'neo-colonialism' together. This notion of 'neo-colonialism' is also stressed in the speech in Qom when Khamene'i states that Western civilisation removes all culture and civilisations that stand in its way through 'materialist power and capitalism on the one hand and military and political power on the other hand'.³³⁰

This ever-present historical consciousness can be seen as a reason for the obsession with the possibility of the enemy from outside taking hold within as well as strong anti-imperialist sentiments. The discourse of the fear of the external enemy and its possible impact on national interests is reflected in a speech by Hussein Shari'atmadari, Director of the newspaper *Kayhān*, at a meeting with the national-wide Islamic political student groups at Azad University. It is reported in *Kayhān* on 4 October 2000 that Shari'atmadari discusses the role and duty of Iran's press in his speech. According to *Kayhān*, Shari'atmadari commences with a complaint that some of the media is not being transparent and truthful about their identity and how, as a result of this, the external enemy can take advantage of such members of the media and thus use the media as an internal 'launch pad', presumably for an attack on national interests. Later on in the speech it becomes clear that such a complaint may be in reference to *Kayhān Magazine*. Shari'atmadari refers to a report in '*Asr-i Azādigān Newspaper* on the American foundation of *Halqih-yi Kīyān* and the subsequent forming of *Kayhān Magazine* and *Halqih-yi Kīyān* in Iran and how the foundation searched for those opposed to the Revolution and regime as its members. His comment with regard to this is that by a mere glimpse at the views of Soroush, a leading figure in the *Kīyān* School of Thought, it is clear that the Iran-based foundation and magazine is 'of the same blood' as the America-based foundation. In his speech Shari'atmadari also states:

One of the duties of the press is to inform the people about the individuals and groups that threaten religious identity and national interests. Nowadays there is a current that follows the foreign powers and great capitalist cartels in the name of Reformism which has come to the stage. *Kayhān* ... considers alarming the notion of such dangers as its religious duty and the duty of the press. ... But how can we not prefer God's wishes and the nation's interests over the wishes of the enemies of the people.³³¹

³³⁰ Op. cit. Khamene'i. Qom. **14 Aban 1379 (7 November 2000)**, pp. 11-12

³³¹ *Kayhān Newspaper* 'Anyone who knows freedom as the product of second of Khordad puts the legitimacy of the election of Khatami under question: Hussein Shari'atmadari at a national meeting with political Islamic groups at the Azad University'. 13 Mehr 1379 (4 October 2000).

Thus, once again, the essentialisation of the West is asserted. Furthermore, the reactions of the newspaper *Kayhān* are justified in the name of preserving national interests and religious identity. It can be concluded, therefore, that the basic ideology in this construction of Iranian national identity is *Īslāmīyat*. However, this is contested and the contestation is articulated in several ways. This chapter now turns to one of the sources of contestation.

1.23 Iranist Discourse of National Identity

As the title of this chapter suggests, there is a polarisation of what is perceived to be Iran's "authentic" culture. The previous section dealt with the Islamist discourse of national identity, which can be considered to be positioned at one end of the spectrum. This section now turns to the Iranist discourse of national identity, which is positioned at the other end of the spectrum. The overarching ideology embedded in the Iranist construction of Iranian national identity is that the nation should be based on *Īrānīyat*. In other words, it is the culture of pre-Islamic Iran, whether it is the territorial boundaries and/or what are perceived to be the values of pre-Islamic Iran, which are used in the construction of Iran's national identity. Therefore the 'self' is constructed on the basis of how *Īrānīyat* is perceived. Thus, in sharp contrast to the Islamist discourse, the Iranist discourse of national identity, at its most extreme, rejects the position of Islam as part of Iranian national identity; rather it is the absolute prioritisation of *Īrānīyat*.

As has been illustrated in the previous chapter, *Īrānīyat* has been used by various individuals and governments as the basis of Iranian national identity. Furthermore, the Iranist discourse did not cease to exist with the Islamic Revolution. Rather, it is the case that its position in society and the political arena has changed. Prior to the 1979 Revolution, it was very much a hegemonic state discourse, not to say that it did not exist outside of the state. However, post-1979 it is forced to the non-state level and to a certain extent underground. It has become a counter-hegemonic discourse in terms of its relationship with the state discourses of national identity. Nevertheless, this discourse of national identity remains hegemonic, as its aspirations are hegemonic, as will be illustrated below.

The contention of this section is to illustrate that a discourse of national identity that is based on the prioritisation of *Īrānīyat* and exclusion of *Īslāmīyat* continues to exist in Iran. However, because it is no longer an officially sanctioned state discourse it is not so easily articulated. Thus, unlike the Islamist and Islamist-Iranian discourses of national identity there are no speeches, such as those of Khamene'i and Khatami, which are easily

available for deconstruction. Therefore, this section is based on a combination of different sources that have been pulled together to illustrate that *Īslāmīyat* is rejected by some in Iranian society as the basis of Iranian national identity. There is no claim that the extracts outlined below are representative of Iranian society. The aim, however, is to show that a discussion of Iranian national identity during the Khatami period cannot be based only on those constructions of Iranian national identity articulated on the state level; indeed the sub-altern has its own constructions.

This section illustrates how *Īrānīyat* is used in the construction of Iranian national identity. In this case it is the idea of Sasanian Iran that is used for “authentic” Iranian culture and identity.

1.23.1 A Rediscovery of Sasanian Iran

The use of Sasanian Iran as the basis of “authentic” Iranian national identity is reflected in the discourse of *Anjuman-i Farhangi-yi Īrānzamīn* - The Cultural Society of Iranzamin (Afraz). The language used by Afraz illustrates how *Īrānīyat* is embedded in the construction of Iran’s national identity. Thus, it can be argued that Afraz reflects an Iranist discourse of national identity. Furthermore, the reference to Iranzamin, and to Iranshahr (below), is of particular significance because while it is *Īrānīyat* that is being used in the construction of Iranian national identity, it is not Achaemenid Iran as was the case with the Pahlavi shahs. This indicates a departure, in the case of this group, from the Iranist and Persianist discourses of the Reza Shah and Mohammad Reza Shah.

Afraz considers itself a ‘cultural (non-political), popular (non-state)’ institution that was formed with the following aims:

the familiarisation of members with Iranian culture-civilisation; the revisiting of the religions [of one God], specifically exalted Islam; [and] the endeavour to understand better the history of contemporary Iran (with emphasis on the Islamic Revolution).³³²

This part of Afraz’s constitution is of particular interest because it states that it is a non-political institution; yet, the implications of its aims can be understood as political. It is not clear what is exactly meant by ‘Iranian culture-civilisation’. Nevertheless, the idea of civilisation is important in their construction of Iranian national identity. Thus, just as is the case with the Islamist and Islamist-Iranian discourses, Iran is perceived in terms of civilisation. In addition to this, in the context of the Islamic Republic where Islam is considered as the “truth” and non-negotiable, any suggestion of revisiting Islam or the

³³² *Asās Nāmi-yi Anjuman-i Farhangi-yi Īrānzamīn* (Constitution for the Cultural Society of Iranzamin) <http://www.afraz.ir/afraz%law.pdf> – date accessed 11 July 2006

Islamic Revolution is highly controversial. Taking these issues in consideration, it can be assumed therefore that a familiarisation with ‘Iranian culture-civilisation’ is itself a political action. Furthermore, by taking into consideration the use of Iranzamin in the name of Afraz, it can be assumed that it is Sasanian Iran’s culture or at least Iran’s culture prior to the arrival of Islam, with which the members should be familiarised.

The meanings embedded in Afraz’s construction of Iranian national identity can be further elaborated in their reference to Iranshahr in their newsletter. It is worth mentioning that due to the nature of its content it is presumably published unofficially without passing through the Ministry of Culture and Guidance. The extracts, to be discussed below, are from the seventh edition of *Afraz Newsletter* and enable a better picture of the nature of Afraz. The following is the opening paragraph:

Greetings to the readers of the *Afraz Newsletter* and salutations for *naw rūz* and entry into the New Year ... this ancient Iranian celebration! Also congratulations for the selection of Mr Jalal Talebani as the president of the Republic of Iraq, the heart of Iranshahr.³³³

Of particular interest here is that Iraq is considered here as the ‘the heart of Iranshahr’. Consequently, the belief in the notion of Iranshahr is clearly indicated.

The idea of Iranshahr and its use in the construction of Iranian national identity is significant not only because of the association with Sasanian Iran, but also because it is linked to the debate regarding the idea of Iran. According to Gherardo Gnoli and Josef Wiesehöfer, the political concept of Iran was said to have derived from the Sasanian period (AD 205 – 651) and their use of the term Iranshahr, which literally means ‘Empire of the Aryans’.³³⁴ However, it is argued that this idea of Iran has deeper roots. According to Wiesehöfer, the Middle Persian word *Īrān* can be traced back the concept *ariya* from the Achaemenid period (550 BC – AD 330) and that the Sasanians constructed the concept of Iranshahr in order to legitimise their power by linking their reign to the Achaemenids. It should be pointed out, however, as Wiesehöfer indicates, that Aryan in this context is not synonymous to that used by the Nazis.³³⁵ Rather, it refers to the eastern Iranian part of the Indo-Europeans.³³⁶ However, the idea of Iranshahr, and also Iranzamin, is questioned. Vaziri queries the notion that the labels Iranshahr and Iranzamin were

³³³ *Afraz Newsletter*, Number 7, Autumn 1383 (2004) to Spring 1384 (2005), p. 1

³³⁴ Gnoli, Gherardo. *The Idea of Iran*. Rome: Instituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1989, pp. 175, 179, 183 and Wiesehöfer, Josef. *Ancient Persia from 550 BC to 650 AD*, London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2001, p. xi

³³⁵ *Ibid.* Wiesehöfer, p. xi

³³⁶ The Aryans migrated from their home in southern Russia for Central Asia and eventually what is now Iran. For more see Olmstead, A. T. *History of the Persian Empire*. Chicago & London: Phoenix books, University of Chicago Press, 1966. pp. 16-33

associated with an ethnic or political concept. He argues that they were initially labels used to name the land.³³⁷ All these arguments are refuted by A. Shapur Shahbazi in his article ‘The History of the Idea of Iran’. Not only does he argue that ‘Iran as a national entity – that is, a country with linguistic, political and ethnic identity’³³⁸ existed in antiquity, but also that it originated with the Avestan period, thus pre-dating the Sasanians. Shahbazi’s article can also be considered as an example of the academic literature by Iranians or those of Iranian heritage on Iranian national identity that subscribes to a particular discourse. In this case, the nature of this literature on Iranian national identity is prescriptive rather than analytical. Shahbazi states:

one should not ignore the fact that, once established, a *national identity* keeps its ideological conception even when *the name* is eclipsed by a different political appellation. ... the collapse of the Sasanian Iranshahr in AD 650 did not end Iranians’ *national* idea.³³⁹

Here, Shahbazi refers to the idea of Iranian national identity and its perceived ‘ideological conception’ as a ‘fact’. Shahbazi is writing with the conviction that the idea of Iranshahr and the meanings attached to it are essentially a “truth”. He proceeds to explain how during the Saffarid, Samanid, Buyid, and Saljuq eras, in unofficial settings, the labels Iranshahr and ‘*Mamālik-i Īrān*’ or ‘Iranian Lands’, which are exact translations from the old Avestan term *Airyanaqm daijunqm*, were used.³⁴⁰ This is despite Iran no longer being the official name.

To a certain degree, the debate on the actual origins of the idea of Iran and whether or not it started with the Sasanians’ Iranshahr is irrelevant. What is important, however, is what is believed and constructed by the community in question and how that is reflected in their construction of Iranian national identity. In this case, Iraq is considered the centre of Iranshahr. This implies a construction of the Iranian nation on the basis of that of the Sasanian dynasty, who ruled a large part of western Asia.³⁴¹ Iraq would not have been at the heart of the Avestan Iranshahr; Avestan geography is generally agreed to be regions of the eastern Iranian plateau and the Indo-Iranian border.³⁴² Nonetheless, in the case of this construction, the meanings attached to these concepts are tied to both political and ethnic

³³⁷ Op. cit. Vaziri, p. 87

³³⁸ Shahbazi, A. Shapur. ‘The History of the Idea of Iran’ in Sarkhosh Curtis, Vesta and Stewart, Sarah. (eds) *The Idea of Iran Volume 1: Birth of the Persian Empire*. London & New York: I. B. Tauris, pp. 100-111, 2005. p. 100

³³⁹ Ibid., p. 111

³⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 111

³⁴¹ Morony, M. ‘Sasanids’ in *Encyclopaedia of Islam New Edition (EI2)*, 9: 70-83

³⁴² Gnoli, G. ‘Avestan Geography’ in Yarshater, Ehsan (ed) *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 3, 1989. pp. 44-47, p. 44

identities. Not only is culture perceived here in terms of the pre-Islamic culture as the basis of national identity, but also the concept of land. As has been mentioned in Chapter Three with regard to the Pahlavi shahs, notions of ‘grandeur and superiority’ are attached to the idea of land.³⁴³ Furthermore, because of the belief by some that Iranshahr was the first original political concept of Iran, it is possible that this is why Afraz have selected Sasanian Iran, as opposed to Achaemenid Iran. In other words, it is possible that it is the “true” “authentic” Iran in political terms.

A consideration of the Abolqasem Ferdowsi’s *Shahnameh* (*Book of Kings*), and the meanings attached to Iranzamin may bring light to the values embedded in Afraz’s construction of Iranian national identity. The *Shahnameh* was completed at the turn of the eleventh century, which is three centuries after the Arab/Islamic conquest of the Sasanians. According to Ansari, the *Shahnameh* ‘not only provided the terms of reference for a distinct ‘national’ memory, but an effective means for its social absorption and dissemination.’³⁴⁴ Indeed, as is contended by Dick Davis, the epic poem represents ‘the revival of interest in indigenous Persian culture ... which sought to celebrate the cultural and ethnic inheritance of ancient Iran’.³⁴⁵ This, as he argues, is reflected in the fact that although Ferdowsi was believed to be a ‘sincere Muslim’, he made no attempt to ‘include any elements of the Qur’anic/Muslim cosmology in his poem’. Thus, unlike the likes of historians such as Tabari and Mas’udi, ‘he simply ignores Islamic cosmology and chronology altogether and places the Persian creation myths centre stage.’³⁴⁶ ‘The revival of interest in indigenous Persian culture’ is also reflected in his strict use of the Persian language.

There are several references in the *Shahnameh* to Iranzamin which is interchanged with *Shahr-i Īrān* and *Jahān* (world). For example, the ironmonger Kaveh mobilises the *savārān* (those on horseback) to search for the rightful King of Iranzamin so as to depose Zahhak.³⁴⁷ Feraydun ultimately becomes the rightful king and is referred to as *Shāh-i Zamīn* (king of the land) and *Jahāndār* (literally, possessor of the world).³⁴⁸ The significance of Iranzamin is that it appears that this is something to be aspired to. This is also evident in the story of Rostam and Sohrab. Sohrab, the son of both Rostam and

³⁴³ Op. cit. **Kashani-Sabet 2000, pp. 3-4**

³⁴⁴ Op. cit. Ansari 2005, p. 322

³⁴⁵ Davis, Dick. ‘Introduction’ in Ferdowsi, Abolqasem. *Shahnameh: The Persian Book of Kings*. trans. Dick Davis, foreword by Azar Nafisi. New York & London: Penguin Books. 2007. pp. xiii-xxxvii, p. xix

³⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. xix-xx

³⁴⁷ Foroghi, Mohammad Ali (Zaka-ol-Molk). (ed) *Shāhnāmīh-yi Fīrdawsī (Ferdowsi’s Shahnameh)*. Tehran: Sazman-i Intisharat-i Javidan. undated. p. 9

³⁴⁸ Ibid. p. 15

Tahmineh, states that he wants to make Tahmineh the ‘*bānū* [lady] of Iranzamin, *Shahr-i Īrān*’.³⁴⁹ It is worth mentioning that while references to Iranzamin and *Shahr-i Īrān* are in the original text, they are not mentioned in Davis’ translations of these stories.

According to Davis, the *Shahnameh* is ‘the record of the passing of a deeply mourned civilisation whose loss is seen as disaster’.³⁵⁰ Taking this argument and the references to Iranzamin into consideration, it is possible that like Ferdowsi, the community of Afraz are also longing for the pre-Islamic civilisation of the Sasanians that has been ‘lost’. The *Shahnameh* is significant not only because of the reference to Iranzamin, but also because Zahhak, as Davis comments, is ‘the first evil person [to be mentioned] ... who brings disaster on Iran and who is identified as an Arab.’³⁵¹ It is Davis’ contention that the *Shahnameh* demonstrates ‘a fairly forthright hostility toward the Arabs and the political culture, if not the religion, they brought with them.’³⁵² Thus, once again parallels can be drawn with the values embedded in Afraz’s construction of Iranian national identity. Davis’ comment on the significance of the *Shahnameh* certainly appears applicable to Afraz: ‘revival of interest in indigenous Persian culture ... which sought to celebrate the cultural and ethnic inheritance of ancient Iran’.³⁵³

The reference to Iranshahr and Iranzamin by Afraz also demonstrates the continued use of this term to refer to Iran. Not only was the idea of Iranshahr/Iranzamin referred to in the eleventh century by Ferdowsi but also by the geographer Abu Isahq Ibrahim bin Mohammad al-Farisi al-Istakhri in the tenth century, who ‘expressed particular fondness for “Iranshahr”’.³⁵⁴ Furthermore, ‘the notion of “Iranshahr” persisted well after al-Istakhri’s time’.³⁵⁵ According to Kashani-Sabet, the historian Hamd Allah Mustawfi writing in the fourteenth century under Mongol rule made references to Iranzamin.³⁵⁶ Taking these into consideration, it can be argued therefore, that the use of Sasanian Iran in Afraz’s construction of Iranian national identity also reflects a persistent undercurrent whereby Iran is imagined as Iranshahr or Iranzamin.

A benefit of discourse analysis of the articulation of national identity is the ability to look at the power relations between the multiple constructions or discourses. This is reflected

³⁴⁹ Ibid. p. 85

³⁵⁰ Op. cit. Davis, p. xvi

³⁵¹ Ibid., p. xx

³⁵² Ibid., p. xx

³⁵³ Ibid., p. xix

³⁵⁴ Op. cit. Kashani-Sabet 2000, p. 15

³⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 15

³⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 16

in the counter-hegemonic nature of the Iranist discourse of national identity as articulated by Afraz. This second extract from the seventh edition of the *Afraz Newsletter* clearly elaborates on the political aspirations of Afraz. It is also crucial in delineating the parameters or aspects of this construction of national identity. It states:

If one day Afraz creates the opportunity to give birth to something out of its positioning of similar thinkers risen from Iran worshipers (*Īrān parastān*) we will have got closer to achieving our greatest ideals; the Iranian with his/her breadth and able culture, and not in the tight framework of imposed politics; and its worshipers, those who stand in the margins and protectors, who constantly worship *yazdān* and nurse the motherland (*mām-i mīhan*).³⁵⁷

The language used is of particular note; it is recognised as pure Persian rather than Arabised Persian, which is commonly used in contemporary texts and official government documents.³⁵⁸ This is particularly pertinent in the use of the terms ‘*Īrān parastān*’ (Iran worshipers), ‘*yazdān*’ (creator) and ‘*mām-i mīhan*’ (motherland). While *yazdān* and *mām-i mīhan* may be used on a daily basis as well as those that have come to the language through Arabic – *Allah* and *vatan* respectively – it is the deliberate use of the non-Arabic, as opposed to a mixture, that is of significance. Once again, a parallel can be drawn here with Ferdowsi’s use of *only* the Persian language in the *Shahnameh*. As for *Īrān parastān*, or patriots, bearing in mind that *Iranshahr* means ‘Empire of the Aryans’, parallels can be drawn between ‘*Īrān parastān*’ and ‘*nizhād parastān*’, which is literally ‘race worshipers’. This term, which has been used for the concept of nationalism in the past, now has very negative connotations. *Nizhād parastān*’ implies nationalism in the sense of the superiority of one race over another; in this case that of the Aryans. This was a common theme in the Pahlavi Persian nationalist construction of Iranian national identity. Thus, it can be argued here that what is implied by the term ‘*Īrān parastān*’ is the worshiping of Iran over other nations. Furthermore, bearing in mind the above-mentioned *Iranshahr*, it can also be understood that the Iran that is to be worshiped over other nations is the imperialist Iran of the pre-Islamic eras and Sasanian Iran more specifically.

When looking at these extracts as a whole, the sense is that the “true” Iran is that of old, and more specifically that of Sasanian Iran. Even though the perception of Iran and its identity is static in this case, it is crucial to point out here that, like all discourses, the

³⁵⁷ Op. cit. *Afraz Newsletter*, p. 1

³⁵⁸ The Western technical and academic term for the current Persian language is New Persian, which has generally been the language of from the ninth century AD. Old Persian is the language of the Achaemenids in the sixth to fourth centuries BC and Middle Persian is the language of the Sasanian in the third century BC to the seventh century AD. The evolution of New Persian is associated with the fall of the Sasanian empire and the arrival of the Arabs, hence the emergence of Arab terminology and Arab script in the language. For more, see Jeremiás, Éva M. ‘Iran – languages’ in *Encyclopaedia of Islam Supplement*, (New Edition). pp. 425-448

Iranist discourse is fluid and constructed. This is reflected in the fact that it is not always the same aspect of Iran's pre-Islamic culture that is used in the construction of Iranian national identity.

The use of *Iranshahr*, which implies a particular territorial space, raises the issue of how land is used in the construction of Iranian national identity. If nation is a 'limited' socially constructed political unit, one that is based on *Iranshahr* is very different to one based on the current territorial boundaries of Iran. To this regard, similarities can be drawn here with the Islamist discourse. However, unlike the Islamist discourse, which is based on the prioritisation of *Īslāmīyat*, the idea here is primarily based on land. Furthermore, if the idea of land that is used is *Iranshahr* or that of Sasanian Iran, it is also therefore an Iranist construction of national identity because *Iranshahr* is ultimately based on *Īrānīyat*. It is for this reason that constructions of Iranian national identity based on the notion that the land of Iran or the territory of Iran as the most fundamental character are included in here. This is even though they do not necessarily have the same ideological basis as the discourse outlined above.

An example of the articulation of this discourse is evident in the work of Ahmadi. He argues that the overriding element of Iranian identity is the continuous existence of a land named Iran and its political territorial core. It is in this context that he argues that Iranian identity is at least two thousand years old going back to the 'state' of the Medes, despite the argument of others that Iranian identity stretches back to the 'state' of the Elamites of four thousand years ago.³⁵⁹

The notion of Iran as integral to Iran's national identity is also argued by both Cottam and Ehteshami. It is Cottam's contention that Iran's geographical isolation is a factor that strengthened Iranian nationalism because it encouraged the belief that Iranians are a people who are culturally and historically unique. He argues that as long as geography is partly responsible for the uniqueness of Iranian character, culture, and history, it is a factor that helped create national particularism and the growth of national sentiment.³⁶⁰ It is Ehteshami's contention that a crucial factor in Iran's current national identity is that it considers itself as one of the only 'natural' states in the Middle East because of its 'old and territorially established civilization', which is based on the notion of *Iranzamin*.³⁶¹ He argues that it is this territorial nationalism that is one of the guiding forces of Iran's

³⁵⁹ Op. cit. Ahmadi. 'Huvīyat-i Millī-yi Īrān'. 1383 (2004/2005), p. 194-195

³⁶⁰ Op. cit. Cottam, p. 24

³⁶¹ Op. cit. Ehteshami, pp. 286-287

foreign policy. The significance of these arguments is that it is *not* *Īslāmīyat* that is considered as the overriding element of Iranian identity.

1.24 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to show how culture is used as the basis of Iranian national identity construction. Through a discourse analysis of the texts, it has been possible to illustrate that culture, as a set of values or ideology, is embedded in the construction of Iranian national identity. Furthermore, one of the values attached to the notion of culture is the idea of authenticity. However, as has been illustrated, that which is perceived as authentic is contested. On the one hand, it is *Īslāmīyat* that is considered as Iran's "true" and "authentic" culture, while on the other hand it is *Īrānīyat*. Thus, Iran's national identity is also contested and consequently there is more than one discourse of national identity. The Islamist discourse prioritises *Īslāmīyat* and excludes *Īrānīyat* from the construction of national identity. The Iranist discourse, on the other hand, prioritises *Īrānīyat* and it is *Īslāmīyat* that is rejected. The construction of national identity in this way reflects an ideology that *prioritises* either *Īrānīyat* or *Īslāmīyat*, at the exclusion of the other. This prioritisation of culture also demonstrates a polarisation of culture.

The perception of either *Īslāmīyat* or *Īrānīyat* as Iran's "authentic" culture is used to legitimise and justify a particular political system. Consequently, culture is also politicised. Since authenticity is contested, then so too is what is considered as Iran's appropriate political system. Khamene'i, as the principal articulator of the Islamist discourse of national identity advocates *nizām-i Īslāmī*, which in the case of Iran is an Islamic theocracy. For the Iranist discourse of national identity it is a political system of pre-Islamic Iran that is preferred, namely monarchy. It becomes evident therefore that for both the Iranist and Islamist discourses it is not only *huvīyat-i millī* that is prescribed, but also *huvīyat-i dawlat*. Furthermore, it can be understood that *huvīyat-i millī* is to be achieved through the political apparatus based on a particular *huvīyat-i dawlat*. Thus, national identity and state identity become very close. These constructions can only be really considered as aspirations of what the identity of the nation should be, regardless of whether the nation identifies itself as such.

Furthermore, the existence of these two discourses, each advocating a different political system, also reveals something about the nature of the state in general. It is clear that the state is made up of 'systems of meaning that are the object and the mechanism of social control and contestation.'³⁶² In this case, the Islamist discourse and those propagating it

³⁶² Op. cit. **Finlayson and Martin 2006, p. 159**

are the ‘object of control and contestation’; they are resisting a political system that has controlled them in an earlier period and reacting to its existence by rejecting the use of *Īrānīyat* in the construction of national identity.

This chapter has also demonstrated that for both the Islamist and Iranist discourses the notion of civilisation is integral to the construction of Iranian nation identity. However, just as culture, authenticity and national identity is contested, so is civilisation. In the Islamist discourse of national identity, Iran is articulated in terms of Islamic civilisation, whereas for the Iranist discourse it is Iranian civilisation. For Afraz, this is based on what is to be perceived Sasanian Iran. The idea of civilisation in both cases demonstrates not only a belief in a set of values based on “advanced culture”, but also an idea of Iran that extends beyond Iran’s current territorial boundaries. In the case of Afraz, this is explicitly physical; it is the territory of Sasanian Iran that is aspired to. The notion of Islamic civilisation, which is not explicitly physical, alludes to former “glory” and the superiority of Islamic identity based on it being transnational. In both cases, the notion of civilisation reflects the sense that in earlier times Iran was more “civilised”.

The insistence on the “true” Iranian national identity reflects the exclusive and hegemonic nature of both the discourses. The exclusivity of the Islamist discourses is evident in the conviction that Iranian identity is Islamic and that the nation is synonymous with Islam. This excludes Iran’s non-Muslim communities and, to a certain extent, non-Shi’i communities. The Iranist discourse is also exclusive. It does not allow for the inclusion of those who are Muslim, and possibly those who are not perceived as Persian. Furthermore, the approach to *Īslāmīyat* reflects a sense of cultural, moral and political superiority. The articulation of the Islamist discourse demonstrates the conviction that any values, whether cultural, moral or political, that divert from a particular interpretation of *Īslāmīyat* are considered as a divergence from the “true” way and the “real” Iranian national identity. This is reflected in the way the West is constructed. Similarly, the meanings attached to *Īrānīyat* in the Iranist discourse also prescribe certain cultural, moral and political values that are considered more superior than others.

While these discourses are hegemonic, they are also counter-hegemonic. This is reflected in their resistance to each other. The Iranist discourse is resisted by the Islamist discourse on the basis of a contestation of what is considered as Iran’s authentic national identity and *vice versa*. The perceived dichotomy between *Īslāmīyat* and *Īrānīyat* creates an ‘us-them’ or ‘self-other’ dynamic. The relationship between the Iranist and Islamist discourses is one whereby each sees the other as the ‘other’. In the attempt to prove the

authenticity of what is perceived to be Iranian identity, the discourses either consciously or unconsciously ‘otherise’ those who do not subscribe to the discourse.

The ‘self’ and ‘other’ dynamic not only exists on an internal level but also on an external level. Iran’s heritage of high culture is what, as far as the two discourses are concerned, differentiates them from their neighbours in general, and the Arabs in particular. It is also what is perceived to be a differentiating factor from the West. Since part of the process of constructing identity is not only how one perceives the ‘self’, or in this case perceives the nation, but also how one differentiates oneself from the other; i.e. not the nation, then high culture can be considered as an aspect of Iranian national identity. The Iranist and Islamist discourses of national identity are a recognition of the concept of Iran’s long-standing heritage of high culture as an integral part of Iranian national identity, which both legitimises their construction of the Iranian nation, and also justifies their attitude to the ‘other’. Thus, in a sense is symptomatic of the notion of ‘Orientalism’. In this case, however, Iran is the ‘occident’, the civilised ideal, and the rest including the West and the Arabs, are the ‘other’, which are in need of civilising or are lacking civilisation.

Although the Islamist and Iranist discourses are seemingly irreconcilable, the way in which the identity of the nation is constructed is very similar. For example, methodologically both discourses are based on a particular “authentic” culture that is static. This is precisely the type of culture Hall is criticising. In the case of Iran, the contestation occurs because there is conflict regarding what is the ‘one true self’.³⁶³ Essentially, their way is the only way and to move away from that is simply a digression from the “true” and “authentic” Iranian national identity. If we use Fairclough’s approach, the constructions of national identity can be considered as effective ideologies in that they have established their assumptions about how the Iranian nation is constructed as common sense.³⁶⁴ However, since more than one construction of Iranian national identity exist, surely this alludes to the argument that nation is indeed constructed and fluid. The fact that the Iranist and Islamist constructions have changed positions with regard to their role as a state identity also illustrates that how national identity is constructed is not static. Nonetheless, it cannot be denied that for those constructing nation, the national identity defined is indeed *the* Iranian national identity.

As has been illustrated in the previous chapter, Iran has a history of multiple nationalisms and discourses of national identity; this trend continues in the Khatami period. There is no single construction of Iranian national identity, and nor can the construction of national

³⁶³ Op. cit. Hall 1990, p. 223

³⁶⁴ Op. cit. Fairclough, 1989, p. 77

identity be considered as being restricted to that which the state articulates. As has been illustrated, Iranian national identity is constructed on both state and non-state levels. Thus, neither of the discourses of national identity portrayed here are unique to the Khatami period. Many of the ideas and ideals used in the construction of the Islamist and Iranist discourse in the Khatami period are also evident in earlier construction of Iranian national identity. For example, parallels can be drawn between the discourses of Khamene'i and Al-e Ahmad. However, where as prior to the Islamic Revolution it was very much a counter-hegemonic discourse, following the Revolution it has been "elevated" to the state level, with a degree of popular support. Likewise, similarities can be drawn between the Iranist discourse discussed in this chapter and the discourses of the Pahlavi dynasty and that of certain individuals during the Constitutional period. Whereas prior to the Islamic Revolution it was a public and state construction, it is now confined to the private space within in Iran, but still in the public space in some cases outside of Iran. It could be argued, therefore that the Islamist and Iranist constructions have changed places in terms of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic positions. However, it must be stressed that in the case of Afraz and to a certain extent Jaleh, the rediscovery of Sasanian Iran indicates a departure from the Achaemenid Iran used by the Pahlavis. It is possible that this is indicative of a new discourse of Iranian national identity that not only wants to distance and differentiate itself from the Islamic Republic, but also from the Pahlavi regime.

By looking at the Iranist and Islamist discourses of national identity together, it becomes apparent that there are concurrent competing discourses of national identity during Khatami's presidency. The Iranist discourse can be considered to be at one end of the spectrum with the prioritisation of *Īrānīyat* as the principle factor in Iranian national identity, while at the other end of the spectrum is the Islamist discourse with the prioritisation of *Īslāmīyat*. By addressing *Īrānīyat* in discourses of Iranian national identity, it has been demonstrated that Iranian national identity, despite it being an Islamic Republic, should not be considered simply in terms of it being Islamic. Furthermore, the *Īslāmīyat* of the Islamist discourse of national identity can be regarded as the only interpretation of Islam in Khatami's Iran. A deconstruction of the Islamist-Iranian discourse in the following chapter will show that even on the official state level *Īslāmīyat* is not monolithic. Indeed, the nature of Iranian national identity is complex. It is hoped that this thesis provides a more rounded approach to the discussion on the nature of national identity in Iran.

Chapter Five: Islamist-Iranian Discourse of National Identity: Khatami's State Counter-Discourse

Today's world is Western in its orientation, techniques, and thoughts, such that if one lives outside the geographic boundaries of the West, one must incorporate the West into one's values and life. The West has indeed brought great achievements to humanity, but it has also created great difficulties. But the key issue here is that our difficulties are more compounded than the West's because Westerners at least have a culture that is in harmony with their civilisation and thus do not suffer from a precarious identity. But our problems are compounded precisely because on the one hand our personal and social lives are directly influenced by the West, a civilisation whose foundations we have not absorbed and internalised. On the other hand, aspects of our culture belong to a civilisation whose time has passed.³⁶⁵

One of our most central problems is that important aspects of our culture belong to a civilisation whose time has long passed, and our life is influenced by modern civilisation which requires a culture appropriate for it.³⁶⁶

Seyyed Mohammad Khatami

The Islamist-Iranian discourse of national identity is essentially that of Khatami. The two above extracts from one of his speeches illustrate the dilemma facing Iranian identity in general and Iranian national identity in particular. As this chapter will illustrate, Khatami has endeavoured to reconcile these issues in the construction of an Iranian national identity; dealing with the implications of the West on daily life while maintaining independence and “authenticity”. While there has been considerable discussion of Khatami's presidency, this has been mainly in terms of political liberalisation both internally reflected in discussions on Islamic democracy and calls for more democratic progress, and externally reflected in the notion of ‘dialogue among civilisations’. However, how Khatami perceives Iranian identity has been little covered. Through the notion of ‘discourse of national identity’ a picture of how Khatami perceives and constructs Iranian national identity can be built and the sets of values embedded in this construction can be identified. By using this approach, four contentions can be made.

The first contention is that Khatami's discourse of national identity is based on the politicisation of culture, namely *Īslāmīyat*. This, however, is not exclusive of *Īrānīyat*; the “authenticity” of both *Īslāmīyat* and *Īrānīyat* are acknowledged. As in the previous chapter, the politicisation of culture can be understood here in terms of culture being used as the basis or justification for a particular political system. In this case it is Islamic democracy or Islamic *mardumsālārī*. Since the discourse is based on the politicisation of

³⁶⁵ Khatami, Mohammad. *Islam, Dialogue and Civil Society*. Canberra: Centre for Arab and Islamic Studies, The Australian National University, 2000. p. 42

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 42

culture, namely Islam, it is referred to as ‘Islamist-Iranian’ in the thesis to illustrate the similarity with the Islamist and Iranist discourses. As with the Islamist discourse, Islamist here also implies a prioritisation of Islam. Bayat refers to the Reform movement as post-Islamist. The contention here, however, is that it remains Islamist because it is still Islam that is used as the framework of the political system.

The second contention is that the determination to assert independence in face of the external ‘other’ is integral to how Khatami perceives the nation. However, unlike the Islamist discourse, he advocates ‘dialogue among civilisations’. The notion of ‘dialogue among civilisations’ also illustrates that, like the Islamist and Iranist discourses, the Iranian nation is actually perceived in terms of civilisation. Related to this is the third contention; that is that democracy, or *mardumsālārī* to use Khatami’s terminology, acts as a means of popularising his construction of national identity. Like earlier discourses of national identity, the notion of democracy or *mardumsālārī* is also linked to anti-imperialist sentiment.

Bearing in mind these arguments the Islamist-Iranian discourse can be understood in terms of three pillars that act as the basis of the construction of Iranian national identity: *Īslāmīyat* and *Īrānīyat*, democracy, and the notion of ‘dialogue among civilisations’. It is the combination of these features and their articulation on the state level that differentiates Khatami’s articulation of national identity from others and also the period of Khatami’s presidency from other periods in Iran’s history. These three pillars will be used as the framework for analysis and the structure for the chapter.

The fourth contention is that the Islamist-Iranian discourse is at once both a hegemonic and counter-hegemonic discourse. It is the latter because it is a discourse of resistance on many levels. On the one hand, it resists the exclusivity and claim to hegemony of both the Islamist and Iranist discourses that only prioritise either *Īslāmīyat* or *Īrānīyat*. Furthermore, as a state discourse, like the Islamist discourse, there is a hegemonic and counter-hegemonic dynamic within the Islamic Republic’s political apparatus. The counter-hegemonic nature of the discourse is also reflected in its resistance to the West and is articulated in the notion of ‘dialogue among civilisations’. On the other hand, the Islamist-Iranian discourse is also hegemonic because it claims cultural, political and moral leadership. Additionally, despite it being more inclusive than the Islamist and Iranist discourses, it also remains exclusive. However, the question that must also be raised in this context is whether in fact the exclusivity of the Islamist-Iranian discourse of

national identity is due to the argument that political development is limited in the context of the Islamic Republic and it is forced to subscribe to certain values.

Before proceeding with the three pillars of the Islamist-Iranian discourses of national identity, it is first necessary to provide a brief background to Khatami and the Reform Movement in general. This will be followed by the second section which addresses how culture is used in the construction of Iranian national identity. The third section returns to the issue of civilisation and expands on anti-imperialism, common in many of the discourses of national identity throughout Iran's history, through a deconstruction of the notion, 'dialogue among civilisations'.

The fourth section considers the notion of Islamic *mardumsālārī*, or democracy. The aim is to illustrate first of all that since the notion of Islamic *mardumsālārī* is based on the politicisation of *Īslāmīyat*, the discourse of national identity must be referred to as *Islamist-Iranian* as opposed to *Iranian-Islamic*. The second aim of this section is to illustrate how *mardumsālārī* is a means of popularising the Islamist-Iranian discourse of national identity. The third aim of this section is to illustrate how the notion of *mardumsālārī* is linked to the idea of independence and anti-imperialist sentiment. The final section of the chapter offers some concluding remarks.

1.25 Background to Khatami and the Reform Movement

The intellectual and political origins of Khatami and the Reform Movement essentially lie in the disillusionment with the Islamic Republic, as discussed in Chapter One. Eric Hooglund argues that the Islamic Republic contains two general orientations – elitist and populist. The first believes in the 'ultimate sovereignty' of the government belonging to God; the second, however, believes that the government's political sovereignty is 'based on a consensual contract among citizens'.³⁶⁷ While Khamene'i belongs to the first, Khatami belongs to the second. As will be illustrated, this is clearly reflected in his call for Islamic *mardumsālārī*. This more relaxed approach to Iranian politics and society is also evident in Khatami's position as Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance between 1983 and 1992. During this time he relaxed censorship and thus became popular among intellectuals.³⁶⁸ Because of this tolerance, he was often accused of being too lenient in face of "*tahajum-i farhangī-yi gharb*" (Western cultural invasion).³⁶⁹ While Khamene'i is positioned in the traditionalist right, Khatami is positioned in the Islamic left. The largest

³⁶⁷ Hooglund, Eric. 'Khatami's Iran' in *Current History*, February 1999. pp. 59-64

³⁶⁸ Op. cit. Keddie 2003, p. 269

³⁶⁹ Op. cit. Buchta, p. 30

Islamic-left group, the *Majma'-i Ruhāniyūn-i Mubāriz* (Combatant Clerics Society) was founded by Khatami among others. The Reformists, referred to as 'Second of Khordad Front' because of the day they were elected, were made up of a coalition of a number of parties and groups, amongst which is the Combatant Clerics Society. Also included in this coalition were:

“insiders” in government who still supported an Islamic state, headed by a ruling *faqīh*; secularists who wanted not only democracy and civil society but the separation of religion and government; and the Nationalist-Religious Alliance.³⁷⁰

Ansari attributes the origins of the Reform Movement ‘to the vigorous debates and discussions that emerged in Iran’s universities following the end of the Iran-Iraq War in 1988’.³⁷¹ Their aim was to return to the origins of the Islamic Revolution, which was essentially reflected in the election of Khatami.³⁷² However, it must be stressed that the original aims of the Revolution are contested. Ahmadinezhad has also claimed to return to the original aims of the Revolution. These, however, are quite different to those of the Reformists. It must also be noted that the Reform movement as a whole is not monolithic. As will be illustrated below, the relationship between *vilāyat-i faqīh* is contested.

The slogans of culture and democracy were at the centre of Khatami’s election campaign. He discussed ‘freedom of opinion, human rights, party pluralism, and the balancing of democracy and Islam.’³⁷³ On 23 1997 May, or, 2 Khordad 1376, Khatami was elected with a generally agreed seventy-seven percent of the vote. He gained support from ethnic and religious minorities, especially Sunnis.³⁷⁴ Among his most avid supporters were Iran’s women and youth.

1.26 Culture and Identity

Having provided some background to Khatami and the Reform Movement, attention is now turned to the first of the three pillars of the Islamist-Iranian discourse of national identity, namely culture – *Īslāmīyat* and *Īrānīyat*. Khatami defines culture ‘as the collection of rooted beliefs, as well as habits of thought and emotion in society.’³⁷⁵ As Mahmoud Alinejad points out, the notion of culture is integral to Khatami’s idea of

³⁷⁰ Mir-Hosseini, Ziba and Tapper, Richard. *Islam and Democracy in Iran: Eshkevari and the Quest for Reform*. London & New York: I. B. Tauris, 2006. p. 29

³⁷¹ Op. cit. Ansari. *Confronting Iran*. 2006, p. 148

³⁷² Op. cit. Ansari. *Islam, Iran and Democracy*. 2006, p. 113

³⁷³ Op. cit. Buchta, p. 29

³⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 31

³⁷⁵ Op. cit. Khatami. *Islam, Dialogue and Civil Society*. 2000, p. 42

‘nationality’.³⁷⁶ However, unlike the Islamist and Iranist discourses, Khatami considers both *Īrānīyat* and *Īslāmīyat* as “authentic” to Iranian identity. The combining of both these cultures is reflected in Khatami’s election campaign. For example, posters had a picture of the Iranian flag and the slogan: ‘Iran for all Iranians’. It is also reflected in the way in which Khatami addresses the issue of *Īslāmīyat* and *Īrānīyat* in his speeches.

Like the Islamist and Iranist discourses of national identity, the Islamist-Iranian discourse of national identity is based on the politicisation of culture, namely *Īslāmīyat*. This is not to say that culture in itself is not political, rather culture is politicised in the sense that it is used as the basis of nation, a political unit, and of a particular political apparatus. This is illustrated in the following section where it becomes evident that Khatami considers Islam as the framework for democracy; thus, *Īslāmīyat* is politicised and a particular system of government is prescribed.

1.26.1 ‘Iranian-Islamic’ Identity

In Khatami’s speech to inaugurate the state Jam-i Jam television network on 6 December 1997, only seven months after his election, he states:

Several times I have said that we must have dialogue with other civilisations and cultures, but before that we have to know what is this ‘we’ that we are. My answer ... is that our identity is Iranian-Islamic. We take pride in being Iranian. Of course there have been many struggles, and possibly there is still this wrong image that we have to split being Iranian from being Islamic. On the one hand, people have said that we must focus on Islam and take away being Iranian; on the other hand, many have called for that in order to be Iranian we must take away Islam. Both these are a mistake and a digression from the true way.³⁷⁷

Several points can be made regarding this extract. First of all, the timing of the speech is worthy of note. Not long after his election, Khatami is making it very clear where he stands on the nature of Iranian identity. It is obvious that he is aware that the concept of Iranian identity is an issue and is keen to make his stand-point known. He does not uphold the view that is perhaps expected of him as a cleric and as part of the government; his construction of Iranian identity does not prioritise *Īslāmīyat* at the expense of *Īrānīyat*. While accepting that Islam is a fundamental part, so is being Iranian, in other words Iran’s pre-Islamic culture. Thus, Iran’s national identity is ‘Iranian-Islamic’; there is the need for a balance between the two. This demonstrates the shift of emphasis from that articulated

³⁷⁶ Alinejad, Mahmoud. ‘Coming to terms with Modernity: Iranian Intellectuals and the Emerging Public Sphere’ in *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 13, 1, 2002. pp. 25-48, p. 33

³⁷⁷ Khatami, Seyyed Mohammad. ‘Farhang-i Irani-Islami (Iranian-Islamic culture)’. 1376 (1997). in Khatami, Seyyed Mohammad. *Īslām, Rūhānīyat va Inqilāb-i Īslāmī; bā muqaddimay az Seyyed Mohammad Ali Abtahi (Islam, Clericism and the Īslāmīc Revolution; with an introduction from Seyyed Mohammad Ali Abtahi)*, Tehran: Tarh-e No Publications, 1379 (2000/2001). pp. 17-20, p. 18

by Khamene'i. Although Khatami cannot be considered as the first since the Islamic Republic to advocate the importance of both *Īslāmīyat* and *Īrānīyat* in Iran's national identity, he can be regarded as a symbol of the Islamist-Iranian discourse as reflected in his writings and speeches. Furthermore, even though the Islamic Republic may have publicly acknowledged the existence of an Iranian-Islamic identity at the time of the Iran-Iraq War, Khatami's approach to the issue alludes to the continuation of a deep conviction of the nation being synonymous with *Īslāmīyat* alone.

Secondly, not only does Khatami make his stand-point clear, he also criticises both those who deny *Īslāmīyat* as part of Iran's identity, as well as those who deny the importance of *Īrānīyat*. Thus, it is precisely the Islamist and Iranist constructions that Khatami is criticising. This suggests that he is resisting these other perceptions of the Iranian nation. Thus, in terms of the hegemonic and counter-hegemonic dynamic, the Islamist-Iranian discourse can be seen as a counter-discourse to the perceived hegemonic nature of, not only the Iranist, but also the Islamist discourse.

Thirdly, this dynamic between Khatami and Khamene'i is of particular significance. Taking into consideration that both the Islamist and Islamist-Iranian discourses are state discourses, there are two essentially conflicting constructions of national identity being articulated. Thus, on the state level, let alone on non-state levels, there is a fundamental contestation regarding the basis of Iran's national identity. Furthermore, the Iranian state cannot, therefore, be considered as a monolithic entity.

Fourthly, the notion of 'Iranian-Islamic' is also more inclusive. Declaring that Iran's identity is Iranian-Islamic can also be considered as a way of gathering the support of the masses because it is more inclusive than either of the Iranist or Islamist discourses. It can also be considered as a means of rallying support for the Islamic Republic. However, also worthy of note is the phrase 'true way'. This illustrates Khatami's conviction that his way is perceived as the truth and therefore dismissive of other notions of national identity. In this sense, therefore, the Islamist-Iranian discourse of national identity is hegemonic. Thus, it is both hegemonic and counter-hegemonic at once. Despite these points, it is necessary to consider the context of the speech. As will be discussed in the following section, one of the main audiences of the speech is the Iranian diaspora. It is likely that an emphasis on *Īslāmīyat* over *Īrānīyat* would not be popular in this environment. Nevertheless, Iranian-Islamic identity is also stressed in other contexts.

A more recent affirmation of the Iranian-Islamic perception of Iranian identity is reflected in an interview carried out with Khatami's former vice-president Seyyed Mohammad Ali

Abtahi in November 2005. In response to a question about Iran's national identity, Abtahi argues that Iran has had two trends: *īrāni garāyī* – Iranism - and *Īslāmī garāyī* - Islamism. He argues that Iranism wants to dispose of 'ashūra and hazrat-i 'Alī³⁷⁸ because they are considered to be Arab. This reflects the association by some of Islam being Arab and therefore not Iranian. Abtahi also argues that the Islamists want to dispose of *naw rūz* because it is considered un-Islamic. He concludes his response to the question by arguing that there needs to be a balance between *Īrānīyat* and *Īslāmīyat* in Iran's national identity. Furthermore, as far as Abtahi is concerned, it was during Khatami's presidency that these seeming irreconcilable cultures came together and both *naw rūz* and 'ashūra could be celebrated.

Four and a half months after the Jam-i Jam speech, on 21 April 1998, Khatami raises the issue of Iranian-Islamic identity again. This time, however, he is addressing university staff and clerics in the provinces of Sistan and Baluchistan. It must be stressed that the audiences of these two speeches are very different. While in the previous speech he is addressing those who are likely to watch the programmes of the Jam-i Jam Network, in the latter he is addressing clerics, the establishment. Consequently, the messages of the speeches are also different. Furthermore, it is likely that Khatami has framed his thoughts in a particular way so as to ensure their legitimacy. He states:

Our being Iranian is not opposed to our being Islamic. Unfortunately, an incorrect chain of thought that has arisen from nearsightedness ... wants Iran and Islam to be in opposition to each other. Some want the elimination of *Īslāmīyat*, something imaginary called Iranian identity, and that there be Iran without Islam. Of course Iranians before Islam also had a civilisation and things to be proud of. But that which appeared in Iran after Islam, with that which existed before Islam, cannot be compared. Islam had a truly important role in the greatness of this nation [*millat*]. On the other hand, it is possible that some also want, under the pretext of Islamism, to eliminate Iranian identity Our identity is Iranian-Islamic and [it is] the perception of this very reality that is able to maintain us.³⁷⁹

In this extract, Khatami's understanding of the 'Iranian-Islamic' identity is clarified further. There is the sense that *Īslāmīyat* is more important than *Īrānīyat*: 'that which appeared in Iran after Islam, with that which existed before Islam, cannot be compared.' However, pre-Islamic Iranian civilisation is appreciated. Nonetheless, attention must also

³⁷⁸ Ali ibn Abi Talib, the Prophet Mohammad's cousin and son-in-law, is considered as the first Shi'i Imam. 'Ashura takes place on the tenth day of Muharram in the Islamic Lunar calendar and is when the martyrdom of Hussein, the Prophet Mohammad's grandson and fourth Shi'i Imam, along with his army at Karbala in modern day Iraq in AD 680.

³⁷⁹ Khatami, Seyyed Mohammad. 'Huvīyat-i Īrānī-Īslāmī (Iranian-Islamic Identity)' 1377 (1998). in Khatami, Seyyed Mohammad. *Īslām, Rūhānīyat va Inqilāb-i Īslāmī; bā muqaddimay az Seyyed Mohammad Ali Abtahi (Islam, Clericism and the Īslāmīc Revolution; with an introduction from Seyyed Mohammad Ali Abtahi)*. Tehran: Tarh-e No Publications, 1379 (2000/2001). pp. 60-66, pp. 61-62

be paid here to the statement: ‘Our identity is Iranian-Islamic and [it is] the perception of this very reality that is able to maintain us’. Is Khatami suggesting here that unless there is a real acceptance of these seemingly irreconcilable aspects of Iran’s national identity and culture, the very existence of the nation is unsustainable?

The prioritisation of *Īslāmīyat* over *Īrānīyat* is reaffirmed later in the same speech in the way in which he goes on to address Iran’s non-Muslim population. Although Khatami considers Iran’s identity as Iranian-Islamic, it is Islam that that is considered as the basis of cultural identity and identity in general. He states:

I respect all non-Muslims of the same motherland - Zoroastrian, Jewish, Christian and other citizens, but we must not forget that the union of the soul and Iranian character with Islam has caused the creation of these greatnesses. The most important basis of our cultural identity, whether Muslim or non-Muslim, is Islamic culture. The elimination of Islam means the elimination of the basic basis of our identity ... Even the non-Muslim Iranians, if they want to be dear, must pay attention to the base and position of Islam in history and our historical identity.³⁸⁰

Before proceeding it is worth clarifying what is meant in this case by Khatami’s reference to ‘Islamic culture’. Although he does not state explicitly what is meant here, it can be understood from Abtahi’s introduction to a collection of Khatami’s speeches, including the Jam-i Jam and Sistan speeches, entitled *Islām, Rūhānīyat va Inqilāb-i Īslāmī (Islam, Clericisms and the Islamic Revolution)*. In reference to the creation of an Islamic identity, Abtahi praises the ‘philosophers, Gnostics, poets and other Iranian applauders of culture, in the most brilliant era of Iranian civilisation’ and mentions ‘Ibn Sina, Zakariya Razi, Mawlana, [and] Hafiz’ as the proof of the ‘new-found Islamic culture’.³⁸¹ In this sense, therefore, Islamic culture is high culture, thus demonstrating the importance of high culture in culture as a whole.

In this extract it is clear that Islam, not in the sense of converting to Islam, but rather as a culture, must be accepted as the base for Iranian identity by non-Muslims. This is stressed in his statement: ‘if they want to be dear’. The word ‘dear’ is translated from the Persian word *‘azīz* - a term of endearment. The implication is that if the non-Muslim population wishes to be close to the Muslim population, there has to be the acceptance of Islam, not as part of, but as the basis of Iranian identity. The prioritisation of Islam over pre-Islamic culture is once again reflected in Abtahi’s introduction. He stresses the

³⁸⁰ Ibid., pp. 62-63

³⁸¹ Abtahi, Seyyed Mohammad Ali. ‘Introduction’ in Khatami, Seyyed Mohammad. *slām, Rūhānīyat va Inqilāb-i Īslāmī; bā muqaddimay az Seyyed Mohammad Ali Abtahi (Islam, Clericisms and the Īslāmīc Revolution; with an introduction from Seyyed Mohammad Ali Abtahi)*. Tehran: Tarh-e No Publications, 1379 (2000/2001), pp. 7-9, p. 7

importance on the Islamic part of Iran's culture. In his opinion the 'new-found Islamic culture' is the 'most brilliant era of Iranian civilisation'. He stresses that this contribution placed Iran as having a crucial role in Islamic civilisation: the most important civilisation of the past and present.³⁸² Once again, as mentioned above, *Īslāmīyat* appears to be regarded as more important than *Īrānīyat*.

In this speech to the clerics and university members of Sistan and Baluchistan, Khatami also emphasises the need for solidarity and cohesion regardless of religious, clan or ethnic divisions. He reinforces this with the fact that the Constitution is not based on these things; rather it is based on the individual. He also states that 'We must be powerful, and our power is in our pledge of our solidarity and union.'³⁸³ However, it seems that Khatami contradicts himself. While proclaiming that Iranian national identity is based on culture and calling for solidarity regardless of religion and ethnicity, the very basis of the national identity is proclaimed as religion, namely Islam. Nevertheless, two questions must be raised. The first question is whether *Īslāmīyat* is essentially Iranian as suggested by Corbin's argument of Iranian Islam. The second question is whether the idea of *Īrānīyat* is essentially a Persianate idea, and thus primarily one based on a particular ethnicity. Both these issues are worthy of further research. If the latter is the case, while pledging solidarity and union, he is also being exclusive.

Although it is not entirely clear whether the nation is primarily based on the Persian ethnicity, it is based, however, on the notion of Smith's 'native culture'. Furthermore, it is possible that the Iranian aspect of the identity is perceived as an ethnic identity. Indeed, as Ansari points out, 'there is little doubt that a sense of Iranian ethnic identity has existed to varying degrees over many centuries'.³⁸⁴ Taking these factors into consideration, it could be argued that the Islamist-Iranian discourse of national identity is constructed along the lines of Smith's definition of ethnic nation: its 'distinguishing feature is its emphasis on a community of birth and native culture'³⁸⁵. However, since religion and ethnicity are so intertwined, how Khatami perceives Iran as a nation can be considered as an ethno-religious nation. Nonetheless, as will be illustrated in the next section, the idea of citizenship, which Khatami also advocates, has similarities with what Smith defines as a civic nation. This raises the theoretical issue of whether it is indeed possible to have the

³⁸² Ibid. p. 7

³⁸³ Op. cit. Khatami 1377 (1998), p. 64

³⁸⁴ Op. cit. Ansari 2005, p. 321

³⁸⁵ Op. cit. Smith 1991, p. 11

notion of citizenship within the context of ethnic nation. This would refute the contention that citizenship has to be in the context of a civic nation.

The final issue that must be raised here is the notion of anti-imperialism. As has been illustrated, with regard to the Islamist discourse of national identity and Iran's historical experience, Iran's relationship with the external 'other' in terms of an anti-imperialist sentiment is a common theme. This is also reflected in relation to the issue of culture as expressed in Khatami's speech in Sistan and Baluchistan:

Our country throughout its history has been exposed to invasions and floods but the great nation of Iran has in no place let its identity go when faced with the invading ethnic group, rather greatness of the culture of this nation has even been the reason that after a period the foreign invading ethnic group is subdued by the greatness of this nation and has been influenced by the Iranian culture and even changed its own culture.³⁸⁶

It is clear that he considers Iran's culture as a mighty force. Furthermore, it is its stability and longevity, in face of the invading foreigner, that makes the Iranian nation great. The issue of anti-imperialism in Khatami's construction of Iranian national identity will be further addressed in the following two sections.

1.26.2 Soroush and Iranian identity

It must be pointed out that the notion that both *Īslāmīyat* and *Īrānīyat* are part of Iran's national identity is not restricted to Khatami. It is also articulated by Abdolkarim Soroush, who indeed cannot be excluded from a discussion on Iranian identity. Soroush has been criticising the authoritarian nature of the clergy since the 1980s.³⁸⁷ He is also one of the *Rawshānfikrān-i Dīnī* who engaged in a critique of the Islamic Republic and the role of *vilāyat-i faqīh* in the early 1990s³⁸⁸; Matin-Asgari argues that '[Soroush] is arguably Iran's leading intellectual dissident of the 1990s'.³⁸⁹ Indeed, he is a leading figure in the Kiyān School of Thought, one of the many 'semi-opposition' groups.³⁹⁰ There has been much discussion in the existing scholarship regarding the thoughts and writings of Soroush. The hope here is to compliment the existing scholarship by contextualising Soroush's notion of Iranian national identity within the framework of the discourses and counter-discourse of Iranian national identity addressed in this thesis. In this section, how Soroush deals with culture will be addressed. In the section '*Mardumsālārī* (democracy)' below, how Soroush deals with the issue of Islam and democracy will be addressed.

³⁸⁶ Op. cit. Khatami 1377 (1998), p. 61

³⁸⁷ Op. cit. Ansari. *Islam, Iran and Democracy*. 2006, p. 70

³⁸⁸ Op. cit. Dabashi, p. 190

³⁸⁹ Op. cit. Matin-Asgari 1997, , p. 100

³⁹⁰ Op. cit. Buchta, p. 81

In his discussion of Soroush's notion of Iranian national identity, Matin-Asgari states that Soroush 'sees Iran's contemporary culture to be formed by three basic constituents: Iranian, Islamic and Western.'³⁹¹ It is to these that Soroush refers in the opening quote of the thesis, which is taken from his lecture *The Three Cultures*³⁹²:

We Iranian Muslims are the inheritors and carriers of three cultures at once. As long as we ignore our links with the elements of our triple cultural heritage and our cultural geography, constructive social and cultural action will elude us. ... The three cultures that form our common heritage are of national, religious, and Western origins. While steeped in an ancient culture, we are also immersed in our religious culture, and we are at the same time awash in successive waves coming from the Western shores. Whatever solutions that we divine for our problems must come from this mixed heritage to which our contemporary social thinkers, reformers, and modernisers have been heirs, often seeking the salvation of our people in the hegemony of one of these cultures over the other two.³⁹³

Soroush's discourse is similar to that of Khatami in a number of ways. First of all, Soroush asserts the need for the acceptance of multiple heritages or cultures. However, unlike Khatami, it is not only *Īslāmīyat* and *Īrānīyat*, but also Western culture that Soroush explicitly accepts as part of Iranian identity. This does not mean, however, that Khatami rejects the West; he alludes to this in the opening quote of this chapter. It has been said that Khatami's approach to the West comes from the same school of thought as Soroush and Mujtahid Shabestari.³⁹⁴ How Khatami deals with the West will be addressed in the following section of the chapter in terms of the notion of 'dialogue among civilisations'.

The second similarity is in the apparent warnings both Soroush and Khatami give. Soroush's statement - 'As long as we ignore our links with the elements of our triple cultural heritage and our cultural geography, constructive social and cultural action will elude us' - is very similar to Khatami's statement - 'Our identity is Iranian-Islamic and [it is] the perception of this very reality that is able to maintain us'. This brings us to the third and final point. It is suggested that only adhering to one of Iran's cultures would be hegemonic. It can be argued, therefore, that any construction that prioritises *Īslāmīyat*, *Īrānīyat* or Western culture over the other two is ultimately a discourse of hegemony.

³⁹¹ Matin-Asgari, Afshin. 'Abolkarim Soroush and the Secularisation of Islamic Thought in Iran', *Iranian Studies* 30, 1-2, 1997. pp. 95-115, p. 100

³⁹² Is it worth mentioning that the edited book, Sadri and Sadri 2000, pp. 156-170, does not give a date for 'The Three Cultures'.

³⁹³ Op. cit. Soroush in Sadri and Sadri, p. 156

³⁹⁴ Kaji, Hussain. (ed) *Kisti Ma? (Who are We?)*. Ruz-i Naw Publishers, 1378 (1999/2000). p. 127

The following extract is also from Soroush's *The Three Cultures* lecture and reflects the perceived resistance of Iranian culture in face of external forces:

There is no denying the importance of our national culture. Our people were Iranians before they accepted Islam ... They remained Iranians even after becoming Moslems and accepting the intellectual and religious bent of the Shi'a creed. Our Iranian essence was not absorbed in the digestive systems of religious or Western cultures; many of our native customs and folkways have persisted, especially the Persian language, which is one of the most important foundations of our nationhood. ... Our calendar is uniquely Persian, No Ruz prevails as our most important holiday, and our literature is permeated with expressions born of ancient Iranian cultures and customs.³⁹⁵

Soroush's use of 'national culture' here should be clarified. It can only be assumed that it is the culture of the people that is implied. On the other hand, the reference to national could also be being used in relation to *Īrānīyat* and *millīyat*, or Iran distinct from the religious culture, namely *Īslāmīyat*. It must be mentioned, however, that the original text is not available and therefore it is not possible to be sure of the Persian terminology. Nevertheless, this is what is suggested by the context. This raises the methodological issue of how *millat* or *millī* are to be translated. They cannot be seen to be synonymous with the English 'nation'. Despite this, it is not clear whether Soroush advocates the politicisation of culture, therefore, how he perceives identity can only be referred to as Iranian identity as opposed to Iranian national identity. Nonetheless, it is worthy of inclusion here because it illustrates that Khatami's discourse is not necessarily unique.

The above extract also reflects a common narrative in general discussions on Iranian national identity; Iran has always been able to resist the onslaught from external forces. For example, it is often said that when the Arabs brought Islam, it was Iranianised. Thus, it must be considered that if *Īslāmīyat* is essentially Iranianised Islam, then the division between *Īslāmīyat* and *Īrānīyat* is not so clearly defined. Soroush stresses the importance of *Īrānīyat* again by showing how despite the arrival of Islam the country has still been able to remain Iranian. His use of 'native' also implies original; thus, the original culture was *Īrānīyat*. However, bearing in mind the previous extract, unlike the Iranist discourse, there is no call for a return to the customs of pre-Islamic Iran, nor is there the call for Iran without *Īslāmīyat*.

Finally, the issues of inclusivity and exclusivity must be raised. Although Soroush includes *Īrānīyat*, *Īslāmīyat* and Western culture, his notion of Iranian national identity remains exclusive. His stress on the 'Persian' – language and calendar – gives a strong Persianate sense to being Iranian. This remains exclusive as Iran's other languages seem

³⁹⁵ Op. cit. Sadri and Sadri, p. 157

to have been forgotten. Also, the reference to Islam in terms of Shi‘ism again is exclusive; being Iranian is seen here in terms of the “Iranianised Islam”. Thus, non-Muslims and Sunnis are excluded. Therefore, in this sense the national culture of Iran, is in fact Persianate and Shi‘i.

1.27 ‘Dialogue among Civilisations’

Having deconstructed culture and the relationship with the construction of Iranian national identity, this chapter now turns to the second pillar of the Islamist-Iranian discourse of national identity – the notion of ‘dialogue among civilisations’. Discussion of this notion tends to be in terms of its impact on Iran’s international relations and approaches to international relations in general. For example, in the interview with Abtahi, when asked whether or not the notion of ‘dialogue among civilisations’ could be considered as part of Iran’s national identity, he simply answered ‘no – it is about international relations’.³⁹⁶ However, the contention here is that the discourse of ‘dialogue among civilisations’ reflects a set of values, or ideology, regarding how the Iranian nation is perceived and constructed.

The meanings attached to ‘dialogue among civilisations’ and how this relates to Iran as a nation are complex and multi-layered. Through a discourse analysis of the texts, not only is it possible to determine how the notion of ‘dialogue among civilisations’; as a set of values is embedded in Khatami’s construction of Iranian national, but also to determine the meanings that are attached to the notion. The contention regarding these meanings is multi-fold.

The first contention is that the notion of ‘dialogue among civilisations’ represents dialogues on many levels. On one level, it can be interpreted as a quest for dialogue between *Īrānīyat* and *Īslāmīyat*, and thus a dialogue between the Iranist and Islamist discourses of national identity. On another level, it can be considered in terms of a dialogue with Iran’s post-revolution generation. Finally, ‘dialogue among civilisations’ represents a dialogue between Iran, whether it is considered as an Islamic or Iranian civilisation, and Western civilisation. It is worth considering here the personal role Khatami has played in this ‘dialogue’; it is quite possible that he sees himself as the means of carrying out dialogue between *Īrānīyat* and *Īslāmīyat*, between the two generations, or, in other words, between the Islamic Republic and a nation that is calling for something very different. It is also possible that Khatami sees himself as the means of

³⁹⁶ Interview by author with Seyyed Mohammad Ali Abtahi, Tehran, 26 November 2005

‘dialogue’ between Iran and the West. Furthermore, it is also worth considering, therefore, if he sees himself as the means of Iran’s “salvation”.

The second contention is that the meanings attached to the notion of ‘dialogue among civilisations’ is largely to do with how the ‘self’ is constructed in relation to the ‘other’. While the ‘self’ is fluid and complex, the ‘other’ is monolithic and static. Thus, Khatami’s construction of Western civilisation can be considered as ‘Orientalism in reverse’.³⁹⁷ Furthermore, it becomes clear that Iran is perceived not simply as a nation, but as a civilisation.

The third contention is that the notion of ‘dialogue among civilisations’ reflects the counter-hegemonic nature of the Islamist-Iranian discourse of national identity. On the one hand, the Islamist-Iranian discourse is resisting the perceived hegemony of the West. ‘Dialogue among civilisations’ is not only about having dialogue in international relations instead of seeing the world in terms of a clash of civilisations. Rather, it is also about Iran being considered as an *equal* in the international arena. Thus, this is linked to the notion of anti-imperialism and the quest for independence, which are essential in how the Iranian nation is constructed. On the other hand, by advocating a dialogue with the West, the Islamist-Iranian discourse of national identity is resisting the explicitly Occidentalist Islamist approach to the West. The fourth and final contention is that it is for these reasons that the notion of ‘dialogue among civilisations’ acts as the second pillar of the Islamist-Iranian discourse.

This section is divided into three parts. The first addresses the issue of dialogue between the two generations. The second illustrates how the notion of ‘dialogue among civilisations’ reflects the construction of the ‘self’ in terms of civilisation. The third pays attention to the other side of the ‘self-other’ dynamic by demonstrating how the West is perceived. This also demonstrates how the notion of ‘dialogue among civilisations’ reflects a hegemonic and counter-hegemonic dynamic.

1.27.1 Dialogue

Ansari notes that the notion of ‘dialogue among civilisations’ exposes the influence of Jürgen Habermas on Khatami.³⁹⁸ Habermas argues that communication is a means of transmitting ‘culturally stored knowledge’ and reproducing cultural tradition.³⁹⁹ Dialogue can be understood as a means of communicative action. As Farid Mirbagheri points out,

³⁹⁷ This term is borrowed from Boroujerdi 1996, p. 14

³⁹⁸ Op. cit. Ansari. *Islam, Iran and Democracy*. 2006, p. 133

³⁹⁹ Habermas, Jürgen. *The Theory of Communicative Action. Vol. 2. Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*. trans. by Thomas McCarthy. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987. p. 63

Khatami states that ‘Dialogue is a search for emotional and sincere trust.’⁴⁰⁰ As has been mentioned, Khatami attempts to create dialogue on more than one level. Thus, dialogue, in the case of Khatami’s Iran, can be interpreted as a quest for a dialogue between *Īslāmīyat* and *Īrānīyat* in the context of the construction of Iranian national identity, as has been illustrated in the previous section. ‘Dialogue among civilisations’ in terms of dialogue between Iran and the West and between East and West in general will be addressed below.

In addition to these levels of dialogue, there is also a quest for a dialogue between generations in Iran. To this regard, Khatami states in a speech in Hamadan on 27 July 1999:

The first accomplishment of the most important accomplishments of the second of Khordad was the restoration of the partition between two generations; this means the generation of the Revolution and the generation after the Revolution. The partition between the generations is the greatest curse of all revolutions.⁴⁰¹

It has been argued that a dialogue between these two generations has been achieved through the medium of art. Khatami’s presidency has been recognised in art circles for its attention to the arts. This is evident in the re-establishment of a public space for the expression and revival of Iranian art and culture, which is reflected in the plethora of art galleries mainly in northern Tehran, but also in the establishment of Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art (TMCA). In her doctoral thesis *Art and Identity*, Mehri Honarbin-Holliday addresses the role and impact of TMCA. She argues that the ‘TMCA perceives itself as the single most significant cultural institution and venue for contemporary art discourses in Iran.’⁴⁰² Thus, Khatami’s presidency, despite its failures in other areas, has had a measured success in its re-establishment of a public space for the expression and revival of Iranian art and culture. Honarbin-Holliday commends this because he has provided an avenue whereby the Islamic Republic has enabled a dialogue with the post-revolution generation.⁴⁰³

⁴⁰⁰ Khatami, Seyyed Mohammad. ‘Symposium: Islam, Iran and the Dialogue of Civilisations’ *Global Dialogue*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 2001, p. 1 cited in Mirbagheri, Farid. ‘Narrowing the Gap or Camouflaging the Divide: An Analysis of Mohammad Khatami’s ‘Dialogue of Civilisations’’, *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 34, 3, 2007. pp. 305-316, p. 308

⁴⁰¹⁴¹⁷ Khatami, Seyyed Mohammad. ‘Duvum-i Khurdād va Mardumsālārī Īslāmī - Sukhanrānī dar Didār-i ‘Umūmi ba Mardum-i Hamadān’ (Second of Khordad and Islamic *Mardumsālārī* – A Speech at a General Meeting with the People of Hamadan), 5 Mordad 1378 (27 July 1999) in Khatami, Mohammad. *Mardumsālārī (Democracy)*. Tehran: Tarh-e No Publishers, 1380 (2001/2002). pp. 99- 109, p. 101

⁴⁰² Honarbin-Holliday, Mehri. *Art and Identity: An Ethnographic Investigation into Art Education in the Islamic Republic of Iran, with the Researcher as a Participant Ceramic Artist in Canterbury*, PhD Thesis (unpublished), 2005. pp. 131-132

⁴⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 132

It is also possible that Khatami's focus on the promotion of culture, art and music is part of an attempt to preserve Iran's national identity and restore it to its former glory as part of the Islamic and/or Iranian civilisation(s) as a whole. The proliferation of art can be considered as the need to endeavour to attain high culture which has a strong association with civilisation and notions of "progress". Indeed times of national 'progress' in Iran's history can be coupled with times of a considerable production of high culture. In other words, it is often argued that the success of a civilisation is apparent in its high culture.

1.27.2 The Fluid 'Self': Islamic or Iranian Civilisation?

In the discussion on identity in Chapter Two, attention was brought to Ashraf's analysis of Iranian identity. He states: 'The 'self' and the 'other' are two sides of the same coin; and one without the other is meaningless'.⁴⁰⁴ A deconstruction of 'dialogue among civilisations' enables a deeper understanding of the dynamic between 'self' and 'other'. Before looking at the 'other', it is first necessary to look at the 'self'. It is Ansari's contention that 'an understanding of the 'self' was an essential prerequisite for a constructive and mutually beneficial understanding of the 'other'".⁴⁰⁵ Thus, the question that must be asked, therefore, is what the 'self' is.

This has been addressed to some extent in the previous section and the discussion of Iranian-Islamic identity. However, there are also other values embedded in the construction of Iranian national identity. First of all, is the issue of how Khatami defines civilisation. He states that civilisation includes: 'the material aspects of social life and all institutions and organisations that act as political, economic, industrial and other frameworks for social organisation'.⁴⁰⁶ Furthermore, they have always existed.⁴⁰⁷ Secondly, when Iran is referred to by Khatami as a civilisation, is it in terms of an Islamic civilisation or an Iranian civilisation? Just as the division between Iranian and Islamic identity is not clear-cut, there is considerable fluidity in the term civilisation. On the one hand, it appears that Iran is perceived in terms of an Islamic civilisation, yet on the other hand it is the Iranian civilisation.

The perception of Iran as a civilisation in its own right is very clear. This is reflected in how Khatami approaches the issue of the Iranian diaspora. There is much discussion regarding whether or not a nation's diaspora can in fact be considered as part of the nation. In Khatami's case it is clear that they are indeed an integral part. The following

⁴⁰⁴ Op. cit. Ashraf 1373 (1994/1995), pp. 7-8

⁴⁰⁵ Op. cit. Ansari. *Islam, Iran and Democracy*. 2006, p. 132

⁴⁰⁶ Op. cit. Khatami 1998, p. 20

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 83

two extracts are taken from his speech to inaugurate the state Jam-i Jam television network on 21 April 1998. As mentioned above, the context of this speech must be taken into consideration. He states:

Iranians wherever they may be are dear to us and respected. ... I am very worried about a generation that is taking form and growing among Iranians outside the country; I am worried that this generation in the future will not know that they are Iranian, or why they should take pride in their being Iranian; I am worried that this generation will lose the motherland ... because a people without a motherland is entitled to pity.⁴⁰⁸

The following excerpt further illustrates how important Khatami considers the diaspora in that he wants them to have access to Iran by means of the newly inaugurated Jam-i Jam Network. He states:

It is our duty to maintain our links with those of the same motherland resident outside the country (*hamvatanān*). ... I hope that the ... Jam-i Jam Network, however small, will maintain and widen this link ... I hope that this link takes place especially with the Iranian youth who are born and growing up far from the motherland until we all, wherever we are ... hopefully move towards a better and more brilliant future.⁴⁰⁹

The Persian language term used by Khatami to describe those outside Iran is *hamvatanān*, which literally means those of the same motherland. This can be interpreted as an indication of Khatami's vision of Iran as nation, which includes those outside the territorial boundaries of Iran; i.e. the diaspora. In this case, Khatami perceives the Jam-i Jam television network as a means of maintaining a dialogue with the diaspora. This also reflects the theme of dialogue with Iran's post-revolution generation addressed previously. Khatami's concern for the diaspora is endearing. However, it is possible that his attitude towards the diaspora is simply part of a wider ambition: the preservation of the Iranian nation and civilisation. The following extract illustrates the importance of the diaspora in relation to this:

Iran is connected to all Iranians ... One of the important ways of expansion of the Iranian-Islamic culture and civilisation was these very emigrants [the diaspora], that is through Iranian trade and tourism which has travelled to different points of the world, [and] has truly brought our cultural heritage to other nations.⁴¹⁰

The significance of this discussion of the diaspora in this context lies in Khatami's attitude towards them. First of all, not only does he perceive the diaspora as important to the preservation of Iran as a nation and civilisation, but also as a means of its expansion.

⁴⁰⁸ Op. cit. Khatami 1376 (1997), p. 19

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 20

⁴¹⁰ Ibid., p. 20

Thus, the subtle parallel between the Islamist-Iranian discourse of national identity and the Iranist discourse cannot be ignored. It seems that there is the desire for Iranian civilisation to extend beyond the current territorial boundaries of Iran. Secondly, Khatami's reference to 'Iranian-Islamic culture and civilisation' once again demonstrates how the Iranian and the Islamic, whether culture or civilisation, are intertwined. This illustrates the fluidity of the notion of civilisation as an identity.

Finally, in many ways the diaspora can be considered almost as the mediator between Iranian/Islamic civilisation and Western civilisation. The role of the diaspora as mediator is also reflected in the several receptions held at the Iranian Embassy in London during Khatami's presidency. On one occasion, the scholars of Iranian studies, many of whom are in fact part of the diaspora, were considered in the Ambassador's address as a means dialogue between Iran and the West.⁴¹¹

Indeed, Iran as a nation is not always perceived in terms of *Iranian* civilisation. For example, in his speech as Chairman of the Eighth Session of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) Summit in Tehran on 9 December 1997 *Iranian* civilisation is not raised. Rather the 'self' is portrayed in terms of an *Islamic* civilisation. Khatami states:

Our predicament is that the Islamic *'umma*, once a flag-bearer of knowledge, thought, and civilisation, has in recent centuries relapsed into weakness and backwardness and worse still, has even failed, due to the consequent painful state of passivity *vis-à-vis* the ostentatious dominant civilisation of the time, to properly utilise the fruits of this civilisation.⁴¹²

Later, in the same speech he states:

It is imperative to discern that between Islamic civilisation or to be exact, civilisation of Muslims – and our life today – there stands what is called 'Western civilisation', a civilisation whose accomplishments are not few, and whose negative consequences, particularly for non-Westerners, are plentiful. Our era is an era of the preponderance of Western culture and civilisation, an understanding of which is imperative.⁴¹³

It is clear here that Iran is perceived as part of the Islamic *'umma* or community, and therefore also as part of an Islamic civilisation. Thus, the 'self' in the Islamist-Iranian discourse of national identity is far from static. However, although this is the case, the context of the speech must be considered. Khatami is speaking at an Islamic Summit Conference; rhetoric that portrays Iran as an Iranian civilisation would not be popular in this context. It must also be noted that Islamic civilisation is inclusive of Arabs. Thus,

⁴¹¹ Op. cit. Honarbin-Holliday, p. 12

⁴¹² Op. cit. Khatami. *Islam, Dialogue and Civil Society*. 2000, p. 14

⁴¹³ Ibid., p. 15

unlike some articulations of the Iranist discourse of national identity, as illustrated in the previous two chapters, Arabs are not seen as the external ‘other’ in the same way. Nonetheless, as outlined by Abtahi in the introduction to the collection of Khatami’s speeches entitled *Islam, Clericism and Islamic Revolution*, Iran’s role in the creation of the Islamic civilisation was one of the most important.⁴¹⁴ To this regard there is a sense of Iranian superiority over others, namely Arabs.

1.27.3 Resistance to the Static ‘Other’

The OIC Summit speech leads us to how the ‘other’ is constructed; while the ‘self’ is fluid, the ‘other’ is static. The ‘other’ in this case is the West, which is also perceived as a civilisation. Western civilisation is perceived as a hegemon that has negative repercussions for the non-Western. This reflects an ongoing theme that portrays the world at this time in history as being dominated by a monolithic Western civilisation.

This speech also demonstrates the counter-hegemonic nature of the Islamist-Iranian discourse. In the two extracts given above, the domination of Western civilisation is being resisted. In the first extract Khatami refers to a ‘dominant civilisation’. In the second he states: ‘Our era is an era of the preponderance of Western culture and civilisation, an understanding of which is imperative.’⁴¹⁵ It can be assumed that the ‘dominant civilisation’ is indeed that of the West. This is further illustrated in the following extract of the same speech. Khatami states:

The relations between the Islamic world and others is also fraught with mistrust, misunderstanding, and misconceived perceptions, part of which is rooted in history and another part which emanates from hegemonic relationships, or are a consequence of the fanning of chronic misunderstandings by hegemons. In this connection, though providing the necessary grounds for dialogue among civilisations and culture ... we should open the way towards a fundamental understanding which lies at the very foundation of genuine peace, which is in turn based on the realisation of the rights of all nations, and thus render ineffective the grounds for the influence of negative propaganda in public opinion.⁴¹⁶

In this last extract from the OIC Summit, Khatami refers to what he considers ‘chronic misunderstandings by hegemons’. This reinforces the perception by Khatami that Western civilisation is a hegemon. His means of resisting this is through dialogue on *equal* terms, as will be illustrated below.

⁴¹⁴ Op. cit. Abtahi 1379 (2000/2001). p. 7

⁴¹⁵ Op. cit. Khatami. *Islam, Dialogue and Civil Society*. 2000, p. 15

⁴¹⁶ Ibid., p. 21

This is also an example of the importance of ‘dialogue among civilisation’ in the context of international relations. Khatami asks Muslim countries to ‘address and find remedies for’ issues such as ‘a new and just world order’ and ‘security and peace in the region and the world’.⁴¹⁷ The above extract is in response to this latter quest. Thus, ‘dialogue among civilisations’ is perceived as a means of dealing with the issue of security. This is in sharp contrast to Huntington’s view of the world as a ‘clash of civilisations’.⁴¹⁸ Ansari argues that ‘dialogue’ as opposed to ‘clash’ was a ‘clever response to Huntington’s thesis ... and represented the appropriation of a discourse familiar in Western intellectual and policy circles. This appropriation gave Khatami’s argument immediate relevance’.⁴¹⁹ Khatami’s interview with CNN on 7 January 1998 is a significant occasion of ‘dialogue among civilisation’ in the context of international relations.⁴²⁰ Following the interview, according to Ansari, ‘there were vibrant discussions on the relationship with the United States, Britain and surprisingly Israel’.⁴²¹

It cannot be denied that international relations are a fundamental part of the concept and important to Khatami. However, ‘dialogue among civilisations’ is not simply about having dialogue in international relations, it is also about Iran being considered as an *equal* in the international arena. This is clearly articulated in his definition of the term ‘dialogue among civilisations’ in a speech given in 2001, when it was confirmed that there should be a ‘Year of Dialogue among Civilisations’⁴²²:

‘Dialogue among Civilisations’ means equality between peoples and nations. In other words, one conducts a dialogue only when one respects the other party and considered the other party as equal to oneself.⁴²³

Of particular interest here is the phrase ‘equality between peoples and nations’. This notion of equality is also demonstrated in the previous extract from the OIC Summit speech in the phrase ‘the realisation of the rights of all nations’. This shows Khatami’s determination that Iran must be seen as an independent nation. Furthermore, while Khatami believes in dialogue, there is a certain amount of assumption that in fact Islamic civilisation, and therefore Iran’s culture, is more superior to that of the West. This is

⁴¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 19-23

⁴¹⁸ Op. cit. Huntington, pp. 22-49

⁴¹⁹ Op. cit. Ansari. *Islam, Iran and Democracy*. 2006, p. 133

⁴²⁰ *Transcript of Interview with Iranian President Mohammad Khatami*. January 7, 1998. <http://www.cnn.com/WORLD/9801/07/iran/interview.html> - date accessed 1 May 2007.

⁴²¹ Op. cit. Ansari. *Confronting Iran*. 2006, p. 159. For more on the CNN interview and a discussion of ‘dialogue among civilisations’ in the context of international relations and US-Iranian relations, see pp. 153-159 and Ansari. *Islam, Iran and Democracy*. 2006, pp. 131-134

⁴²² Op. cit. Khatami. *Islam, Dialogue and Civil Society*. 2000, p. 1

⁴²³ Ibid., p. 2. Unfortunately no further details are available for the speech; no date or location is given. Therefore it is difficult to contextualise the speech.

reflected in his conviction in the same speech that ‘Western Civilisation is strongly indebted to Islamic civilisation’.

Thus, on the one hand, the Islamist-Iranian discourse is counter-hegemonic in the sense that it is resisting the perceived hegemony of Western civilisation. On the other hand, it is counter-hegemonic in the sense that it also resisting the other state discourse – the Islamist discourse of national identity. Hence, the significance of Khatami’s approach to civilisation becomes particularly apparent when it is compared to that of Khamene’i. While the notion of civilisation is integral to Iranian national identity in both the Islamist and Islamist-Iranian discourses, it is more of a ‘clash’ of civilisations for Khamene’i as opposed to a ‘dialogue’ for Khatami, in terms of international relations. The resistance to the Islamist discourse in this sense is demonstrated in a speech at the European University Institute in Florence on 19 March 1999 where Khatami talks about the relationship between East and West:

In Orientalism, we find that the East is treated as an object of study, rather than as ‘the other side’ of a dialogue. For a real dialogue among civilisations to take place, it is imperative that the East should become a real participant in the discussions and not just remain an object of study. This is a very important step that Europe and America need to take towards the realisation of the ‘dialogue-among-civilisations’ project. Of course this is not a one way invitation. We too, as Iranians, as Muslims and as Asians, need to make major steps towards gaining true knowledge of the West, as it really is.⁴²⁴

The final statement implies that others, such as those who articulate the Islamist discourse of national identity, create an inaccurate picture of the West. Ironically though, Khatami is doing the same in his construction of Western civilisation as a monolithic entity. His resistance to the Islamist approach is further articulated in the following extract:

The rigidly traditional want us to return to the past. The Westernised prescribe that we melt into the West, but those who really care about the welfare of their national and religious culture believe that we must incorporate the West to be able to transcend it, remaining aware of our own religious sources, as well as the questions and puzzles of today’s world. We must adopt all the positive achievements of the West, but see them in relation to our own heritage so we can fill in its deficiencies. That is why we must place greater focus on the future of the West than on its past.⁴²⁵

What is interesting here is that it seems that Khatami is criticising the idea that the need to remain in the past and thus tradition, and perceives it negatively. What Khatami is calling for is a compromise; the need to maintain what is Iranian without assimilating into Western culture and to take from the West what is necessary for progress. This extract

⁴²⁴ Ibid., p. 11

⁴²⁵ Ibid., p. 37

plainly reflects the counter-hegemonic dimension of the Islamist-Iranian discourse. Not only is he resisting the so called ‘rigidly traditional’, which can be taken to mean those that prescribe an Islamist or Iranist interpretation of national identity, but he is also resisting the West.

1.28 *Mardumsālārī* and National Identity

The focus of this section is the third and final pillar of the Islamist-Iranian discourse of national identity - *mardumsālārī*/democracy. As far as the researcher is aware, the relationship between democracy and national identity, in relation to Khatami, has not been discussed in detail. Before proceeding, however, it is necessary to clarify the terminology. As mentioned in Chapter Two, ‘an understanding of the dynamics of language is crucial ... for understanding ... the structure of political societies and ideological machinery and political thought.’⁴²⁶ Whereas previously *huvīyat-i millī* was considered, here attention must be paid to *mardumsālārī* and democracy. The word ‘democracy’ is often used in the Persian language to refer to democracy in general terms or Western notions of democracy; however, this is not always the case. If this term is used it will be referred to in the English as ‘democracy’. In the case of Khatami’s reference to this notion, the term ‘*mardumsālārī*’ is usually used. This literally means that the people are at the top of the hierarchy. Thus, its root is essentially the same as the root of democracy. However, in order to avoid confusion, the term *mardumsālārī* will be used if it has been used in the Persian language.

The argument in this section is four-fold. The first contention is that *Īslāmīyat* is politicised; the Reform Movement sees Islam as the framework for the political system, and more particularly their construction of Islamic *mardumsālārī*. Thus, this discourse has been labelled *Islamist-Iranian*, as opposed to *Iranian-Islamic*. *Islamist-Iranian* also implies the prioritisation of Islam. The second contention is that *mardumsālārī* is a means of popularising the construction of national identity. The third contention is that *mardumsālārī* is linked to the notion of anti-imperialism. The fourth and final contention is that because of these factors *mardumsālārī* forms the third pillar of the Islamist-Iranian discourse of national identity. The discussion here, therefore, is not one of whether or not Islam and democracy are compatible. The deconstruction of *mardumsālārī* can, however, contribute to discussions on Islamic democracy.

⁴²⁶ Op. cit. Sadiki, p. 96

1.28.1 Defining *Mardumsālārī*

Before looking at how *mardumsālārī* forms this third pillar it is first necessary to determine how it is defined. Much of the data on Khatami's *mardumsālārī* used here is taken from the book of the same name published in 2001/2002, which is a collection of speeches by Khatami in which he has spoken about the subject. As is the case with other such books, Abtahi provides the introduction. He contends that the main pillars of *mardumsālārī* are 'freedom, equality, and possession of rights' through which the people are able to truly enjoy civil and political rights.⁴²⁷ It is also Abtahi's contention that democracy is the process of the people choosing their leader; a leader may have rights but they do not have legitimacy as long as they are not chosen by the people.⁴²⁸ This is also reflected in and expanded by Khatami's speeches.

On 29 August 1998, Khatami raises the issue of the role of the government and the relationship between the government and the people in a speech at the inaugural session of the Congress of Martyr Raja'i. Raja'i, who is considered a militant fundamentalist by Gheissari and Nasr, was Iran's second president and took office in 1981 when he replaced Abol-Hassan Bani-Sadr. He was assassinated and replaced by Seyyed Ali Khamene'i, the current Supreme Leader.⁴²⁹ Khatami states:

We must identify whether in our [political] system government means "government over the people" or "government for the people"? Does government mean accessing provision for the rulers to do what he wants to do and the people submit to that? Does government mean the ruler has the rights and the people only duty/obligation? Or is it that the government is for the people? From where have the powers of the ruler come? What role do the people have in giving powers?⁴³⁰

A couple of paragraphs later he suggests "government *for* the people" as the preferred system of government and explains what he means:

"Government for the people" means that the people have rights; it means that the government has duties/obligation towards the people; it means the people have a role in the legitimacy of government. Such views are compatible with democratic government. Such a view also exists in Islam and our Constitution also confirms this view. This means that people have a role in the realisation of government; this means the people's vote/will is the decider. Even if this vote is not given to the leader, the leader's word will not impact/influence society. Of course in our view, in addition to the vote/will of the people, there are additional values and principles in the realisation of the government. But if those values

⁴²⁷ Abtahi, Mohammad Ali. 'Introduction' in *Mardumsālārī (Democracy)*. Tehran: Tarh-e No Publishers, 1380 (2001). pp. 7-9, p. 7

⁴²⁸ Interview by author with Seyyed Mohammad Ali Abtahi, Tehran, 26 November 2005

⁴²⁹ Op. cit. Gheissari and Nasr, p. 92

⁴³⁰ Khatami, Mohammad. *Mardumsālārī (Democracy)*. Tehran: Tarh-e No Publishers, 1380 (2001), p. 17

exist, and the will of the people does not then the ruler has no right to impose himself on the people.⁴³¹

While Khatami draws parallels between the characteristics of “government *for* the people” and democracy, Islam and the Constitution, “government *for* the people” is also associated ‘with additional values and principles’. Thus, his preferred system of government as reflected in this speech is not simply “government *for* the people”; rather it is subject to specific values, presumably Islam. Also of interest in the discussions regarding systems of government is that although Khatami advocates “government *for* the people”, which is more democratic and more inclusive than “government *over* the people”, it is presumably less democratic than “government *by* the people”.

It must be stressed here that the call for Islamic *mardumsālārī* also represents a resistance to the Islamic theocracy advocated by Khamene’i. Indeed, as is the contention of Mohsen Milani, the presidential race for the 1997 elections did not reflect a debate ‘for or against Islam, for or against the *vilāyat-i faqīh*, for or against secularism. Rather, it was a debate of Islam against Islam.’⁴³² He argues that one version of Islam calls for the compatibility of the *vilāyat-i faqīh* and popular sovereignty, an attempt at the adoption of modernity; whereas the other version of Islam restricts the sovereignty of the people to that which is defined by the *faqīh*. As Milani suggests, the presidency of Khatami represents Islamic discourses that contest each other. The contention here is that they are discourses of national identity rather than simply religious discourses or discourses of religious identity, because their conviction is that the nation of Iran, that is not just the government apparatus, should subscribe to the discourse and accept it as their identity.

However, despite Khatami’s resistance on the level of the idea of system of government, he has to maintain a certain amount of support for the regime. This is reflected in his speech at Hamadan when he states:

I announce that the state and the President of the Republic have complete synchronisation with the Supreme Leader and are the enforcer of his views and on another point the nation and the President of the Republic also support without regret the Leader of the Revolution.⁴³³

In the speech at the inaugural session of the Congress of Martyr Raja’i, Khatami considers historical precedence for “government *for* the people” and finds a source of legitimacy. He states:

⁴³¹ Ibid., p. 18

⁴³² Op. cit. Milani, p. 30

⁴³³ Op. cit. Khatami 1378 (1999), p. 103

I personally believe that at the time of the Prophet and admitting the innocence of his holiness this [government for the people] was not the case neither was it during the time of Ali ibn Abi Talib. Furthermore, the Shi‘ites have not seen such rule as appropriate. At the time of the Imam [Khomeini] the issue of the form of government was clearly presented and as it is also stated in the constitution the will of the people in the realisation of government is recognised. It is possible that some believe that the will of the people has not been influential or instrumental in the realisation of government. This discussion is valuable and must be respected in terms of theory but our basis of the understanding of the Islamic view is that which is in the Constitution; this means that the people have rights against the government and the government also has rights in addition duties. At the very least the Shi‘ites are unified in this. Approximately 1100 years before the idea of civil society with its contemporary meaning was even discussed, Ali ibn Abi Talib said “I have rights as your representative (*valī*), and you as citizens who are ruled have rights”.⁴³⁴

This part of the speech is very interesting because although *mardumsālārī* is Islamic *mardumsālārī*, as will be illustrated below, Khatami does not draw legitimacy from the time of the Caliphs. Quite to the contrary, he acknowledges that at the time of Ali no such “government for the people” existed. Instead, he takes legitimacy from the time of Imam Khomeini, and therefore the Islamic Revolution, and most importantly, the product of the Revolution – the Constitution. This is particularly significant because it illustrates that as far as Khatami is concerned, Islam to a certain extent, is under negotiation. Nevertheless, Khatami does draw legitimacy for the idea of civil society from Ali himself who is reported to have said ‘you as citizens who are ruled have rights’.

In summary, *mardumsālārī* is “government for the people”, which is to be achieved through civil society and is upheld by the Constitution. Furthermore, an important factor in understanding the Reform Movement’s democracy is that Islam is considered as inherently democratic. For example, when asked about Islamic democracy, Abtahi’s response was simply that he believes in democracy and that the Islam that he believes in is democratic.⁴³⁵

However, Khatami’s notion of democracy must be placed into context. It is worthy of mention here that Khatami cannot take full credit for the notion of democracy within the framework of Islam in the Islamic world let alone in Iran. Indeed, the idea of the compatibility of Islam and democracy is part of a wider movement. Predating the speeches analysed here, in the early 1990s, were discussions regarding the nature of the Islamic Republic and its relationship carried out by the *Rawshānfikrān-i Dīnī*, one of

⁴³⁴ Ibid., pp. 18-19

⁴³⁵ Interview by author with Seyyed Mohammad Ali Abtahi, Tehran, 26 November 2005

whom is Soroush. Indeed, Khatami's ideas and language regarding 'democracy' and 'rule of law' are said to be 'largely drawn from Soroush and his co-thinkers'.⁴³⁶

Soroush's critique of the Islamic Republic in this period was in response to a speech delivered by Mehdi Bazargan in 1992 in which he stated that:

The only purpose of sending prophets is to alert people to the existence of God and prepare them for the hereafter, not to tell them how to conduct their politics and run their affairs in this world.⁴³⁷

As Mir-Hosseini and Tapper observe, Bazargan's speech was 'in-line with the argument of Soroush and his co-thinkers [who] had been developing a critique of the ideologisation of religion and its use as a political tool and a legitimising force'.⁴³⁸ Bazargan's lecture initiated a series of discussions that culminated in a seminar series in April 1995 that questioned the 'project of political Islam'.⁴³⁹ The series called for a discussion of five political theories among which were 'Sovereignty of religious values by means of the sovereignty of the people (religious democratic government)' and 'Separation of religion from government (liberalism and secularism)'.⁴⁴⁰

Among those who were invited was Hojjatoleslam Hasan Yousefi Eshkevari, often referred to as a 'dissident cleric', who was later arrested in April 2005 for participating in the Berlin Conference. During the seminar series Eshkevari delivered a paper entitled 'Islamic democratic government'. In this paper he, although denying that 'Islam prescribes any specific form of government', called for the fourth political theory.⁴⁴¹ Thus, he objected to the attempts by Bazargan and Soroush to 'distance religion from politics and tried to redeem the project of political Islam'.⁴⁴² In his paper he states:

Democracy too is one of the most controversial concepts. But it appears that – irrespective of various definitions – two features are inseparable from the spirit and essence of democracy: (1) the worldly popular origin of state, government and power; [and] (2) pluralism and the widest possible distribution of political

⁴³⁶ Op. cit. Mir-Hosseini and Tapper, p. 29

⁴³⁷ Bazargan, Mehdi. *Akhīrāt va Khudā: Hadaf-i Bi'sat-i Anbā (The Afterlife and God: The Purpose and Appointment of Prophets)*. Tehran: Resa. 1377 (1998), Preface cited in Mir-Hosseini, Ziba and Tapper, Richard. *Islam and Democracy in Iran: Eshkevari and the Quest for Reform*. London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2006, p. 65.

⁴³⁸ Op. cit. Mir-Hosseini and Tapper 2006, p. 66

⁴³⁹ Ibid., p. 70-72

⁴⁴⁰ Anjuman-i Islāmī-yi Muhandisīn. *Dīn va Hukūmat: Majmū'ih-yi Maqalāt va Sukhanrānihā dar Simīnār-i Dīn va Hukūmat dar Anjuman-i Islāmī-yi Muhandisīn (Religion and Government: Collected Papers and Lectures in the Religion and Government Seminar of the Islamic Association of Engineers)*. Tehran: Reza Cultural Services Company. 1378 (1999). cited in Mir-Hosseini, Ziba and Tapper, Richard. *Islam and Democracy in Iran: Eshkevari and the Quest for Reform*. London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2006, pp. 70-71

⁴⁴¹ Ibid., p. 72

⁴⁴² Ibid., p. 72

power among the people. Democratic methods, therefore, are ways and means for the distribution of power and the execution of the popular right of sovereignty and the fulfilment of duties of the government chosen by the people
.....⁴⁴³

He goes on to state:

... it must be said that not only are Islam and democracy in the realm of state and government not incompatible, but, on the contrary, Muslim government cannot be undemocratic.⁴⁴⁴

From this paper it is clear that Khatami's ideas regarding democracy are very similar to those of Eshkevari. However, also invited to take part in the seminar series was Hojjatoleslam Mohsen Kadivar, who equated *vilāyat* with *saltanat*⁴⁴⁵, the very political system despised and being resisted by the Islamist discourse of national identity.

Kadivar addresses 'the incompatibility between *vilāyat-i faqīh* and democracy, and the compatibility between Islam, on the one hand, and modernity (secular) human rights, and democracy on the other.'⁴⁴⁶ A paper entitled, *The Vilāyat-i Faqīh and Democracy*, given in Cambridge in November 2002 demonstrates a different approach to democracy in the context of Iran to that of Khatami and Eshkevari. The paper sets out to analyse three approaches to the relationship between *vilāyat-i faqīh* and democracy. Kadivar's aim is to criticise the first two and to advocate the third. The first approach is that of those who believe that *vilāyat-i faqīh* 'is the only form of Islamic government' and 'the official view of the Islamic Republic of Iran'. As Kadivar notes, 'According to this interpretation, the *vilāyat-i faqīh* is not compatible with democracy.'⁴⁴⁷ The second approach, according Kadivar, is that of the 'traditional Iranian reformists'. He states:

[this approach] is based on the opinion that neither the absolute appointive *vilāyat-i faqīh* nor democracy is entirely acceptable, but by altering and combining the two one can arrive at a type of Islamic democracy that can be labelled "elective, conditional *vilāyat-i faqīh*".⁴⁴⁸

This is essentially the view of Khatami. The third and final approach is that advocated by Kadivar himself and is that 'of the Iranian Muslim intellectuals'. This approach:

rests on the opinion that the *vilāyat-i faqīh* in the political sphere, be it appointive or elective, absolute or conditional, is not supported by valid religious proof. Islam has basically not offered a fixed and specific model for the political management of society, even though it is not compatible with every

⁴⁴³ Eshkevari, Hasan Yousefi. *Islamic Democratic Government*. 1995. cited in Mir-Hosseini, p. 82

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 86

⁴⁴⁵ Op. cit. Mir-Hosseini and Tapper, pp. 35-36

⁴⁴⁶ Matsunaga, p. 320

⁴⁴⁷ Kadivar, Mohsen. *The Vilāyat-i Faqīh and Democracy*. Cambridge. 17 November 2002. <http://iran-opp.blogspot.com/2005/01/mohsen-kadivar-velayat-e-faqih-and.html> - date accessed 25 May 2008

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid.

kind of politics. The *vilāyat-i faqīh*, being an autocratic rule of God based on the divine rights of the jurists, is incompatible with democracy. Democracy, being based on principles such as popular sovereignty and participation, the rule of law and human rights, is evidently incompatible with clerical rule and the *vilāyat-i faqīh*, which is a type of religious dictatorship. The illusion of compatibility of the *vilāyat-i faqīh* with democracy is due to the lack of familiarity with the jurisprudential terminology, on the one hand, and the theory of democracy, on the other. The fundamental incompatibility between democracy and the *vilāyat-i faqīh* is not an obstacle to the democratic management of an Islamic society. The majority of its Muslim citizens can have a democratic government while remaining committed to their Islamic faith and ethical values. Islam as a religion can be integrated with democracy as the method of modern political life.

The significance of this is that the Reform movement as a whole is not monolithic. Indeed, it must be stressed that the Islamist-Iranian discourse of national identity is that of Khatami and not necessarily applicable to all Reformists.

1.28.2 *Mardumsālārī* and National Independence

As has been mentioned, the contention here is that *mardumsālārī* illustrates anti-imperialist sentiment. This link between *mardumsālārī* and national independence is clearly expressed in his speech in Hamadan on 27 July 1999. The Islamic nature of Khatami's *mardumsālārī* is also made clear. He states:

Our Revolution was the Revolution of independence, freedom and the Islamic Republic. Independence is the demand of all Reformers, on the subject of these last two hundred years, Seyyed Jamal ad-Din Asadabady [Afghani] was among the offspring of the great land of Hamadan. Our Revolution was the Revolution of freedom; freedom is the great aim of God's prophets. ... Our Revolution was the Revolution of the people for the sovereignty over their own destiny, the Revolution of the rise of the government from the heart of the people and the responsibility of the government for the people. Our Revolution was the Revolution of attendance, the Revolution of participation, the Revolution of the sovereignty of the people over their destiny in the framework of the excellent Islamic standards and values that the people, independent, free and with respect have demanded.⁴⁴⁹

Later in the same speech he states:

The message of the Islamic Revolution is Islamic *mardumsālārī* and the stabilisation and strengthening of independence and the provision of freedom at the same time as spirituality; the outcome of the Islamic Revolution is the Islamic Republic and Constitution as the codified charter of this regime.⁴⁵⁰

This extract is important to understanding the meanings attached to the notion of Islamic *mardumsālārī*. The first paragraph (actually the second paragraph of the speech) is leading up to Khatami's statement that the 'the message of the Islamic Revolution is

⁴⁴⁹ Op. cit. Khatami 1378 (1999), p. 100

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 100

Islamic *mardumsālārī*. This is done by talking about Revolution in terms of independence and freedom. He also makes the most of the location of the speech, Hamadan, by bringing in Afghani who, as illustrated in Chapter Three, was an important figure in advocating Muslim independence against foreign encroachments. Thus, the Revolution is established as the most recent event in the two hundred year struggle for independence. Furthermore, legitimacy is given through his statement that freedom was the aim of the prophets. The notion of freedom is then expanded. Not only is it seen as freedom from imperialism, but also in terms of freedom from authoritarianism. This is reflected in phrases such as ‘sovereignty over their own destiny’, ‘attendance’, ‘participation’, which are all also characteristic of democratic practice and values. Finally, it becomes clear that these are within the framework of Islamic *mardumsālārī*. Consequently, Khatami has legitimised Islamic *mardumsālārī* by linking it to the Revolution and to the struggle for independence. Furthermore, it is also clear here that Islam is not being perceived in a cultural sense, but rather in a political sense.

As has been illustrated in Chapter Three, democracy is by no means new to Iran. However, for some, such as Abtahi, it was the Revolution that was the first stage of democracy in Iran.⁴⁵¹ Iran also has a history of democracy being linked to independence and nationalism. The nationalism of the Popular Movement, Musaddiq and the National Front can be considered as a discourse of national identity that has democracy as integral to the construction of Iranian national identity. To this regard, it is worth referring back to the following statement:

We are Muslims, Iranians, constitutionalists, and Musaddiqists: Muslims because we refuse to divorce our principles from politics; Iranians because we respect our national heritage; constitutionalist because we demand freedom of thought, expression, and association; Musaddiqists because we want national independence.⁴⁵²

The similarity between Khatami’s Hamadan speech and this statement of the second National Front cannot be denied. However, democracy of previous periods has tended to be associated with a more secular understanding. In spite of this, the activities of Musaddiq have been praised:

While strict Islamists might debunk and reject the secularism of Dr Musaddiq, most reformists encouraged his rehabilitation as a democratic hero undermined by foreign allies and their conservative allies in Iran. The analogy being drawn was obvious. The Islamic Republic itself was the third significant attempt of the century to achieve political emancipation, stability and democratic order.⁴⁵³

⁴⁵¹ Interview by author with Seyyed Mohammad Ali Abtahi, Tehran, 26 November 2005

⁴⁵² Cited in Abrahamian 1982, p. 460

⁴⁵³ Op. cit. Ansari. *Islam, Iran and Democracy*. 2006, p. 112

As mentioned above, the association between democracy and independence continues to be an important discourse during the Khatami period. Furthermore, it is not just Khatami that advocates this. Like Khatami, Hasan Yousefi Eshkevari advocates these attributes within the context of Islam, and in particular reformist Islam. Before looking at this in any detail it is first necessary to give a brief background to this cleric. Ziba Mir-Hosseini and Richard Tapper argue that this mid-ranking cleric ‘is an outspoken and influential critic of the current Iranian version of theocracy.’ He was arrested in December 2000 following his speeches at the Berlin Conference of April 2000 for ‘apostasy’ and ‘war against Islam’. At first, he was condemned to death, but his sentence was later to be reduced to five years imprisonment.⁴⁵⁴ The arrest of Eshkevari suggests the counter-hegemonic nature of his ideas of Islam and democracy in relation to the more hegemonic Islamist discourse of national identity.

Eshkevari argues that in the last 150 years, since Muslims encountered Western civilisation, they have been ‘confronted by two different faces of Europe. One was its advanced science, civilisation and culture; the other was domination and colonialism.’⁴⁵⁵ He argues that in response to this there have been several Islamic reactions: ‘traditional Islam, fundamentalist Islam, and modernist or reformist Islam.’⁴⁵⁶ As far as he is concerned:

freedom, independence, democracy, justice, development, human rights, civil society were among the most important promises of reformist Islam, and a major part of them are reflected in the constitution of the Islamic Republic.⁴⁵⁷

Thus, once again the link between independence and democracy and freedom is established in how Islamic *mardumsālārī* is defined.

1.28.3 The Popularisation of National Identity

The popularising aspect of *mardumsālārī*, and therefore of the Islamist-Iranian discourse in general, is reflected in the notion of civil society. Indeed it is an integral part of Khatami’s vision of democracy. To this end, Abtahi argues that in order to enjoy civil and

⁴⁵⁴ Op. cit. Mir-Hosseini and Tapper, p. 1

⁴⁵⁵ The speech ‘Reformist Islam and modern society’ given at the Berlin Conference in April 2000 is translated in full from Zakaraya’i, Mohammad ‘Ali. *Konferans-e Berlin: Khedmat ya Khiyanat (The Berlin Conference: Service or Treason)* Tehran: Tarh-e Now, 1379 (2000) in Mir-Hosseini and Tapper, pp. 155-163. This statement is p. 156.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid. Eshkevari goes on to explain: ‘Traditionalist Muslims are non-political ... they have no faith in compatibility between Islam and modernisation ... Fundamentalist Muslims ... whose Islami is political and militant ... rely on the ‘veracity’, ‘universality’ and ‘completeness’ of the religion of Islam. ... they want, by reviving political Islam ‘through the revival of an Islamic caliphate’, and by jihad against the West ... to [re]create a power similar to that of the Umayyads and Abbasids and the early Ottoman Caliphs’. pp. 156-157

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid. p. 157

political rights, as mentioned above, *mardumsālārī* will form and strengthen civil society with ‘civil institutions that provide what is appropriate for the nation (*millat*) and the state (*dawlat*)’.⁴⁵⁸ Of particular interest here is that not only does Abtahi address the *millat*, but also the *dawlat*, and therefore the nation as a whole. It must be mentioned here that civil society was a fundamental factor in the Reformists’ manifesto.⁴⁵⁹

The popularising element is explicitly reflected in the phrase ‘*madanī kardan-i jāmi‘ih*’, literally the ‘citizenisation of society’ or ‘the making of society for the citizen’, which is often heard in relation to the aims of Khatami’s *mardumsālārī*. This can be considered in opposition to the desire for the *dīn kardan-i jāmi‘ih*, or the remaking of society into a religious one, in the 1970s. It can be argued that the call for the re-organisation of society through civil institutions in favour of its citizens can be considered as an attempt to popularise the Islamist-Iranian discourse of national identity. In other words, ‘*madanī kardan-i jāmi‘ih*’ is an essential part of Khatami’s discourse of national identity as it is a means of popularising how he believes Iranian national identity should be constructed.

In the statement given at the OIC Summit on 9 December 1997 in Tehran, Khatami discusses the role and nature of civil society. He recognises that the origins of Western civil society are different to those of an Islamic civil society; the Western comes from a Greco-Roman heritage, while the Islamic is based on *madīnat al-nabī* (the city of the Prophet Mohammad).⁴⁶⁰ Rather than the origins of civil society in the two so-called ‘civilisations’, what is important here is the notion of citizenship and how that relates to national identity. He states:

Citizens of an Islamic civil society enjoy the right to determine their own destiny, supervise the governance and hold the government accountable. ... Our civil society is not a society where only Muslims are entitled to rights and are considered citizens. Rather, all individuals are entitled to rights, within the framework of law and order.⁴⁶¹

As this extract illustrates, this is a notion of citizenship that includes *all* of Iran’s citizens. Later, in the same speech, he states that civil society ‘is based on our collective identity’.⁴⁶² Although it is not specifically stated, the collective identity implied here must be the national identity as it is all citizens to whom Khatami is referring. The question that

⁴⁵⁸ Op. cit. Abtahi 1380 (2001), p. 7

⁴⁵⁹ Op. cit. Ansari. *Islam, Iran and Democracy*. 2006, pp. 114-116 for a summary of the Reformists policies. They include ‘political rationalisation as a prerequisite top economic development’, ‘the institutionalisation of civil society’, ‘the enhancement of he Majlis’, consolidating popular participation’, ‘decentralisation’, depersonalisation’, ‘religion as the handmaiden of democracy’, ‘economic restructuring’ and ‘reintegrating into a global society’.

⁴⁶⁰ Op. cit. Khatami. *Islam, Dialogue and Civil Society*. 2000, p. 16

⁴⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 17-18

⁴⁶² Ibid., p. 18

must be asked, therefore, is how the equality of all citizens can be championed when the national identity and corresponding political apparatus is an Islamist one. As has been illustrated, not only are Iran's non-Muslims expected to 'pay attention to the base and position of Islam in history and our historical identity' in order to be 'dear'⁴⁶³, but also accept a national identity that prescribes an Islamist political system, albeit a democratic one.

It must be stressed, however, that the discussion here is not whether or not Islam is compatible with democracy, or inherently democratic; that is a topic worthy of more research. Rather, the discussion at hand is how inclusive such a construction of Iranian national identity can be. It can be argued, therefore, that Khatami is perhaps contradicting himself. While all citizens are to be included, preference is still given, very subtly, to those who are Muslim. However, it must also be mentioned that this could well be Khatami's means of legitimising his ideas that basically stand against the Islamist discourse of national identity. He is finding a way of suggesting change within the overall discourse of the Islamic Republic.

For Eshkevari, civil society is also important. The following is taken from his speech *Reformist Islam and Modern Society* given at the Berlin Conference in April 2000:

Civil society is the independent popular institutions that stand as a buffer between citizens and the state and defend citizens' rights against all forms of aggression on the part of the elite and powerful.⁴⁶⁴

Thus, Khatami is far from being alone in his call for civil society. This also reflects a wider sense of resistance to the Islamist discourse of national identity.

Also of interest here is the relationship between citizenship and national identity. Khatami's notion of civil society is one based on a collective identity, which, as has been stated before, is an ethno-religious national identity. Thus, this illustrates citizenship is in the context of an ethno-religious national identity, rather than a civic national identity. As will be illustrated in the following chapter, the rejection of politicised culture, which is essentially ethnic and religious in nature, as the basis of Iranian nation identity can be considered in terms of civic national identity. Within this context the notion of citizenship is also advocated. Consequently, there is a situation whereby citizenship is articulated as part of an ethno-religious national identity *and* a civic national identity simultaneously. Furthermore, this situation also has a hegemonic and counter-hegemonic dimension. This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Six.

⁴⁶³ Op. cit. Khatami 1377 (1998), pp. 62-63

⁴⁶⁴ Op. cit. Mir-Hosseini and Tapper, p. 156

1.29 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to outline the Islamist-Iranian discourse of national identity. The contention is that this discourse can be understood in terms of three “pillars” that act as the basis of the construction of Iranian national identity: the cultures of *Īslāmīyat* and *Īrānīyat*, the concept of *mardumsālārī*, and the notion of ‘dialogue among civilisations’. These “pillars” reflect the ideologies embedded in this construction of Iranian national identity and together form the Islamist-Iranian discourse of national identity. These ideologies and the meanings attached to Iranian national identity have been illustrated through a discourse analysis of primarily Khatami’s speeches, and to a lesser extent the contentions of Abtahi, Soroush and Eshkevari.

Many of the characteristics of the Islamist-Iranian discourse have existed in earlier constructions of Iranian national identity. For example, the use of democracy as an integral part of Iranian national identity stems from the Constitutional Revolution and the National Front. In both these cases, democracy was a means of expressing anti-imperialism and asserting Iran’s independence as a nation. The linking of Iranian and Islamic identity was also used during the Iran-Iraq War. Although the individual aspects of the Islamist-Iranian construction of national identity may not be unique, the combination of the three above-mentioned “pillars” in addition to their expression on the state level is unique. It is these factors that differentiate the Islamist-Iranian discourse and the Khatami period from others in Iran’s history. The Islamist-Iranian discourse of national identity presents many similarities with the Iranist and Islamist discourses in how they are constructed. However, despite their similarities, they are indeed very different.

The use of culture - *Īrānīyat* and *Īslāmīyat* - as a basis of Iranian national identity presents a parallel with the Islamist and Iranist discourses of national identity. All three discourses of national identity are based on what is perceived to be Iran’s “authentic” culture; while for the Islamist and Iranist discourses it is exclusively *Īslāmīyat* and *Īrānīyat* respectively, for the Islamist-Iranian discourse it is both *Īslāmīyat* and *Īrānīyat*. Taking this into consideration, Khatami, through his call for Iranian-Islamic identity, can be considered in terms of a means of dialogue between the other two polarised constructions of national identity. Nonetheless, while the Islamist-Iranian discourse of national identity is more inclusive than the Iranist and Islamist discourses, it remains exclusive. Ultimately, there is a prioritisation of *Īslāmīyat* over *Īrānīyat*. This hegemony is also illustrated in the notion that a particular national identity is the true and authentic national identity.

The issue of *Īslāmīyat* and *Īrānīyat* is further elaborated with regard to the idea of civilisation. To this regard, once again parallels can be drawn with the Islamist and Iranist discourses; for all three the Iranian nation is perceived in terms of civilisation. However, how civilisation is constructed, that is as Islamic or Iranian is different. Nevertheless, if *Īslāmīyat* is indeed an “Iranianised” Islam, then the Islamist and Islamist-Iranian constructions of civilisation are very similar. This would be in accordance with Vaziri’s contention that it is not Shi‘ism that holds Iranian national identity together; rather it is Iranism.⁴⁶⁵

Another similarity between the three discourses of national identity discussed thus far is that for each the idea of Iranian national identity is not perceived in terms of a construction, but rather as *the* “true way”. Thus, in these cases Iranian culture and nation is perceived as a static phenomenon that must be “returned” to. This idea of returning to the “authentic” Iranian identity is also reflected in the meanings attached to civilisation; it is a time of progress and development that should be returned to. Nevertheless, the fact that the research has identified more than one so-called “true way” demonstrates that national identity is indeed constructed.

The Islamist-Iranian discourse is also similar to the Islamist and Iranist discourses with regard to the politicisation of culture; it is used as the basis for a particular political system. However, the political systems are dissimilar, thus exacerbating the differences between the discourses. While the Iranist discourse of national identity reflects a political system that would be based on one of pre-Islamic Iran, the Islamist and Islamist-Iranian discourses are based on political systems that are Islamic. However, these are very different; for the former it is Islamic theocracy, where as for the latter it is Islamic democracy. Thus, there are two competing ideologies on the state level. The very existence of both the Islamist and Islamist-Iranian discourses as state discourses illustrates that the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran is far from monolithic and that Islam in the government is no way homogeneous.

The idea of Islamic *mardumsālārī* is more complex than simply an alternative form of Islamic government. It demonstrates anti-imperialism as an integral part of the construction of Iranian national identity. Furthermore, it is also a means of popularising the Islamist-Iranian construction of national identity. The notion of civil society is an attempt to involve the *millat* in this particular political culture. *Mardumsālārī* is also part of an attempt to make Iranian national identity accessible to the *millat* and therefore more

⁴⁶⁵ Op. cit. Vaziri 1993, p. 178

inclusive. Although the Islamist-Iranian discourse of national identity is not strictly speaking based on the idea of civic nation, it does advocate citizenship. Thus, theoretically speaking citizenship is being developed within the framework of an ethno-religious nation. However, as will be illustrated in the following chapter, a more politically liberal space allowed by Khatami's presidency has also enabled the development of the notion of citizenship within the context of a discourse of national identity based on a civic construction of the nation.

This more inclusive approach to Iranian national identity and the existence of competing state discourses reflects a hegemonic and counter-hegemonic dynamic. The Islamist-Iranian discourse of national identity, through its construction of Iranian national identity on the basis of *mardumsālārī* in addition to both *Īslāmīyat* and *Īrānīyat*, reflects a resistance to the perceived hegemony of the Islamist discourse of Iranian national identity. Khatami's rejection of the Islamist and Iranist constructions may be on the grounds of inclusivity and exclusivity; by acknowledging both *Īslāmīyat* and *Īrānīyat* as "authentic" the Islamist-Iranian discourse is more inclusive. Thus, Khatami's Islamist-Iranian construction of national identity, to a certain extent, is a move away from these very exclusive constructions of national identity. This naturally opens the way for more varied expressions of social and political behaviour. Thus, Khatami represents a state counter-discourse.

The existence of competing state discourses and the fact that the Reformists themselves are not monolithic alludes to certain conclusions regarding Iran's socio-political dynamics. The very fact that within in the state apparatus itself the construction of Iran's national identity is so contested alludes to social and political tensions in Iran both in the government and in society as a whole. This can also be viewed as a dynamic of hegemony and counter-hegemony. There are two competing ideologies on the state level; the Islamist-Iranian- resisting the Islamist construction of national identity, which further reveals the factionalisation of the regime. Furthermore, this also demonstrates that with regard to the state itself is not possible to 'establish fixed rules of thought or language, tradition and community that underpin all or some political institutions or groups'.⁴⁶⁶

Furthermore, Iran's social and political tensions are further exaggerated by the fact that it is precisely, not only the Islamist construction, but also the Iranist one, both of which have a popular following, that Khatami is rejecting with the Islamist-Iranian construction. Is Khatami suggesting in the last sentence of one of the extracts – 'Our identity is Iranian-

⁴⁶⁶ Op. cit. **Finlayson and Martin 2006, p. 159**

Islamic and [it is] the perception of this very reality that is able to maintain us⁴⁶⁷ - that unless there is a real acceptance of these seemingly irreconcilable aspects of Iran's national identity and heritage, the very existence of the nation is unsustainable?

The counter-hegemonic nature of the Islamist-Iranian discourse is demonstrated in the meanings attached to civilisation. The notion of 'dialogue among civilisations' illustrates not only Khatami's resistance to Khamene'i and his supporters through his call for dialogue with as opposed to a complete rejection of "Western civilisation", but also resistance to the West. Thus, anti-imperialism and the independence of the Iranian nation are articulated on another level. However, although Khatami resists the perceived hegemony of the Iranist and Islamist discourse, the Islamist-Iranian discourse remains hegemonic because of its portrayal of the Iranian national identity only as Iranian-Islamic. Thus, the Islamist-Iranian discourse is at once counter-hegemonic and hegemonic.

As was outlined in Chapter Two, the benefit of discourse analysis lies in the ability to explore the 'complexities of political identity and difference [and] the construction of hegemonic formations'.⁴⁶⁸ In the case of Iranian national identity during the Khatami period, a discourse approach to national identity has illustrated the complexity of political identity, in this case national identity. Furthermore, also drawing on Fairclough's concept of 'ideological diversity', national identity in Iran demonstrates ideological diversity and difference. Indeed, there is more than one construction of Iranian national identity existing concurrently and competing for the same space. The Iranist, Islamist and Islamist-Iranian discourses of national identity co-exist in Khatami's Iran, each with their own hegemonic claim to the "authentic" Iranian national identity.

Finally, while Khatami's Islamist-Iranian discourse of national identity is far more inclusive than the Islamist and Iranist discourses, for some it is still not inclusive enough. Existing alongside these three discourses of national identity, which are based on the politicisation of *Īslāmīyat* and/or *Īrānīyat* there are also discourses that reject this politicisation. The Khatami period also bears witness to a discourse of civic Iranian national identity and a discourse of cosmopolitan Iranian national identity. These will be addressed in the following chapter.

⁴⁶⁷ Op. cit. Khatami 1376 (1997), p. 61-62

⁴⁶⁸ Op. cit. Howarth, p. 6

Chapter Six: Alternative Discourses of Iranian National Identity

The previous two chapters addressed three discourses of national identity identified for discussion during the Khatami period: Iranist, Islamist and Islamist-Iranian. Through a discourse analysis of texts it has been possible to deconstruct the ideologies or sets of values embedded in the processes of constructing Iranian national identity. As has been illustrated, although there are different ideologies, how the Iranian nation's identity is constructed by these discourses is similar. For all three, the notion of civilisation is important and is embedded in the construction of national identity. This illustrates a construction of the Iranian nation based on the past. In addition to this, there is the importance of culture, whether *Īrānīyat*, *Īslāmīyat* or both, as the basis of the nation's identity. This approach to culture and the importance of the past illustrate a static understanding of nation and identity. Finally, these constructions of nation, civilisation and culture are largely based on what is perceived to be Iran's "true" or "authentic" identity. Finally, all three discourses illustrate an exclusive construction, admittedly to varying degrees, of the nation's identity.

To regard Iranian national identity during Khatami's presidency only in terms of the discourses addressed thus far is an oversimplification and gives an inaccurate picture of national identity construction in Iran. The focus of this chapter, therefore, is alternative discourses of national identity. It is worth commenting that an issue that could be included here is how Iran's ethnic and religious minorities construct Iranian national identity. This process would not necessarily reflect a resistance to the idea of Iran as their nation. On the one hand, there could be a rejection of the legitimacy of Iran as a nation. On the other hand, there could also be an acceptance of the discourses already discussed. The way in which these communities engage with the discourses of national identity discussed here is an important issue. Nevertheless, it is one that can be addressed in future research.

What is to be discussed in this chapter are how the Iranist, Islamist, and Islamist-Iranian discourses of national identity are rejected and resisted. This chapter essentially explores the rejection of the politicisation of either culture and/or ethnicity as the basis of national identity. Two discourses have been identified, both of which resist the Islamist, Islamist-Iranian and Iranist discourses of national identity in various ways, thus demonstrating another layer of the hegemonic and counter-hegemonic dynamic. The first can be described as a discourse of civic Iranian national identity, which reflects ideologies such as the importance of democratic values, citizenship and human rights in a secular framework embedded in national identity construction. The second reflects a

cosmopolitan approach in the construction of Iranian national identity. It must be stressed, however, that these discourses do not fall as neatly into categories as the previously discussed. Consequently, the sources are more varied. They include discussions on national identity by academics and lay intellectuals both in Iran and among the diaspora and interviews, as described in Chapter Two.

It must also be asserted that these two discourses are not necessarily exclusive of each other. Rather, they represent sets of values or ideologies embedded in the construction of Iranian national identity that reject the construction of national identity on the basis of politicised culture. This is not to say that *Īrānīyat* and *Īslāmīyat* are not considered as part of Iranian identity in general. Rather, when it comes to national identity, which is also the basis of state identity and the political apparatus, the prioritisation, or basic element, moves away from such factors as culture.

These are non-state discourses. The non-state discourse of national identity previously addressed in this thesis is the Iranist discourse. Since the discourses presented here are also non-state, this illustrates that not only on the state level is national identity contested but also on the non-state level. However, while the Iranist discourse is restricted to the private space, some of the sentiments reflected here are very much in the public space, but sometimes at a cost. The co-existence of these multiple discourses contributes to the contention that national identity can be constructed on both the state and non-state levels. Nonetheless, there still remain other discourses of national identity being articulated on the non-state level.

Although it is not only the Iranist and the Islamist, but also the Islamist-Iranian discourses of national identity that is resisted, an issue that must be raised is the significance of Khatami's presidency. It has been made clear that the articulation of Khatami's Islamist-Iranian discourse of national identity as a state discourse makes Khatami's presidency unique. What must be considered in a discussion on national identity in Khatami's Iran, therefore, is the extent to which Khatami has created a space for new constructions of national identity, as well as the revival of discourses that existed in the public space prior to the 1979 Revolution. Indeed, as one of the interviewees stated, Khatami restored "*itmād-i millī*" (national confidence). This surely encouraged alternative expressions of Iranian national identity. Although many Iranians feel betrayed by Khatami and his inability to deliver his promises, it must be acknowledged that the space he created through political liberalisation and the discussion of civil society, have had a profound and possible

irreversible impact on the articulation of Iranian national identity. As will be illustrated, this is evident on a number of levels.

Before proceeding with the structure of this chapter, it is necessary to first consider the importance of focussing on non-state discourses. An analysis of non-institutionalised discourses of national identity is essential in any discussion on the construction of national identity in general. On the one hand, it is necessary because it must be illustrated that the state does not have ownership of national identity construction, rather it is articulated on several levels. On the other hand, it is necessary in order to consider power relations in society. To this regard, Phillips and Jørgensen contend:

the aim of carrying out critical research, that is, to investigate and analyse power relations in society and formulate normative perspectives from which a critique of such relations can be made with an eye on the possibilities for social change.⁴⁶⁹

This must be addressed when looking at national identity. Indeed as Hossein Bashiriyeh contends, ‘since every political discourse contains a set of rules which define political practices, a discursive change is required for any changes in those practices.’⁴⁷⁰ By addressing how the Iranist, Islamist and Islamist-Iranian discourses are resisted on the non-state level, alternative counter-discourses of national identity are demonstrated. Therefore, it can be argued that the very existence of alternative discourses that essentially also call for alternative political systems, or at least reject the current political system, demonstrates the possibility for social and potentially political change in Iranian society.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section, ‘Academic Critique of Islamist, Iranist and Islamist-Iranian discourses’ is based on four articles on the subject of contemporary Iranian national identity written both in Iran and by the diaspora during Khatami’s presidency. The contention here is to not only illustrate how the discourses constructed in the manner of the afore-mentioned discourses of national identity are rejected, but that there is also a process of self-analysis regarding Iranian national identity taking place. Furthermore, the aim is to show that the diaspora is also an important part of this process of self-analysis.

The second and third sections turn to the alternative discourses of national identity mentioned above. The contention in the second section, ‘Civic Iranian National Identity’, is that one of the non-state counter-discourses in the Khatami period is based on a civic

⁴⁶⁹ Op. cit. Phillips and Jørgensen, p. 2

⁴⁷⁰ Bashiriyeh, Hossein. ‘Civil Society and Democratisation in Khatami’s First Term’ in *Global Dialogue* 3, 2/3, 2001. pp. 19-26, p. 19

national identity as opposed to an ethnic or ethno-religious one. This is done by exploring how the notions of democracy, human rights and citizenship within a secular framework are embedded in the construction of Iranian national identity. The contention in the third section, ‘Cosmopolitan Iranian National Identity’, is that there is a secular discourse of Iranian national identity that is very much constructed in global terms that co-exists alongside the discourses addressed in the previous chapter. Finally, the chapter turns to concluding remarks.

1.30 Academic Critique of Islamist, Iranist and Islamist-Iranian Discourses

Discourses of national identity are not only articulated by state actors and politicians, but also on an academic level. This section will focus on how the approaches to Iranian national identity based on politicised culture are critiqued by four individuals: Hussein Rahyab, Ihsan Shari'ati, Homa Katouzian and Mehrzad Boroujerdi. These individuals are included here because they specifically discuss the issue of contemporary Iranian national identity and in so doing critique the Iranist, Islamist and Islamist-Iranian discourses.

This section is divided into four parts. The first focuses on Rahyab’s article ‘*Mahīyat-i, Mavāni*’-i va *Imkānāt-i Nawsāzī-yi Huvīyat-i Īrānī*’ (‘The Essence of, Impediments to and Possibilities for the Renewal of Iranian Identity’) and the second on Shari'ati’s ‘*Darbāri-yi Huvīyat-i Millī*’ (‘About National Identity’). These two articles are part of an edited collection entitled *Khudkāvi-yi Millī dar ‘Asr-i Jahānī Shudan* (*National Self-Analysis in the Age of Globalisation*). These will be followed by a discussion on Katouzian’s ‘Iran and the Problem of Political Development’ and Boroujerdi’s ‘Contesting Nationalist Constructions of Iranian Identity’. The latter two are prolific academics among the Iranian diaspora. However, here, their articles are examined as examples of discourse. Although they are part of the diaspora it can be assumed that their views on Iranian national identity also exist in Iran. Furthermore, it also proves that the issue of how Iranian national identity should be constructed continues to be just as significant among the diaspora as it is within Iran.

1.30.1 Renewal, not Reproduction

Rahyab’s discussion on Iranian national identity focuses on how Iran’s cultural identity can be renewed. Since he contends that the nation is based on unity through land, blood and culture⁴⁷¹, his discussion on cultural identity can be regarded as a discussion of the

⁴⁷¹ Rahyab, Hussein. ‘*Mahīyat-i, Mavāni*’-i va *Imkānāt-i Nawsāzī-yi Huvīyat-i Īrānī* (The Essence, Impediments and Possibilities of the Renewal of Iranian Identity)’ in Shariati Foundation. (ed) *Khudkāvi-yi Millī dar ‘Asr-i Jahānī Shudan* (*National Self-Analysis in the Age of Globalisation*). Tehran: Ghasideh Sara, 1381 (2002). pp. 51-96, p. 61

nation's identity as it is culture that is a fundamental factor in nation. This also demonstrates the importance of culture in the construction of Iranian national identity. As will be illustrated below, Rahyab's contention can be interpreted as a problematisation of the Iranist, Islamist and Islamist-Iranian discourses of national identity, and therefore part of an alternative counter-discourse.

As has been argued in Chapters Four and Five, the Iranist, Islamist and Islamist-Iranian discourses of national identity are based on a static approach to Iran's pre-Islamic and/or Islamic cultures, which are essentially positioned in the past. The crucial factor that differentiates Rahyab's construction of Iranian national identity from these is his critique of the construction of identity that is based on a civilisation of the past. Rather, there is a need to look to the future.⁴⁷² While accepting that Iranian identity is Iranian-Islamic civilisation (*tamaddun-i Īrānī-Īslāmī*), using Fernand Braudel's dates for the "Golden Age" of the Islamic civilisation (AD 813 to the death of Ibn Rushd in 1198), he argues that the Iranian-Islamic civilisation has actually come to end. It is due to this that there is need for the renewal of identity.⁴⁷³ Furthermore, the crucial point here is that in Rahyab's eyes the *renewal* of cultural identity is not the *reproduction* of identity.⁴⁷⁴ Thus, unlike the Islamist, Iranist and Islamist-Iranian discourses, there is no articulation here of the need to "return" to "authenticity", which is perceived to have existed in the civilisations of the past.

Nevertheless, despite the fundamental departure from looking to the future as opposed to returning to the past, there are similarities with the Islamist, Iranist, and Islamist-Iranian discourses in terms of how national identity is constructed. For example, Rahyab believes in the notion of civilisation and considers it important. Linked to this is the sense of superiority. Like the Islamist, Iranist and Islamist-Iranian discourses, Rahyab articulates a sense of superiority regarding civilisation. This is reflected in his contention that Iran's culture was the first culture.⁴⁷⁵ Thus, the 'self' is more sophisticated than and superior to the 'other', which is typical of 'Orientalism in reverse'.

In addition to these, there is the appreciation of Iran's historical experience. Like the Islamist, Iranist and Islamist-Iranian discourses, Rahyab also uses Iran's history to justify his approach to Iranian cultural identity, and therefore national identity. He also makes use of Iran's mythical experience. However, his interpretation differs from the other

⁴⁷² Ibid., p. 78

⁴⁷³ Ibid., pp. 72-74

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 78

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 87

discourses in that it aims to show that Iranian identity has always been fluid, as opposed to static. This is reflected in his approach to the idea of cultural exchange. For example, he argues that following the attack of Alexander on Iran in the third century BC there was a cultural exchange. One result of this cultural exchange was the notion of worshipping Mehr or Mitra which eventually resulted in the emergence of Christianity. The idea of cultural exchange alludes to the fluidity of culture.⁴⁷⁶

Specific parallels can be drawn with Khatami's Islamist-Iranian discourse of national identity. For example, the above mentioned notion of cultural exchange is reminiscent of Khatami's 'dialogue among civilisations'. In addition to this, as illustrated above, Khatami states that Iran's identity is 'Iranian-Islamic'. Rahyab also perceives Iranian identity as Iranian-Islamic. Thus, in both cases *Īslāmīyat* and *Īrānīyat* are not perceived as exclusive of each other. However, what distinguishes Rahyab's contention from the Islamist-Iranian discourse is his argument that the renewal of identity must not be within the framework of religion.⁴⁷⁷ This resistance is also reminiscent of the Iranist discourse of national identity. However, in this case there is an acceptance of Iran's Islamic culture and the idea of civilisation as part of its identity, but there is a move away from the *politicisation of Īslāmīyat*.

Furthermore, like the Islamist-Iranian articulation of Iranian national identity, Rahyab's approach to civilisation reflects a more inclusive discourse of national identity. This is reflected in how Islamic civilisation is remembered. It is Rahyab's contention that the stagnation of the Islamic civilisation was due to intolerance, which was uncharacteristic of the "Golden Age".⁴⁷⁸ Rahyab's articulation of Iranian national identity is also more inclusive because of the rejection of religion as the framework. When taking these factors into consideration, Rahyab's construction of Iranian national identity reflects one that acts as a counter-discourse to the Iranist, Islamist, Islamist-Iranian discourses.

1.30.2 Resistance to "Pure" Identity

The Islamist, Iranist and Islamist-Iranian discourses have several similarities in terms of the way in which national identity is constructed. One is that they are based on the past, which has been critiqued by Rahyab. Another similarity is that they are based on what is considered as the "true" and therefore "authentic" culture. These notions of authenticity and truth also raise the issue of purity and what is considered as "pure" Iranian identity. It is this that is critiqued by Shari'ati. Furthermore, the prioritisation of one aspect of Iran's

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid., pp. 79-80

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 79

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 75

culture is also critiqued. In fact, he goes as far as warning against such approaches to Iranian national identity.

Shari'ati's article provides a discussion of the attributes given to Arabs, Greeks and Iranians in antiquity. He then proceeds with an account on Iranian history and the implications for Iranian national identity. However, it is his conclusion that is of particular significance in the discussion here. He states:

... in the real world we confront a chain of identities ... and pure identity has never had an external existence and shall not: *Īrānī*, *Īslāmī*, *Shi'ī*, *mudirn-ī gharbī* ... are all relative fragments ... which can change form.⁴⁷⁹

It is clear here that Shari'ati considers Iranian national identity in terms of a multiplicity of identities: Iranian, Islamic, Shi'i, and what he calls 'western-modern'. Thus, Iranian identity cannot be considered in terms of a single pure identity. Furthermore, Shari'ati perceives these multiple identities as fluid. Therefore, this can also be considered as a critique of the Iranist, Islamist and Islamist-Iranian discourses that are based on a static understanding of Iranian national identity and its components. Nevertheless, the idea of the Iranian, Islamic and Western being part of Iranian identity in general, is reminiscent of Soroush's articulation of Iranian national identity.

Shari'ati's critique of 'pure identity' is further elaborated in the following extract. He states:

... the danger and harm of ... any kind of search for pure and complete identity, whether national or religious ... is that those in the real human world have no choice but to seek political solutions that involve cleansing, ethnic cleansing, opinion cleansing ...⁴⁸⁰

His suggestion demonstrates a very clear rejection of any form of national identity based on "purity". Furthermore, the rejection of any kind of exclusive construction of Iranian national identity is implied in his statement regarding 'ethnic cleansing' and 'opinion cleansing'. It is possible that Shari'ati is implying that a more "democratic" understanding of Iranian national identity is more appropriate; however there is no explicit statement to this regard.

Of additional interest here is that Shari'ati's suggestion also appears to be a warning with regard to the nature of Iranian national identity. Although Shari'ati's discussion can be considered in part as a critique of the Islamist-Iranian discourse of national identity, parallels can be drawn here with the statements given by Khatami and Soroush. As

⁴⁷⁹ Shariati, Ihsan. '*Darbāri-yi Huvūyat-i Millī* (About National identity)' in Shariati Foundation. (ed) *Khudkāvi-yi Millī dar 'Asr-i Jahānī Shudan* (*National Self-Analysis in the Age of Globalisation*). Tehran: Ghasideh Sara, 1381 (2002). pp. 97-119, p. 112

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 112

illustrated in the previous chapter, Khatami states, 'Our identity is Iranian-Islamic and [it is] the perception of this very reality that is able to maintain us' and Soroush states, 'As long as we ignore our links with the elements of our triple cultural heritage and our cultural geography, constructive social and cultural action will elude us'. Although the approaches of Shari'ati, Khatami and Soroush are not strictly the same, there is recognition by all three that Iran faces a problem regarding its articulation of national identity.

1.30.3 A Critique of 'Heritage-ism'

Rahyab and Shari'ati contend against the focus on the past and the desire for purity in the construction of Iranian national identity respectively. Boroujerdi contributes to this resistance to the Islamist, Iranist and Islamist-Iranian discourses of national identity with a critique of the static and exclusive approach to the construction of Iranian national identity. This is done through his discussion and rejection of what he has labelled as 'heritage-ism'. As will be illustrated, this can be interpreted as a critique of the Iranist discourse of national identity. Although he is critiquing the approach undertaken by intellectuals in particular, it can also be considered as a critique of this articulation of Iranian identity in general.

Despite the fact that 'heritage-ism' is being used here as a reference to what is understood as the Iranist discourse of national identity, it can also be understood as the use of heritage in general as the basis of identity or national identity. Thus, Boroujerdi's critique of 'heritage-ism' can also be understood as a critique of the use of Iran's pre-Islamic heritage *as well as* its Islamic heritage as the basis of national identity construction. Admittedly, Boroujerdi does state that he has 'addressed the fallacies' of an approach to Iranian identity that offers 'Shi'i Islam as the main pillar of Iranians' collective identity' in his book, *Iranian Intellectuals and the West*.⁴⁸¹ This has been considered in the discussion of Jalal Al-e Ahmad and nativism in Chapter Three; it is Boroujerdi's contention that 'xenophobic nationalism, a conspiratorial mind-set, a garrison-state mentality, and unqualified anti-Westernism are some of the end products of the nativist discourse.'⁴⁸²

Boroujerdi critiques 'heritage-ism' in the context of historiography and Iranian secular intellectuals.⁴⁸³ It is his contention that by examining the way in which 'nationalist Iranian intellectuals and political elites' deal with Iranian identity it becomes evident that they 'have fallen victim to an ahistorical definition of authentic "Iranian identity."' He further

⁴⁸¹ Op. cit. Boroujerdi 1998, p. 43

⁴⁸² Op. cit. Boroujerdi 1996, p. 19

⁴⁸³ Op. cit. Boroujerdi 1998, pp. 43-56

argues that ‘these intellectuals have anchored their conception of identity on the matrices of language, selective historiography, and a Persian-centred nationalism that ignores ethnic minorities.’⁴⁸⁴ It is this selective approach that is exclusive.

Boroujerdi later argues that ‘heritage-ism breeds cultural rigidity by insisting on the artificial preservation of order, tradition, continuity, homogeneity, and identity.’⁴⁸⁵ This criticism is significant. The ‘cultural rigidity’ that Boroujerdi refers to reflects a resistance to the perceived hegemony of constructions of national identity based on a static perception of culture and heritage. Furthermore, Boroujerdi’s comment on homogeneity can be regarded as a critique of the way Iranian national identity is constructed on the basis of one culture, namely *Īslāmīyat* or *Īrānīyat*. The idea of homogeneity also alludes to an exclusive construction of Iranian national identity.

Boroujerdi elaborates his critique of ‘heritage-ism’ by positioning it in the discussion of tradition and modernity in Iran. He states:

In the age of modernity, “national identity” no longer should be conceived as something essential, tangible, integrated, settled, and fundamentally unchanging. ... To resort to an ethno-linguistic definition of identity is to misunderstand the multi-dimensional and fundamental nature of the challenges of modernity.⁴⁸⁶

This is interesting because it appears that, as far as Boroujerdi is concerned, a modern understanding of national identity in general would not be static or absolute. Rather, it is implied that it is fluid and heterogeneous.

Boroujerdi’s takes a step beyond the critique of certain constructions of Iranian national identity and prescribes an alternative approach. He differentiates between nationhood based on ethno-linguistic factors – ‘race, blood, culture, and language’ – from one that he calls ‘political definition of nationhood’.⁴⁸⁷ He illustrates his preference for the latter, which he takes from Sami Zubaida’s discussion on the Jacobin model of nationhood.⁴⁸⁸ This understanding of nation is based on:

sovereignty of the people as nation, the state as the sum total of its individual and individualised citizens, the institutions of representation a constitution which enshrines the rights and obligations of citizens and a legal system based upon it before which all are equal.⁴⁸⁹

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 43

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 45

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 51

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 53

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 53, footnote 36

⁴⁸⁹ Zubaida, Sami. *Islam, the People and the State: Political Ideas and Movements in the Middle East*. London & New York: I.B. Tauris, 1995. pp. 121-122 as cited in Boroujerdi 1998, p. 53, footnote 36

In other words, as Boroujerdi states, it emphasises ‘freedom, rights, and citizenship’.⁴⁹⁰ Parallels can be drawn here with the notion of civic nation, which will be discussed in more detail below. The point that needs to be made here, however, is that the discourse articulated in Boroujerdi’s work reflects a rejection of the discourses of national identity addressed in this thesis thus far. Therefore, his work can be considered as part of an alternative discourse of Iranian national identity.

1.30.4 Iranianism, not Persianism

Katouzian’s construction of national identity is similar to that of Boroujerdi in that he calls for a more inclusive articulation of Iranian national identity. This rejection of exclusivity illustrates a resistance to the Iranist, Islamist and Islamist-Iranian discourses. In his discussion of the issue of political development in Iran, Katouzian implicitly provides a prescriptive approach to Iranian national identity. It is his contention that ‘a general discourse on the problems of political development in Iran would be incomplete’ without the consideration of Iran’s ‘ethnic and linguistic plurality and multiplicity’.⁴⁹¹ He argues:

... the fundamental historical barrier to steady political development in Iran has been the repetitive cycle of arbitrary rule and public rebellion and disorder followed by arbitrary rule, which has been a product of the absence of law, and the lack of social legitimacy for the state. Therefore, political development would require [among other things] ... the rejection of pan-Persianist and other pan-ethnicist and racist ideologies, greater ethnic and provincial participation in local and regional affairs, [and] the recognition of the uniformity and integrity of Iran as a whole ...⁴⁹²

Before going further, the notion of Persianist must be clarified. Katouzian makes a distinction between an inclusive Iranian identity and an exclusive Persian identity. He argues that Iranianism would include ‘the diversities of the broader Iranian culture’. In theory, therefore, an Iranian identity based on ‘Iranianism’ would include and celebrate the differences between the different ethnic, religious and linguistic groups in Iran. It should be mentioned that this differs from the Iranist discourse of national identity discussed in Chapter Four. Persianism, on the other hand, presumes the superiority of the Persian culture over others in Iran.⁴⁹³ Thus, the critique of Persianism in the above statement demonstrates a resistance to the exclusivity of discourses such as that of Reza Shah’s Persianist ‘dynastic nationalism’. If this ideology is being resisted in general, then

⁴⁹⁰ Op. cit. Boroujerdi 1998, p. 53

⁴⁹¹ Katouzian, Homayoun. ‘Iran and the Problem of Political Development’ in Mohammadi, A. (ed) *Iran Encountering Globalisation*, London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003. pp. 7-23, p. 16

⁴⁹² Ibid., p. 21

⁴⁹³ Ibid., p. 17

it can be argued that Katouzian is also rejecting the Iranist discourse of national identity portrayed in Chapter Four.

The last statement in the above extract refers to Katouzian's critique of the Islamic Republic's approach to ethnic and linguistic minorities. It is his contention that if the Islamic Republic wishes to take up a long-term solution to the unrest among certain minorities, then it must employ:

a more fundamental strategy to ensure greater participation of the provinces and ethnic groups in local and regional affairs within a firmly established framework of national unity and territorial integrity.⁴⁹⁴

It is interesting that in this discussion of minorities Katouzian refrains from any mention of religious minorities. Only speculations can be made with regard to this. However, the reference to 'framework of national unity' alludes to a framework that is more inclusive, rather than the political systems advocated in the Islamist and Islamist-Iranian discourses of national identity.

By looking at the discussions on Iranian national identity provided by Katouzian, Boroujerdi, Shari'ati and Rahyab, it has been possible to demonstrate that many of the ways in which the identity of the Iranian nation is constructed in the Islamist, Iranist and Islamist-Iranian discourses are resisted. It is for this reason that these discourses that are based on the politicisation of *Īrānīyat* and/or *Īslāmīyat* cannot be considered as the only discourses of national identity in the Khatami period. The situation is far more complex.

1.31 Civic Iranian National Identity

This section now turns to the first of two sections that focus on the alternative ideologies embedded in the construction of Iranian national identity during the Khatami period. The focus of this section is to explore how the notions of democracy, citizenship and human rights are perceived as necessary in the construction of Iranian national identity. The contention here is that while Khatami has established the idea of citizenship within the framework of an ethno-religious national identity in the official state discourse, he has also allowed space for the emergence, or even re-emergence, of civic Iranian national identity. This contention will be made by first providing a theoretical discussion of the concept of civic nation. The section will then explore how the notion of a civic Iranian national identity is articulated. This will be done by demonstrating how the ideologies embedded in the construction of a civic Iranian national identity are articulated on an

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 21

academic level in Iran. However, before proceeding, it is necessary to first clarify the notion ‘secular nationalism’.

1.31.1 Which “Secular Nationalism”?

Since the Islamic Republic is the main factor against which alternative discourses of national identity are juxtaposed, it is often the case that a secular discourse of national identity is thought to be the most appropriate option. However, the notion of a secular discourse of national identity must be clarified. On the one hand, the Iranist discourse of national identity, as it is referred to in this thesis, is considered in some instances as secular nationalism, or at least as a secular ideology. For example, as illustrated above, Boroujerdi discusses the nationalism advocated by *secular* intellectuals as one based on ‘heritage-ism’. On the other hand, secular nationalism is also used in reference to liberal nationalism. Ansari makes the distinction between secular nationalism, religious nationalism and dynastic nationalism.⁴⁹⁵ It can be assumed that ‘secular nationalism’ in this case is one that has similar characteristics to what is referred to as ‘liberal nationalism’. In this sense, it is the discourse of Musaddiq and the National Front and those based on similar ideologies. Secular in this sense does not mean irreligious, as Ansari has also pointed out.⁴⁹⁶ Rather, it means that the political apparatus prescribed by the discourse is not one based on an Islamic framework. Nor is Islam used as the basis of national identity.

Parallels can be drawn between the liberal nationalism of the National Front and the Popular Front and the discourse of civic Iranian national identity to be discussed in this section. To this regard, Bashiriyeh refers to a ‘democratic discourse of civil society’.⁴⁹⁷ In his opinion, this is the discourse that emerged at the time of the Constitutional Revolution and is the discourse of Musaddiq. For both liberal nationalism and the discourse of civic Iranian national identity the idea of democracy in a secular, as opposed to Islamic, context is integral to the discourse. For the Iranist discourse, however, democracy is not a factor.

The contention here is that secular nationalism should be used to refer to a discourse of national identity in which the ideology of a secular democracy is embedded in the construction of Iranian national identity. This raises the issue of whether the discourse of civic Iranian national identity can be referred to as a secular democratic discourse of national identity. Secular is not to be used in terms of the Iranist discourse of national identity or similar ideologies. During the Khatami period the ideas of civic national

⁴⁹⁵ Op. cit. Ansari 2003, p. 15

⁴⁹⁶ Op. cit. Ansari. *Islam, Iran and Democracy*. 2000, p. 15

⁴⁹⁷ Op. cit. **Bashiriyeh, p. 19**

identity and secular discourse can only be considered as aspirations for the identity of the state, or *huvīyat-i dawlat*, even though they are articulated as *huvīyat-i millī*.

1.31.2 Civic National Identity and Citizenship

The contention here is that Khatami's presidency has allowed a space for a non-state discourse of Iranian national identity to be articulated that has the notion of citizenship within the framework of a civic national identity. Habermas' analysis regarding sovereignty and citizenship and the evolution of the European nation-state provides a useful framework for the discussion of this issue.⁴⁹⁸ Clearly, Iran is not a European nation-state and nor does it have a similar evolutionary process in terms of becoming a nation or a state. Nonetheless, some of Habermas' conclusions raise theoretical discussions that relate to the case of Iran. Of particular significance is his analysis of national identity and citizenship, which is in response to his questioning of the viability of an ethnic national identity in multicultural societies.

It is unmistakable that the construction of Iranian national identity is contested. Furthermore, and possibly of more significance in this discussion, is that consequently the corresponding political system is also contested. One of the grounds for contestation is the issue of authentic culture. Taking this into consideration, along with the fact that Iran is a multi-religious and multi-ethnic society, it can be argued that Iran is a multicultural society. Consequently the viability of an ethnic national identity in the context of a multicultural society is worth considering with regard to the case of Iran. This chapter demonstrates that there is some rejection of an Iranian national identity based on the idea of an ethnic or ethno-religious nation. Thus, since the Iranist, Islamist and Islamist-Iranian discourses of Iranian national identity are rejected by some, alternatives must be considered. One of the alternatives is a discourse that prescribes the construction of Iranian national identity on the basis of a civic nation as opposed to an ethnic or ethno-religious national identity. To this regard, Habermas' discussion on the alternatives to an ethnic national identity in multicultural societies is particularly pertinent.

Before proceeding, it is worth returning to the definitions of ethnic and civic nation. As has been addressed in Chapter Two, ethnic nation, according to Smith, is one based on a 'community of birth and native culture', whereas civic nation is based on a 'common civic culture and ideology'⁴⁹⁹ and 'some common institutions and a single code of rights

⁴⁹⁸ see Chapter 4 in Habermas, Jürgen. *The Inclusion of the Other*. (ed. Cronin, Ciaran & de Greiff, Pablo, original 1996), Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1998. for the full discussion. See also Habermas, Jürgen. 'Citizenship and National Identity', 1990. in Habermas, Jürgen. *Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, trans. William Rehg. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996. pp. 491-515

⁴⁹⁹ Op. cit. Smith 1991, p. 11

and duties for all members of the community’.⁵⁰⁰ Habermas ascribes similar definitions. In his discussion on the evolution of the nature of “nation” he argues that they were ‘originally communities of shared descent which were integrated geographically through settlements and neighbourhoods and culturally through their common language, customs and traditions’.⁵⁰¹ However, as Habermas contends, when society changes to being one based on popular sovereignty as opposed to one based on royal sovereignty, ‘the rights of subjects were transformed into human rights and civil rights, that is into basic liberal and political rights of citizens’.⁵⁰² Naturally, Habermas’ discussion is based on particular societies whose process of political development is not similar to that of Iran. Nevertheless, it is the idea of how a political community is united that is of relevance here. On the one hand, national unity is based on common culture and descent, and on the other hand it is based on the idea of a common civic culture and human and civil rights.

In view of what Habermas believes is the apparent failure of the viability of states based on an ethnic nation, he suggests that it is the notion of republicanism that is the way forward. As Pablo de Greiff and Ciaran Cronin note, ‘republicanism is founded on the ideal of voluntary association and universal human rights’.⁵⁰³ This is in opposition to a shared history, common language or ethnicity, which are characteristic of what Habermas refers to as ‘nationality’.⁵⁰⁴ Furthermore, Habermas argues that central to the idea of republicanism is the notion of a democratic process that can act as a means of providing social integration. It is his contention that ‘in a society characterised by cultural and religious pluralism’, the democratic process is the means of ensuring the necessary social integration.⁵⁰⁵ However, in order for democratic citizenship to occur, it is required that ‘every citizen be socialised into a common political culture’.⁵⁰⁶ This common or shared political culture is based on the country’s constitution, the principles of which are based on notions of ‘popular sovereignty and human rights’. It is *not* the majority culture that claims to be one that is recognised by all citizens. Rather, it must be ‘uncoupled from the level of subcultures and the prepolitical identities’. Furthermore, ‘the protected faiths and practices must not contradict the reigning constitutional principles (as they are interpreted

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 9

⁵⁰¹ Op. cit. Habermas 1998, pp. 109-110

⁵⁰² Ibid., p. 112

⁵⁰³ Cronin, Ciaran and de Greiff, Pablo ‘Editor’s Introduction’ in Habermas, Jürgen *The Inclusion of the Other*. (ed. Cronin, Ciaran & de Greiff, Pablo, original 1996), Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1998. p. xxii

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid., p. xxii

⁵⁰⁵ Op. cit. Habermas 1998, p. 117

⁵⁰⁶ Op. cit. Habermas 1990, p. 500

by the political culture).⁵⁰⁷ Thus, ultimately, ‘the real nation of citizens must maintain over the imagined ethnic-cultural nation.’⁵⁰⁸

That which remains to be addressed is how Habermas’ argument relates to national identity in Iran. First of all, the issue of republicanism should be addressed. His argument assumes a republicanism that is not based on culture. The case of Iran, a country that considers itself a republic that is essentially based on a particular culture, namely *Īslāmīyat* and the politicisation of *Īslāmīyat*, essentially contradicts Habermas’ notion of republicanism. Thus, while Habermas argues that republicanism is not dependent on what he refers to as nationality (see above), in the case of Iran, it clearly is. It could be argued, however, that due to the existence of counter-discourses of national identity, Iran’s republicanism is not sustainable. The viability of such an understanding of republicanism is an issue worthy of further research at another time. Nonetheless, as has been illustrated throughout the thesis, the discourse of national identity that prescribes an Islamic republic as its political system is not the only discourse. The values that Habermas’ republicanism prescribes, that is a ‘shared political culture’ based on ‘popular sovereignty and human rights’, are indeed advocated by some who reject the politicisation of *Īslāmīyat*.

It would seem that in theory many of the attributes given by Habermas to the desired notions of republicanism and democratic citizenship exist in Khatami’s Islamist-Iranian discourse of national identity. As has been discussed in the previous chapter, Khatami advocates Islamic *mardumsālārī*. Integral to this is the notion of *madanī kardan-i jāmi‘ ih*, which is essentially a call for the re-organisation of society through civil institutions in favour of its citizens. Thus, the idea of citizenship is promoted within the framework of Islam. However, in the case of a discourse which is based on the idea of a civic Iranian national identity, the notions of democracy and civil society are not within the context of politicised *Īslāmīyat*. Thus, the contention here is that there are two concurrent discourses whereby democracy and citizenship are embedded in the construction of Iranian national identity. One calls for these notions within the context of political Islam and the other questions or even rejects these notions within the context of Islam. Bashiriyeh’s ‘democratic discourse of civil society’ includes the ‘coalition of reformist Islamic groups which won the [1997] elections’⁵⁰⁹. The contention here, however, is that there is a difference between the two; one is secular and the other is not. Finally, it should be

⁵⁰⁷ Op. cit. Habermas 1998, pp. 117-118

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid., pp. 119-120

⁵⁰⁹ Op. cit. **Bashiriyeh**, pp. 19-26

stressed that this is not a discussion regarding the viability or legitimacy of the notion of citizenship within the framework of Islamic democracy.

1.31.3 The Articulation of an Iranian Civic National Identity

Although the idea of citizenship in an Islamic framework is advocated and encouraged by Khatami, it appears that this is not necessarily welcomed. There is no doubt that the idea of Iranian civic national identity is desired by some Iranians. This is demonstrated in the discussion above of the work of Boroujerdi and Katouzian. Both allude to a construction of Iranian national identity that is based on the ideas of democracy and citizenship within the context of a civic national identity. This is also an issue discussed by Rahman Gahramanpour, who is based in Iran.⁵¹⁰ He considers whether or not Iran's civil institutions 'have a significant role in the process of creating national identity, [and] if not, what the main reasons for this are'.

Gahramanpour's discussion on civil institutions and national identity is placed within in the context of tradition and modernity. It is implied that developed societies are modern and developing societies still have traditional structures that hinder national identity construction at the level of civil institutions. Gahramanpour contends that in the traditional world the focus is on identities such as ethnicity, tribe, religion and family, which are perceived to be traditional. In the modern world, however, the focus is on identity based on citizenship and nation building. In this case, the articulation of national identities cannot be separated from the role of institutions. Thus, the role institutions play in the process of creating national identity is interconnected with the 'complexity of the modern world'. In contrast to this, as far as Gahramanpour is concerned, a society in which the elites do not allow the inclusion of these modern elements, the 'product of collective identity is traditional'.

On deconstructing Gahramanpour's argument, it appears that Iran is perceived as a traditional society. He argues that the ruling elites and their role in political activities and civic society have an important role in the process of national identity construction. Consequently, identity construction is dependent on and fluctuates according to pressure from the power system and the changing identity politics of the elites. Furthermore, the importance of and the need for political institutions for nation building in societies that are ever more complex and heterogeneous as opposed to being based on religion or ethnicity is stressed. To this regard, he states:

⁵¹⁰ Gahramanpour, Rahman. *Naqd-i Nahādhā-yi Madanī dar Farāyand-i Takvīn-i Huvīyat-i Millī dar Īrān (The Role of Civil Institutions in the Process of Creating National Identity in Iran)*. (unpublished paper), 2005.

no single social force can rule the society and create a political society unless it creates political institutions which can be independent of the political force which gave them life and sustained that life.

With regard to the specific case of Iran, he contends that Iran's civil society institutions tend to be subject to the fluctuating nature of the political system. Thus, they are not 'independent of the political force'. As a result of this, as he states:

civil institutions, because of acute vulnerability in face of the politics of the ruling elite in Iran, are not able to play a significant role in the process of strengthening and creating a visible modern dimension in national identity in face of the ... traditional dimension.

Gahramanpour concludes that Iran's complex transition from tradition to modernity on the state level is intertwined with the role of civil institutions in the development of national identity. In times of crisis tradition is strengthened for the maintenance of the ruling elite's power and interests. This is not unique to the Revolutionary era; the Pahlavis endeavoured to maintain the tradition of the kings of antiquity. Gahramanpour argues that for the progress of Iran and the coexistence of the traditional and modern aspects of Iranian national identity the introduction of modern elements into Iranian national identity and their institutionalisation are necessary. He argues:

Civil institutions with the widening of facilitation and partnership and the right of citizens, create the ground for the transition from traditional sub-national identities to national identity and increases the faithfulness of ethnic, religious and language minority groups to national identity.

It can be concluded from Gahramanpour's analysis, that there is a discourse that finds the notion of an ethnic nation is not sufficient to maintain national unity. Consequently, Iranian national identity cannot be entirely based on notions of common descent and culture. Rather, a civic understanding of Iranian national identity is required.

The way tradition and modernity are addressed in this analysis is also of interest. It seems that a modern Iranian society is yet to be achieved; both the Pahlavi era and post-Revolutionary Iran are considered as traditional because the notion of a civic national identity has not been achieved on the state level. Parallels can be drawn here with Boroujerdi's deconstruction of Iranian national identity. For both, it appears that whereas modernity is a positive phenomenon, the traditional is negative. Two issues should be raised with regard to this. First of all, since modernity is something to be aspired to, it can perhaps therefore be associated with the idea of "national progress". Secondly, since both Pahlavi and Revolutionary Iran are perceived as traditional, it can also possibly be assumed that unlike the Islamist, Iranist and Islamist-Iranian discourses, there is not the desire to "return to authenticity". Rather, there is a more forward looking approach to the

construction of Iranian national identity. In this sense, a parallel can be drawn with Rahyab's discourse of national identity.

In addition to the academic level, the discourse of a civic Iranian national identity is also articulated on other levels. For example, this is evident in the ideals articulated in the prescriptive discussion of Iranian nationalism by Pejman Yousefzadeh. In his article 'The Future of Iranian Nationalism' posted on the website of *Ettehad-e Jomhourikhahan-e Iran* (EJI), he provides a brief history of Iranian nationalism in twentieth century Iran. It must be noted, however, that the 'Iranian nationalism' under discussion is that of Kasravi and the Pahlavi shahs. It is interesting that there is no mention of Musaddiq's liberal nationalism. Yousefzadeh concludes the article by considering the prospects for the future of Iranian nationalism. He states:

Here is hoping that nationalistic forces manifest themselves in a pluralistic and responsible manner - as a political force that is inclusive instead of exclusive. Such a development may help Iran achieve the stability and democratic values that so many people wish for it to have.⁵¹¹

Thus, it is unmistakeable that the Iranian nationalism to which Yousefzadeh aspires is one that is inclusive and prescribes 'democratic values'. This makes the exclusion of Musaddiq's nationalism in his discussion on Iranian nationalism all the more interesting.

When the context of the article is taken into consideration, it confirms that his aspirations are more in line with the liberal nationalism of the Constitutional Revolution and Musaddiq rather than the dynastic nationalisms of the Pahlavi dynasty. *Ettehad-e Jomhourikhahan-e Iran* is a group that calls for 'unity for a secular and democratic republic in Iran'.⁵¹² Established in Germany in 2003, it advocates:

principles of a pluralistic republic, parliamentary democracy, separation of religion and state, and non-violent approach to establish a new system of government in Iran that adheres to equal rights for all based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.⁵¹³

The group also critique the Reformists because they 'failed to attain and secure the fundamental civil liberties and political rights of the citizenry'.⁵¹⁴ The approach of *Ettehad-e Jomhourikhahan-e Iran*, in addition to that of Yousefzadeh, and their critique demonstrate the values of a discourse that advocates civic Iranian national identity.

⁵¹¹ Yousefzadeh, Pejman. *The Future of Iranian Nationalism*. from www.jomhuri.com, 7 May 2003. - date accessed 10 November 2003

⁵¹² See <http://www.jomhuri.com>

⁵¹³ See <http://www.jomhuri.com/plus/aboutus.htm> - date accessed 22 June 2007.

⁵¹⁴ See http://www.jomhuri.com/plus/platform_for_unity.htm - date accessed 22 June 2007.

The significance of Yousefzadeh's article is that it illustrates that there are alternative discourses of Iranian national identity being articulated. It represents a discourse of national identity based on secular democratic values. Thus, it can be considered as a discourse that is resisting the Islamist, Iranist and Islamist-Iranian discourses of national identity. Although it is not clear whether or not Yousefzadeh is resident in Iran, this discourse cannot be assumed to be restricted to the diaspora alone.

It is necessary to place this discourse of a civic Iranian national identity into context. Indeed, if the essence of this discourse and that of the National Front's liberal nationalism are similar then the roots of the discourse of civic Iranian national identity can be traced back to the Constitutional Revolution. Here the discourse has been presented as a counter-discourse of national identity that reflects a resistance to the Iranist, Islamist and Islamist-Iranian discourses. In support of this contention, Bashiriyeh argues that 'the democratic discourse of civil society has always emerged as a form of resistance to domination.' Furthermore, it reflects 'a reaction to a deep discursive crisis in Iranian politics.' The domination is represented by the 'absolutist-modernist discourse', which is essentially the Iranist discourse of national identity. It is also his contention that the absolutist-modernist discourse 'lacked the capacity to promote civil society and a democratic way of life'. In addition to this, the 'ideological traditionalist discourse' which is essentially the Islamist discourse of national identity, 'created a mass society detrimental to democracy'.⁵¹⁵

With regard to the significance of the articulation of a civic Iranian national identity, the issues raised by Siavoshi are worthy of consideration. She asks whether there is a future for liberal nationalism in post-revolutionary Iran. In her opinion there are three reasons for the unlikelihood of a successful liberal nationalist movement. The first is the existence of politicised religion as it 'requires from society a great deal of conformity of action and ... conformity of thought.' The second reason is the 'lack of a viable liberal opposition'. The third reason is the rentier nature of the Iranian state because it is able to 'retain economic independence from civil society'.⁵¹⁶ These are legitimate reasons. Nevertheless, since it appears that the values of liberal nationalism are virtually the same as those embedded in the construction of a civic national identity, it is possible that there is a future for Siavoshi 'liberal nationalism'. Although it may not be the case that in Khatami's Iran that there is an organised movement based on these values, it may simply be a case of time.

⁵¹⁵ Op. cit. Bashiriyeh 2001, p. 22

⁵¹⁶ Op. cit. Siavoshi, pp. 189-191

1.32 Cosmopolitan Iranian national identity

In addition to a discourse of civic Iranian national identity, there is also a discourse of cosmopolitan Iranian national identity. However, it must be noted that the values embedded in the construction of a civic national identity are not necessarily exclusive of those in a cosmopolitan national identity. As has been stated already, the aim of this chapter is to illustrate that Iranian national identity during Khatami's presidency is not only articulated and constructed in terms of the Iranist, Islamist and Islamist-Iranian discourses of national identity. The idea of a cosmopolitan discourse of Iranian national identity represents another alternative discourse of national identity that resists the approaches discussed in Chapters Four and Five. The aim of this section, therefore, is to demonstrate how a cosmopolitan outlook to Iranian national identity, in a secular context, is articulated in Khatami's Iran. This will be done by presenting examples of how such a discourse is articulated. However, before proceeding it is first necessary to contextualise the notion of cosmopolitanism by considering it in relation to globalisation and nationalism.

1.32.1 Contextualising 'being Cosmopolitan' and Cosmopolitanism

The concepts of 'being cosmopolitan' and cosmopolitanism raise discussions on globalisation and the viability of national identity as opposed to a global identity, both of which are discussed extensively. It is impossible to address all these issues in depth in the context of this thesis. The aim of this section is rather to provide a theoretical understanding of the notions of 'being cosmopolitan' and cosmopolitanism in such a way so as to contextualise the idea of a cosmopolitan Iranian national identity. Since the idea of cosmopolitanism is often made in reference to globalisation, it worth first determining how the notion of globalisation is to be understood here. This will be followed by defining and differentiating between 'being cosmopolitan' and cosmopolitanism. Finally, before turning to how the idea of a cosmopolitan Iranian national identity is articulated, this section will turn to the relationship between globalisation, cosmopolitanism, being cosmopolitan and national identity.

Toby Dodge and Richard Higgott provide a good working definition that covers the several aspects of globalisation. They state:

Globalisation should be seen as a set of complex and contingent economic, technological, political, social, cultural and behavioural processes and practices

that increasingly transcend jurisdictional and territorial barriers. These processes lack uniformity and are not inevitable or irreversible.⁵¹⁷

This definition is appropriate because it addresses the fact that all aspects of globalisation in its many forms are inextricably linked and interdependent on one another. Globalisation cannot be considered simply in terms of either economic globalisation or cultural globalisation.

Furthermore, as Dodge and Higgott argue, while governments in the West, especially that of the US, see globalisation and everything that goes with it as a very positive force, this is not necessarily the case with other regions and countries. For example, for some, especially in the Third World in general and the Middle East in particular, the idea of economic globalisation and cultural globalisation are not necessarily positively perceived.⁵¹⁸ The former is associated with ‘neo-liberal policy prescriptions’ and are considered as ‘a direct attack on their states’ sovereignty and their own autonomy.’⁵¹⁹ The latter is perceived by some as ‘the accelerating encroachment of a homogenised, westernised, consumer culture’⁵²⁰, which is represented by American mass culture and a threat to cultural “authenticity”. It is not surprising therefore that those who subscribe to the Islamist discourse of national identity, in the context of Iran, would perceive globalisation in this sense as *gharbzadagi*.

However, the situation is quite different when taking into consideration the approach to the West advocated by Khatami and the Reformists. Ansari points out that the Reformists argued that ‘Iran could not resist globalising trends, even if they were characterised as a ‘cultural onslaught’. Instead, the country had to accommodate, appropriate and respond.’⁵²¹ Thus, it is argued that ‘cultural globalisation was, in this respect, not so much imposed on Iran as fully endorsed but then transformed by it.’⁵²² For this reason, in the case of Iran, and Khatami’s Iran in particular, cultural globalisation cannot be perceived simply in terms of imperialism. While the Islamist discourse of national identity resists cultural globalisation on the basis that it is essentially ‘Americanisation’, the Islamist-

⁵¹⁷ Dodge, Toby and Higgott, Richard. (eds) *Globalization and the Middle East: Islam, Economy, Society and Politics*. London: The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2002. p.15

⁵¹⁸ Ibid., p. 15

⁵¹⁹ Ibid., p.16

⁵²⁰ Op. cit. Tomlinson, p. 269 refers to Shepard and Hyaduck. (eds) *From ACT UP to the WTO: Urban Protest and Community Building in the Era of Globalization*. London: Verso, 2002

⁵²¹ Ansari, Ali M. ‘Cultural Transmutations: The Dialectics of Globalization in Contemporary Iran’ in Dodge, Toby and Higgott, Richard. (eds) *Globalization and the Middle East: Islam, Economy, Society and Politics*. London: The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2002. pp. 132-148, pp. 137-138

⁵²² Ibid., p. 138

Iranian discourse of national identity embraces it. Once again, it becomes evident that contrasting discourses are being articulated on the state level.

The idea of a more globalised world raises the issue of the viability of a *national* identity. Its sustainability is questioned; is it the end of nationalism, or does it reinforce nationalism. If national identity is no longer viable, then perhaps the notion of a *global* identity or global citizenship is. This raises the issue of a cosmopolitan identity. The notion of 'being cosmopolitan' should not be confused with the idea of cosmopolitanism, although there are similarities. As Zubaida notes, 'The term 'cosmopolitan' is used in a range of overlapping but not always coinciding meanings. It is used of persons, groups and milieus, as well as ideologies and practices.'⁵²³ While being cosmopolitan essentially refers to a type of individual or the type of life-style an individual may lead, the latter can be understood in terms ideology. For example, on the one hand, *economic* cosmopolitanism can refer to a particular approach to economic activity and, on the other hand, *political* cosmopolitanism can refer to a particular approach to the way in which states, or the world as a whole, should be governed. The articulation of a cosmopolitan Iranian national identity to be discussed in the chapter can be understood in terms of 'being cosmopolitan' as opposed to cosmopolitanism as an ideology. Nevertheless, the relationship between cosmopolitanism as an ideology and nationalism makes it necessary for the latter to be addressed.

The idea of being cosmopolitan, which is not to be confused with being multi-cultural, is considered by Zubaida.⁵²⁴ Rather, as he believes it is understood, it is:

the development of ways of living and thinking, styles of life which are deracinated from communities and cultures of origin, from conventional living, from family and homecentredness, and have developed into a culturally promiscuous life, drawing on diverse ideas, traditions and innovations.⁵²⁵

In this case, the idea of being cosmopolitan is not necessarily opposed to nationalism nor does it imply an acceptance of cosmopolitanism as an ideology. The sense of 'being cosmopolitan' is further elaborated by Zubaida's discussion in the specific context of the Middle East. It is his contention that the projected image of cosmopolitanism in the Middle East in the first half of the twentieth century was of 'networks and milieus of intellectuals, artists, dilettantes, and *flâneurs* in urban centres, deracinated, transcending recently impermeable communal and religious boundaries, daring and experimenting.' He

⁵²³ Zubaida, Sami. 'Cosmopolitanism and the Middle East' in Meijer, Roel. (ed) *Cosmopolitanism, Identity and Authenticity in the Middle East*. Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1999. pp. 15-33, p. 15

⁵²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 15-33

⁵²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16

goes on to argue that it is likely that these kinds of milieus and networks continue to exist and possibly more extensively.⁵²⁶

Pippa Norris conflates the two ways of understanding cosmopolitanism as identified by Zubaida. It is her contention that:

cosmopolitans can be understood as those who identify more broadly with their continent or with the world as a whole, and who have greater faith in the institutions of global governance.⁵²⁷

The first part of the definition is similar to Zubaida's description of those who might be part of a cosmopolitan milieu. The second part, those 'who have greater faith in the institutions of global governance', can be understood in terms of economic and/or political cosmopolitanism, and thus as ideological cosmopolitanism. In this case the ideology relates to economics and governance. Norris' definition is provided in contrast to that of 'nationalists':

those who identify strongly with their nation-state, who have little confidence in multilateral and international institutions, and who favour policies of national economic protectionism over the free trade of goods and services.⁵²⁸

In this case, the notions of cosmopolitanism and nationalism are positioned in opposition to each other. Thus, the issue of whether globalisation crates an increased likelihood of cosmopolitanism or nationalism is raised.

Norris presents both sides of the argument. On the one hand, it is contended that eventually national boundaries will be transcended by humanity thus moving towards a global society and culture. Such a society and culture would be one whereby 'the globalisation of markets, governance, and communications' would 'strengthen a cosmopolitan orientation' and identities would be broadened 'beyond national boundaries to a world community'. Thus, the idea of a global citizenship is developed and is possibly more likely. Nevertheless, on the other hand, there is also doubt as to whether there is a cosmopolitan identity that would replace the instinctive attraction of nationalism. Rather, the notions of world economy and governance are possibly having the reverse effect: 'strengthening deep-rooted attitudes towards nationalism and the nation-state.'⁵²⁹ However, a point that should be raised here is the possibility that nationalist sentiment is on the rise because so-called 'global governance', whether economically or politically, is

⁵²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 29

⁵²⁷ Norris, Pippa. 'Global Governance and Cosmopolitan Citizens' in Held, David and McGrew, Anthony. (eds) *The Global Transformations Reader: An Introduction to the Globalization Debate*. 2nd edn. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000. pp. 287-298, p. 289

⁵²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 289

⁵²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 287-289

perceived by some to be an attempt at western governance of the globe, or even imperialism. It cannot be assumed that just because nationalist ideologies appear to be rejecting current trends in economic or political globalisation and the idea of global governance, that, the general idea of global governance is rejected.

Returning to the specific case of the Middle East, this subject is discussed by Roel Meijer. He contends:

Despite the trend towards globalisation, or perhaps because of these developments, a reaction has set in. Nationalism has raised its ugly head, new barriers have been erected and self-imposed confines have been established. Rather than looking outward to contact other cultures and to have the freedom to choose eclectically between elements of different cultures, the search for the self and own identity has turned inwards, seeking exclusivity.⁵³⁰

Thus, as Meijer contends, due to the trend towards globalisation, cosmopolitanism has become a rare phenomenon in the Middle East.⁵³¹ However, when looking at the specific case of Iran, the picture appears far more complicated. On the one hand, the idea of nationalism in reaction to globalisation certainly seems to be the trend when considering the Iranist and Islamist discourses of national identity. They represent an inward looking trend, rather than an outward looking trend in their attempts to construct the 'self'. However, on the other hand, in contrast to these, the Islamist-Iranian discourse and the espousal of 'dialogue among civilisations' is an attempt at a move away from an inward looking approach to national identity. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, there is also the embracing of globalisation in its cultural form. That which remains to be addressed is whether there is a cosmopolitan discourse in the articulation of national identity in Khatami's Iran. This will be addressed below

1.32.2 The Articulation of a Cosmopolitan Iranian Identity

As illustrated above, cosmopolitanism in its most general sense can be considered as 'looking outward to contact other cultures and to have the freedom to choose eclectically between elements of different cultures'. In relation to this definition, the Islamist-Iranian discourse of national identity, to a certain extent, can be considered as cosmopolitan because of its notion of 'dialogue among civilisations', and its approach to cultural globalisation. Indeed, as Zubaida argues, 'religions can be cosmopolitan'.⁵³² If this is the case, then surely so can constructions of national identity based on religion. However, if being cosmopolitan is to be 'deracinated from communities and cultures of origin',

⁵³⁰ Meijer, Roel. (ed) *Cosmopolitanism, Identity and Authenticity in the Middle East*. Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1999. p. 1

⁵³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 1

⁵³² Op. cit. Zubaida 1999, p. 15

despite the less inward looking approach to national identity, the Islamist-Iranian discourse of national identity is far from cosmopolitan. To the contrary, it is very much rooted in Iran's 'cultures of origin'.

In addition to the Islamist-Iranian discourse of national identity, which could be argued to have a somewhat cosmopolitan character, there is also the articulation of an outward looking approach to Iranian national identity that is not within the framework of politicised *Īslāmīyat*. If Zubaida's definition of cosmopolitan milieus is taken into consideration, there do exist 'networks and milieus of intellectuals [and] artists' that exist in urban areas and that are, to a certain extent, 'transcending recently impermeable communal and religious boundaries, daring and experimenting'. For example, it can be argued that the arts scene in Tehran represents some sort of cosmopolitan milieu. In addition to this, some of those interviewed, Anahita, Mariam, Reza, and Kaveh and their friends and associates, because of their occupations and interests, also represent some sort of cosmopolitan milieu. Their lifestyle is based in the urban space of Tehran where the boundaries are being pushed. As will be illustrated below, this is also the case with Tehran's rock musicians. However, whether these groups and individuals can be considered as 'deracinated' is debateable. Perhaps the question that should be asked, therefore, is the *extent* to which certain groups in society can be considered as cosmopolitan.

Zubaida raises the question, 'Does cultural globalisation represent heightened cosmopolitanism?' In response to this, it is his contention that cosmopolitan milieus have been 'routinised'. This means that they have 'lost their special identities and charismatic images'.⁵³³ It is possible that part of this routinisation is being rooted in national identity as opposed to being 'deracinated' from cultural origins. If this is the case, the very label 'cosmopolitan Iranian national identity' no longer seems an oxymoron. It appears that such a discourse exists. It is one whereby being Iranian remains important, but so is being part of the global community and being cosmopolitan in one way or another.

Such a cosmopolitan approach to Iranian national identity has been identified by Laudan Nooshin in her research on rock bands in Tehran that are 'metaphorically *and* physically' underground.⁵³⁴ She provides a very interesting insight into this world. It is her contention that the rock musicians consider their music not only locally, but also internationally. This is done by positioning their music 'in terms of youth expression and cosmopolitanism, as

⁵³³ *Ibid.*, p. 29

⁵³⁴ Nooshin, Laudan. 'Underground, Overground: Rock Music and Youth Discourses in Iran', *Iranian Studies* (Special Issue: Music and Society in Iran), 38, 3, 2005. pp. 463-494

well as an increasingly self-generating local expression of a more widely shared “global” culture.⁵³⁵ It seems that their music remains local because national identity, or at least being Iranian, remains important. To this regard, Nooshin cites an extract from an interview with the band *127*:

... an Iranian brand of alternative, because it is made by us and we are all Iranian ... when you listen to “Coming Around” ... it has an Iranian air. Not the Iran of the past, but our Iran today, where we have lived for the last 20 years.⁵³⁶

The statement ‘not the Iran of the past, but our Iran today’ is significant. A parallel can be drawn here with Rahyab’s articulation of Iranian national identity, as illustrated above. It also represents resistance to the Islamist, Iranist and Islamist-Iranian discourses of national identity because of their rejection of “returning” to a static past. Thus, as Nooshin argues, *127* are reconstructing Iranian national identity. She states:

Far from negating a national framework for their music, then, *127* seek to redefine it and move towards a new vision of national identity which is both rooted at home and is at the same time outward-looking and cosmopolitan.⁵³⁷

Once again a parallel can be drawn with Rahyab. This time it is with his call for a ‘renewal’ of Iranian national identity. It is Nooshin’s contention that the rock musicians’ outward-looking approach is a deliberate engagement in a cultural dialogue that imposes a ‘debate about Iran’s relationship with the outside world, particularly the West, and their future in an increasingly global environment’.⁵³⁸ A question that must be asked in relation to this deliberate engagement with the West is whether such an understanding is due to Khatami and his notion of ‘dialogue among civilisations’. It is possible that because Khatami established the idea of dialogue as part of an official state public discourse, it has become more acceptable to engage with the West. On the other hand, it is also possible that this ‘outward-looking and cosmopolitan’ attitude has always existed in post-Revolutionary Iran; it is simply the case that it is more easily articulated in *Khatami’s* Iran.

Due to the values embedded in the construction of a cosmopolitan articulation of Iranian national identity, there is no doubt that it is a counter-discourse resisting the official state discourses. This resistance is not surprising. As Nooshin points out, Iranian rock music is

⁵³⁵ Nooshin, Laudan. ‘The Language of Rock: Iranian Youth, Popular Music, and National Identity’, in Semati, Mehdi. *Media, Culture and Society in Iran*. New York: Routledge, forthcoming 2007.

⁵³⁶ Garshasbi, Hesam. (2003) ‘The Story of the Elephant and Rock music’, Interview with *127*, 2003. www.tehranavenue.com/article.php?id=175 (date accessed 23.05.05) as cited by Nooshin. ‘The Language of Rock’ forthcoming 2007.

⁵³⁷ Op. cit. Nooshin. ‘The Language of Rock’ forthcoming 2007.

⁵³⁸ *Ibid.*

criticised by some because it is considered as *gharbzadagī*; it does not sound “Iranian”.⁵³⁹ This critique confirms a static construction of Iranian national identity articulated presumably by those of the Islamist discourse. Furthermore, the fact that the rock bands have to go through a complicated process of gaining permission to perform in public also alludes to their resistance to the official state discourses.⁵⁴⁰ Indeed, to this regard, Nooshin herself argues that ‘rock represents an alternative discourse precisely because of its rejection by the powercentre and its problematisation within dominant discourses.’⁵⁴¹

Resistance to the perceived hegemony of the state discourses of national identity is also reflected in their secular approach. To this regard, Nooshin contends:

instead projecting a different kind of national identity which reflects a growing secularism and cosmopolitanism among young people and which draws on very different signifiers (including occasional references to Iran’s pre-Islamic heritage, for example in band names such as *Ahoora*).⁵⁴²

Nonetheless, despite this resistance to the perceived hegemony of state articulations of Iranian national identity, it must be noted that the very existence of Khatami and his discourse of national identity have allowed for a cosmopolitan discourse to be more easily articulated, and possibly for the first time for some. It can be argued that this is the legacy of the Khatami period which, to a certain extent, has enabled alternative expressions of Iranian national identity.

The creation of space for alternative discourses of national identity it not only evident in the world of Tehran’s rock bands, but also in the world of Art. In an interview carried out in November 2005 with Hamid Severi, the head of the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art’s Research Department, he explained the role the museum played during Khatami’s presidency in the articulation of Iranian national identity. He states:

In Khatami’s era something happened that had a big impact on the artistic space – one of them is toleration of the outside world ... non-Iranian artists can come here and hold an exhibition, and Iranian artists resident outside the country come and give an exhibition here. Books that were censored before enter Iran ... Young Iranians who have never had a link with outside before, now have a link.⁵⁴³

⁵³⁹ **Ibid.** It is also worth mentioning ‘popular music of all kinds had proved problematic for the government, both in general terms because of music’s religiously-contested status ... This was compounded by the fact that Western-style Iranian pop had been heavily promoted by the pre-revolutionary Pahlavi monarchy modernising ... policies.’ Nooshin 2005, p. 469

⁵⁴⁰ See Nooshin 2005 for a discussion on gaining permission.

⁵⁴¹ Op. cit. Nooshin 2005, p. 494

⁵⁴² Op. cit. Nooshin. ‘The Language of Rock’. forthcoming 2007.

⁵⁴³ Interview by author with Hamid Severi in Tehran on 14 November 2005

The impression that is given here by Severi's account is that Khatami's policies have provided the opportunity for dialogue with the art world outside of Iran. This alludes to the more outward-looking approach of a cosmopolitan attitude. Thus, it is quite possible that this leads to a more cosmopolitan approach to Iranian national identity.

It is Severi's contention that Khatami's provision of a more politically open space has also enabled a 'contemporary' Iranian national identity to be expressed. He states:

The Museum made the most of the [politically] open space and when the Museum uses this space and shows Iran's contemporary art in this way, what happens? It brings the inhabitants of the world an identity of contemporary Iran. Before, when we thought about being Iranian, what came to our minds? Now, with these activities of the Museum, other things also come to our minds. Being Iranian is not only chador. Being Iranian is not only *tasbīh*. There is that too ... but, a contemporary Iranian artist can have an installation...⁵⁴⁴

The idea of 'contemporary Iran' is crucial here. It signifies a need to move away from an understanding of Iran and Iranian identity, whether national or not, based on the past. Rather, it demonstrates the need to look at Iran and Iranian identity in terms of current trends and sentiments. Thus, the notion of a "return" to authenticity is rejected; the contemporary is also "authentic". Once again, the argument given by Rahyab is being articulated; it is the *renewal* of identity and not the *reproduction* of identity that is required.⁵⁴⁵ In addition to this, it is also worth making a link with Soroush's discourse. Contemporary Iran, like many societies, is influenced by "western" culture. Thus, it is possible that it is precisely this type of understanding of Iranian national identity that Soroush articulates: being Iranian, being Islamic and being Western. The three identities are amalgamated to create an authentic contemporary Iranian culture and therefore national identity.

Nevertheless, this final extract from the interview with Severi is probably the most pertinent. He makes a very interesting point; this contemporary and cosmopolitan construction of Iranian identity is *not* universal. He states:

We cannot say that this is Iranian identity; we can only say that this is the identity of some Iranians. ... In this sense, the museum has a role in identity, in comparison to some other centres it may not be very powerful, and it is not influential.⁵⁴⁶

The contention of this thesis is that Iranian national identity is contested and this contestation is reflected in the multiple discourses of Iranian national identity. This 'contemporary' Iranian identity, which has cosmopolitan characteristics, can only be the

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁵ Op. cit. Rahyab, p. 78

⁵⁴⁶ Interview by author with Hamid Severi in Tehran on 14 November 2005

discourse of some. Nevertheless, the museum is significant; when there are exhibitions of young Iranians' work an identity becomes apparent that was not paid attention to previously.⁵⁴⁷

Despite Meijer's argument that what has been considered as cosmopolitan milieu has become rare in the Middle East, it appears that there are groups in Tehran's society that articulate a cosmopolitan view of Iranian national identity. It cannot be argued that it is non-existent; there is certainly a discourse that has a more cosmopolitan approach to the construction of Iranian national identity in Khatami's Iran. Furthermore, just as two discourses, one based on Islam and the other secular, in which the notions of democracy, citizenship and republicanism are integral co-exist in Khatami's Iran, so do two discourses that have some sort of cosmopolitan identity. One is within the framework of politicised *Īslāmīyat*, and the other rejects the notion of politicised *Īslāmīyat*. Therefore, the label of a cosmopolitan identity cannot be reserved to a discourse that resists the state discourses of national identity. It should also be stressed that these two discourses are interdependent since it is Khatami and his Islamist-Iranian discourse of national identity have provided a space where the articulation cosmopolitan national identity that has become easier.

Having presented these ideas regarding a contemporary cosmopolitan Iranian identity, the question that must be raised is how do these relate to national identity and the system of government in particular? In the cases of the music and art scenes presented here, there is admittedly no explicit expression of the desired political apparatus. Their articulation of cosmopolitanism is not ideological in the sense that it does not relate to economic or political cosmopolitanism. Nonetheless, despite the calls for Iranian national identity based on the prioritisation of either *Īrānīyat* or *Īslāmīyat* and their subsequent political systems as the "authentic" Iranian national identity and the means of achieving that authenticity, there are groups in Iranian society who reject this simply through the way they lead their lives. Furthermore, their lifestyles can only exist in the public space if there is a political system that allows that expression. The Islamist discourse of Iranian national identity simply does not allow that. Although, the space provided by the Islamist-Iranian discourse has to a certain extent provided the space for alternative discourses of national identity, Khatami's idea of 'Iranian-Islamic' identity essentially remains located in the past. It is not the 'contemporary' Iranian identity articulated here. Thus, although there is no explicit call for a particular political system represented in these examples, it

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid.

can be assumed that there is an implicit call for something different to Iran's current political system.

1.33 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to demonstrate the contention that in addition to the Islamist, Iranist and Islamist-Iranian discourses of national identity, the period of Khatami's presidency also bears witness to alternative discourses of national identity that are not based on the politicisation of *Īslāmīyat* or *Īrānīyat*. Such discourses that have been identified for discussion here are the discourse of civic Iranian national identity and the discourse of cosmopolitan Iranian national identity. These are non-state discourses of national identity that reject and resist the notion of politicised culture as the basis of Iranian national identity construction. With the co-existence of the Iranist discourse of national identity alongside the discourse of civic Iranian national identity and the discourse of cosmopolitan national identity, the construction of national identity is contested on the non-state level. Thus, there is contestation on both the non-state and state levels. By looking at these constructions of national identity in terms of discourses, it has been possible to elaborate further on the 'complexities of political identity and difference' with regard to national identity in Iran. The existence of these discourses also contributes the contention of 'ideological diversity' in Iranian society.

Discourse analysis has also enabled the identification of the ideologies embedded in the constructions of National identity. In addition to this discourse approach, a theoretical analysis of the notions of civic nation and cosmopolitanism, have also enabled how Iranian national identity has been articulated by individuals can be identified within a particular discourse. As has been illustrated, a civic nation, as opposed to the notion of ethnic nation, is not based on ideas such as common descent or culture. Rather, it is based on values such as citizenship, human rights, democracy and shared political culture in a secular framework. This chapter illustrated how these values have been articulated in the examples provided. Furthermore, although these values are also articulated in the Islamist-Iranian discourse of national identity, the idea of a civic nation rejects the framework of politicised *Īslāmīyat*, as it is a culture that is not shared by all in the society. Thus, it has been contended that there are two concurrent discourses of national identity in which the notions of citizenship, democracy and civil society are embedded: the Islamist-Iranian discourse of national identity and the discourse of civic national identity.

This chapter has also demonstrated that the notion of cosmopolitanism is contested. However, in its broadest sense it can be considered as an outward-looking approach to life

in general. Furthermore, it has also been demonstrated that cosmopolitanism is not necessarily restricted to secular discourses. This is evident in the cosmopolitan nature of the Islamist-Iranian discourse of national identity. Nevertheless, the contention here is that there is a discourse of cosmopolitan Iranian national identity that resists the politicisation of culture as the basis of national identity and for this reason it can be considered as a secular discourse. Despite this, the articulations of a cosmopolitan Iranian national identity, as reflected in the examples chosen for discussion in this thesis, are not 'deracinated' from their 'cultural origins'. Rather, this articulation of cosmopolitanism is grounded in being Iranian. As far as those articulating it are concerned, this is *contemporary* Iranian national identity; it is not based on a reconstruction of Iran of the past. Thus, on this level, the discourse of cosmopolitan Iranian national identity differs from the Islamist-Iranian discourse of national identity. Nonetheless, just as the Islamist-Iranian discourse of national identity has allowed for more space for the articulation of a civic Iranian national identity, it has also allowed space for the articulation of a cosmopolitan discourse of Iranian national identity.

This chapter has demonstrated that the articulation of a counter-hegemonic dimension with regard to the way Iranian national identity should be constructed exists in different ways and on different levels. First of all, there are the discussions on Iranian national identity by Iranian academics both in Iran and among the diaspora. The analysis of this issue by Gahramanpour, Boroujerdi and Katouzian, are not simply discussions of Iranian national identity. They also suggest, whether explicitly or implicitly, the way Iranian national identity should be constructed. Thus, the way in which this issue is dealt with reflects a particular discourse regarding Iranian national identity. However, their discussions do not address the issue of Iranian national identity as a whole. Furthermore, the discourses of cosmopolitanism and civic Iranian national identity cannot be addressed simply in terms of examples of resistance to a perceived hegemony. For others in Iranian society, it is discourses such as these that are believed to be the hegemonic forces in the society.

A point that must be raised is that the notion of civic national identity for some will not be considered as authentic, and even as *gharbzadagī*. Indeed, the association between civic national identity and democratic values in a secular context will be thought of as a Western ideology. Thus, it is definitely *gharbzadagī*. In addition to this, the activities of the rock bands are also considered as *gharbzadagī*. This introduces yet another layer of the hegemonic and counter-hegemonic dynamic. Not only are the discourses of cosmopolitan and civic national identity resisting the perceived hegemony of the Islamist

and Islamist-Iranian official state discourses of national identity, but the Islamist discourse in particular is also resisting the ideologies represented in these two discourses. Thus, the discourses of civic Iranian national identity and cosmopolitan national identity are at once counter-hegemonic and hegemonic.

Although the discourses of civic and cosmopolitan national identity resist the politicisation of *Īslāmīyat* and *Īrānīyat* as the basis of national identity construction and the political system, it must be stressed that both these cultures continue to be an important part of Iranian identity. A rejection of the politicisation of culture does not mean the rejection of *Īrānīyat* and *Īslāmīyat* as part of Iranian identity. Rather, it is a case of *Īrānīyat* and *Īslāmīyat* being separated from the political level. In Chapter Two, the distinction between ‘Iranian national identity’ and ‘Iranian identity’ was made. The two concepts are not synonymous. Since nation, the combination of *dawlat* and *millat* (state and people), is a political unit, the term ‘Iranian national identity’ thus relates to a political identity. For this reason, a distinction can be made between Iranian national identity and Iranian identity. While *Īslāmīyat* and *Īrānīyat* may be rejected as the basis of national identity on account of their politicisation, they can continue to be appreciated as a part of Iranian identity.

The appreciation for *Īslāmīyat* and *Īrānīyat* is represented on a number of levels. One level that has been considered in this chapter is in the area of both popular and high culture. For example, it is clear in the case of the rock bands that Iran’s pre-Islamic culture is integral to their idea of Iranian identity. Similarly, in the case of Rahyab’s critique, the idea of Iran’s Islamic and pre-Islamic civilisations is important. Aside from these examples, the popularity of ‘*ashūra* and other religious festivals and the display of replicas from Achaemenid and Sasanian Iran demonstrate the importance of *Īrānīyat* and *Īslāmīyat* in Iranian identity. Although there may be the rejection of politicised culture, the continued and constant articulation of *Īrānīyat* by Iranians as part of their identity and culture could itself be considered a political act. It can be interpreted as a form of resistance to the Islamist discourse of national identity in particular. However, it should also be mentioned that more conservative elements of the Islamic Republic have not necessarily always ignored Iran’s pre-Islamic culture.⁵⁴⁸

⁵⁴⁸ Professor Ali Ansari’s British Institute of Persian Studies’ Summer lecture entitled ‘The Idea of Iran’, 8 June 2007

Conclusions

The aim of this thesis has been to expand the discussion on Iranian national identity into the Khatami period. In order to do this, as mentioned in Chapter One, three research questions were posed. The first asks what Iranian national identity during the Khatami period is. The second raises the issue of how national identity during this period compares and relates to earlier twentieth century constructions. The final question asks what national identity during the Khatami period tells us about the social and political dynamics of Khatami's presidency.

In response to the first research question, the first conclusion that can be made is that the issue of national identity can be better understood in terms of five competing concurrent discourses of national identity. It has been acknowledged that they are not the only ones. The first is the Islamist, which is a state discourse based on the prioritisation and politicisation of *Īslāmīyat*. The second, the Iranist, is a non-state discourse that is based on the prioritisation and politicisation of *Īrānīyat*. The third is the Islamist-Iranian discourse of national identity, also a state discourse, which is based on *Īrānīyat*, politicised *Īslāmīyat*, *mardumsālārī*, and the notion of 'dialogue among civilisations'. The fourth, a non-state discourse, is based on the notion of a civic nation and rejects the politicisation of culture. The fifth and final discourse of national identity, also a non-state discourse, is based on a cosmopolitan idea of the Iranian nation and also rejects the politicisation of culture.

Taking into consideration the existence and articulation of these multiple discourses, it can be concluded that national identity is constructed on both the state and non-state levels as well as in both public and private spaces. Thus, the question '*Kudūm Millī Garāyī?*' (Which nationalism?)⁵⁴⁹, as raised in the article of the same name, is certainly worthwhile. Indeed, the existence of multiple discourses of Iranian national identity certainly adds to the contention that 'there has been a "war of discourses" since the 1997 presidential elections'.⁵⁵⁰

A detailed discourse analysis of various texts has illustrated that despite the hegemonic and counter-hegemonic dynamic between these discourses, there are a number of similarities. Furthermore, the thesis has also demonstrated that certain similarities are indeed the cause for the fundamental difference between the discourses and therefore their competitive relationship. One such similarity is that for all, the 'nature' of the national

⁵⁴⁹ Quchani, Mohammad. 'Kudūm millī garāyī? (Which Nationalism?)', *Sharq*. 9 October 2005

⁵⁵⁰ Op. cit. Bashiriyeh 2001, p. 22

identity prescribed has a direct relationship with a desired political apparatus or system. In the case of the Islamist, Islamist-Iranian and Iranist discourses of national identity, the politicisation of culture, *Īrānīyat* or *Īslāmīyat*, justifies, legitimises and advocates a particular form of political system. For the Iranist discourse, *Īrānīyat*, in the form of the dynastic nationalism of and a “return to” Achaemenid Iran by the two Pahlavi shahs, was used as a means of legitimising a particular political system or apparatus, namely monarchy. During the Khatami period, for some it is the values of Sasanian Iran that are desired and articulated as a means of resistance to the Islamic Republic. In contrast to this, *Īslāmīyat* is used as a means of legitimising the idea of Islamic theocracy as the system of government in the Islamist discourse. The contention that democracy is considered as inherent in Islam is used by the Islamist-Iranian discourse to legitimise Islamic democracy as opposed to theocracy. The way in which *Īslāmīyat* and *Īrānīyat* are used by these discourses also reflects how ideology is embedded in the construction of national identity. For the Iranist discourse, *Īrānīyat* is the ideology; for the Islamist discourse it is a theocratic *Īslāmīyat* and for the Islamist-Iranian discourse it is a democratic *Īslāmīyat*.

In addition to these, the notion of an Iranian civic and/or cosmopolitan national identity rejects the politicisation of culture, whether *Īrānīyat* or *Īslāmīyat*. Consequently, political systems associated with the Iranist, Islamist and Islamist-Iranian discourses are also rejected. As a result of this, alternative forms of government must be sought. As has been argued, the civic notion of nation is attached to a secular notion of democratic practice. It can also be concluded that the idea of a cosmopolitan discourse is also based on a secular political system.

The relationship between these discourses and their respective political systems raises the issue of the difference between the notion of Iranian identity and Iranian national identity. The two concepts must not be conflated. Iranian *national* identity is political in the sense that it is associated with the state’s identity and the political apparatus. In other words, while the politicisation of *Īslāmīyat* and *Īrānīyat* may be rejected in national identity, they continue to be part of Iranian identity.

This thesis has demonstrated complex sets of relationships between these discourses. One of these is the issue of inclusivity and exclusivity. The rejection of the politicisation of *Īslāmīyat* and *Īrānīyat* is partly based on the premise that the politicisation of culture is ultimately an exclusive construction because it is based on only one of Iran’s cultures. It does not allow for alternative expressions. In the case of the discourse of civic Iranian

national identity, the notion of secular democratic practice or process is more inclusive than the political systems of the Iranist, Islamist and Islamist-Iranian discourses of national identity. However, compared to the Iranist and Islamist discourses, the Islamist-Iranian discourse is more inclusive due to the acknowledgement of both *Īrānīyat* and *Īslāmīyat* as being “authentically Iranian” and also because of the notion of citizenship within the context of Islamic *mardumsālārī*.

The notion of being “authentically Iranian”, a common value embedded in the constructions of national identity articulated by the different discourses, further demonstrates the complexity of the relationship between these discourses. What is perceived to be authentically Iranian is intrinsically linked with anti-imperialist sentiment and Iran’s historical experience. Chapter Three illustrated that throughout Iran’s twentieth century history there existed concurrent competing Iranian nationalisms. One of the fundamental factors in these nationalisms was anti-imperialism, or the need to gain or maintain Iran’s independence. However, how this is expressed and how the independence of Iran is to be achieved and maintained is contested. It has been illustrated that for some the most appropriate means of achieving independence was to “return to” Iran’s authentic identity and culture, which in itself is contested. This continues to be the case during Khatami’s presidency.

In the case of both the Islamist and Iranist discourses of national identity, the notion of authenticity is used as a further source of legitimacy. For the Iranist discourse it is *Īrānīyat* that is “authentic”, while for the Islamist discourse it is *Īslāmīyat*. However, it is not only *Īslāmīyat* or *Īrānīyat* that are associated with authenticity. The notion of democracy, for the Islamist-Iranian discourse and the discourse of civic national identity, also has meanings of authenticity attached to it. In the Islamist-Iranian discourse of national identity, not only is Islam inherently democratic, but democracy is also perceived as a means of maintaining Iran’s independence as it was for Musaddiq and liberal nationalism. Thus, it can be concluded that democracy continues to be part of the process of formulating the most appropriate means of government devoid of direct influence from external powers. In addition to this, democracy has legitimacy because its “authenticity” is based on Iran’s historical experience.

Taking into consideration Iran’s historical experience, the need to preserve independence from external forces continues to be perceived as essential. Thus, anti-imperialism forms a crucial set of values embedded in the construction of national identity. Although this is evident on non-state levels, it is particularly evident in the two state discourses. However,

how anti-imperialism is articulated differs. While the Islamist discourse is typical of Occidentalism whereby any association with the West, in ideological or cultural terms, is perceived as a threat to independence and Iranian sovereignty, Khatami advocates dialogue between Iran and the West on the basis of *mutual* respect. Khatami also uses the meanings attached to the idea of democracy as articulated by Musaddiq and during the Constitutional Revolution.

In addition to Iran's twentieth century historical experience, its more distant past is also essential in the construction of national identity. This is reflected in the use of Iran's pre-Islamic culture, or *Īrānīyat*. The ideas and actions of Akhundzadah, Kermani, Reza Shah and Mohammad Reza Shah reflect this. However, while parallels can be drawn with the Khatami period where *Īrānīyat* continues to be embedded in the construction of Iranian national identity, it is Sasanian Iran that is being rediscovered as opposed to Achaemenid Iran. This is of particular significance because not only does it demonstrate a departure from the Islamist discourses, but also from the dynastic nationalism of Mohammad Reza Shah. Indeed, a subject worthy of future research is whether this rediscovery of Sasanian Iran is part of a stronger and broader sentiment. With regard to the "return" to *Īslāmīyat*, however, there appears to be more of a continuation rather than a departure. This is evident in the parallels drawn between Khamene'i's Islamist discourse and the discourses of both Al-e Ahmad and Shari'ati.

The return to Iran's more distant past is also evident in the notion of civilisation and the meanings attached to it. Not only are *Īrānīyat* and *Īslāmīyat* associated with what is perceived to be authentically Iranian, but they are also associated with the notion of civilisation and what is perceived to be Iran's *former* glory. It has been demonstrated that the importance attached to Iranian civilisation, whether Islamic or pre-Islamic, is common in all the discourses of national identity identified and analysed in this thesis. Thus, the meanings attached to civilisation are not necessarily restricted to the discourses of national identity where culture is politicised.

In summary, the five discourses deconstructed in this thesis relate to earlier constructions of Iranian national identity in a number of ways. Thus, many of the ideologies embedded in the various constructions, such as the values associated with *Īslāmīyat*, *Īrānīyat*, democracy and anti-imperialism, have been integral to the constructions of Iranian national identity throughout the twentieth century. In a manner of speaking, some of the discourses have existed throughout the twentieth century and continue to exist during Khatami's presidency.

It has been established that there are multiple discourses of Iranian national identity during Khatami's presidency all of which have similarities with earlier articulations of national identity. Attention must now be turned to the social and political dynamics of this period. Indeed, taking all the above-mentioned factors into consideration, the picture of national identity construction in the Khatami period is very complex. As has been outlined in Chapter One, an important aspect of a discourse analysis is the issue of power relations. The hegemonic and counter-hegemonic dimensions demonstrated in this thesis illustrate the complexity of power relations both internally within Iran and also externally in relation to forces and dynamics outside of Iran. While it is impossible to determine which discourse is more powerful, it has been possible to explore how the different discourses relate to each other in terms of maintaining or resisting power. In other words, it is possible to see how the discourses are hegemonic and counter-hegemonic. This dynamic reflects one of the complexities of the political and social dynamics in Khatami's Iran.

The hegemonic and counter-hegemonic relationship between the different discourses of national identity is articulated on a number of levels. Within the state level there is a situation whereby the Islamist discourse is perceived as hegemonic by the Islamist-Iranian discourse of national identity. In other words, the moral, cultural and political leadership aspired to by the Islamist discourse is resisted with an alternative set of values, which are embedded in Khatami's construction of Iranian national identity. However, while Khamene'i's discourse is hegemonic in relation to that of Khatami, it considers itself as a force of resistance in relation to what is perceived as Western hegemony on the one hand, and what is perceived as Iranist hegemony on the other. Thus, the anti-imperialism and rejection of the prioritisation and politicisation of *Īrānīyat* articulated by the Islamist discourse demonstrates a counter-hegemonic dynamic. This is also the case for the Islamist-Iranian discourse of national identity; however it is expressed very differently as mentioned above.

With regard to the relationship between the state and non-state levels, the existence of the Iranist discourse and the discourses of civic and cosmopolitan national identity demonstrates that not only is Khamene'i's construction of Iranian national identity being resisted, but also that of Khatami. Thus, all three non-state discourses are counter-hegemonic. However, as far as the Islamist discourse is concerned, the moral, political and cultural leadership aspired to by the discourses of civic and cosmopolitan national identity are considered as hegemonic because of the perception that they are essentially Western and therefore not "authentic" to Iran. Furthermore, the rejection of politicised

culture by the afore-mentioned discourses also indicates a counter-hegemonic dimension in relation to the Iranist discourse of national identity.

The relationship between the different discourses also demonstrates a dynamic where certain groups, both within Iran and internationally, are constructed and as perceived as the 'other'. This in itself has a social and political impact on Iranian society. This thesis has demonstrated how both the Iranist and Islamist discourses construct each other as their 'other'. As a result, those who subscribe to the other discourse are demonised. It has also been argued that the Islamist discourse of national identity, as represented in its Occidentalism, has also demonised the West through its creation of the West as the 'other'. If Iranian national identity were to be perceived only in terms of these two discourses, the image of Iranian society and politics during Khatami's presidency would simply be one whereby an easing of relations with the West are irreconcilable and whereby Iranian society is perceived in binary terms. However, as has been contended, this is simplistic. The very existence of Khatami's discourse of Islamist-Iranian national identity demonstrates an attempt at creating dialogue on both the internal and external levels. Thus, despite the existence of a very strong and emotional 'self-other' dynamic, there is dialogue between *Īslāmīyat* and *Īrānīyat*, between Iran and the West and between two generations. It is for this reason that the notion of 'dialogue among civilisations' has been identified as integral to the construction of Iranian national identity. Moreover, it has also been demonstrated in Chapter Six that the prioritisation of *Īslāmīyat* and *Īrānīyat* has been rejected. Consequently, the constructions of 'self' and 'other' as prescribed by the Islamist and Iranist discourses of national identity have also been rejected. Indeed, it is possible that it is the Iranist and Islamist discourses that are perceived as the 'other'.

The multiple constructions of Iranian national identity in this period and the multiple ways of dealing with the West can be considered as a response to globalisation in its wider sense. Iran, like many countries, is being forced to adapt, perhaps unwillingly for some, to a more economically, culturally and politically globalised world. On the one hand, as argued by Meijer, one reaction to this ever increasingly globalised world is nationalism. This is evident in the Iranist and Islamist discourses. On the other hand, another reaction is cosmopolitanism, which according to Meijer does not exist in the Middle East. However, as has been illustrated, a cosmopolitan discourse is evident in the discourse of cosmopolitan Iranian national identity and to a certain extent in the Islamist-Iranian discourse of national identity. In addition to this, the idea of democracy or democratic practice, as advocated in the Islamist-Iranian discourse and the discourse of civic Iranian national identity, may also suggest an attempt to reconcile "authenticity"

with globalisation and the notion of global governance. In terms of the social and political dynamics of Khatami's presidency, the existence of multiple concurrent competing discourses of national identity can be understood as multiple social and political responses to a more globalised world.

Since these discourses exist and are a part of everyday life, Iranians are constantly exposed to them when moving between public and private spaces. Each space requires them to conform to the particular discourse in their behaviour, the way they dress and their use of vocabulary. The implication of this needs to be considered. One such implication is whether or not Iran is facing "identity crisis". This was certainly a perception among some in Iran at the time of the research trip in autumn 2005. For example, Abtahi contends that Iranians have several identities; at home there is one identity, at school another, in the office another. As far as he is concerned, the crisis in identity occurs when their different identities 'get mixed up'. When asked how this state of crisis could be solved he responded that during Khatami's presidency there was less of a crisis because there was freedom.⁵⁵¹ Naturally, such a statement is debateable. Nevertheless, the important point is that there is a sense of crisis being felt. However, it must be asserted that Iran is not unique in this sense of identity crisis. The discussion in Chapter One on what it means to be British and how that relates to being English or Welsh is just one example. Furthermore, it must also be asked if in fact the sentiment of identity crisis is anything new. Surely throughout time, groups have had to renegotiate their sense of identity. It is simply the case that the renegotiation of identity in relation to new internal and external forces and dynamics is a continual process.

The legacy of Khatami's presidency and his Islamist-Iranian discourse of national identity in particular can be considered in a number of ways. On the one hand, it can be argued that Khatami failed because of his inability to establish his discourse as the dominant discourse; his understanding of cultural, political and moral leadership was resisted on more than one level. This is reflected in the perception that he has been unable to reform Iran's political system sufficiently. On the other hand, it could also be argued that Khatami has been successful in his attempt to articulate and communicate his political, cultural and moral leadership. This is reflected in his ability to establish the notions of citizenship, democracy and dialogue in the public sphere. In addition to this, by prescribing such ideologies, he has also enabled the articulation of alternative discourses of Iranian national identity that resist what are perceived to be the hegemonic values of the Islamic Republic. Furthermore, the contention here is that Khatami's presidency is of

⁵⁵¹ Interview with Seyyed Mohammad Ali Abtahi, Tehran, 26 November 2005

great significance in the reconstruction and evolution of Iranian national identity because Khatami and the Reform Movement have been able to combine four ideologies, *Īrānīyat*, politicised *Īslāmīyat*, ‘dialogue among civilisations’ and *mardumsālārī*, which for some are simply irreconcilable, and embed them in the construction of Iranian national identity on the state level and establish them as a part of a public and official political discourse.

Nevertheless, to assume that Iranians on the non-state level as a whole believe in the reform of or end of the Islamic Republic is simplistic. Indeed, it can be argued that resistance to this articulation is reflected in the election of Ahmadinezhad, who arguably represents another discourse of national identity that perceives the Islamist-Iranian discourse as hegemonic for very different reasons to the non-state discourses addressed in this thesis. A future line of enquiry related to this is a deconstruction of President Mahmoud Ahmadinezhad’s discourse, similar to that of Khatami and Khamene’i. Keeping within the theme of the construction of Iranian national identity, an issue that should be raised is concerned with the implication of the election of Ahmadinezhad and his rhetoric about the Iranian nation on the construction and reconstruction of Iranian national identity. Initially, it appears that he represents another Islamist discourse of national identity. Thus, the idea of Islamism in Iran is further factionalised; not only are there the Islamist and Islamist-Iranian discourses of national identity on the state level, but also a third one articulated by Ahmadinezhad and his supporters.

As for the non-state level, those who voted for Ahmadinezhad should be also considered. The issue of whether or not their choice of president represents an alternative discourse of national identity should be addressed. The fact that the election of Ahmadinezhad as president was such a surprise also suggests that there is a group in Iranian society that has been largely forgotten, not only by the Islamic Republic, but also by the Pahlavi dynasty. In a sense, it is possible that several groups in Iranian society have had a government that represents their interests and articulation of national identity, and the election of Ahmadinezhad represents an additional group. Thus, an analysis of Ahmadinezhad’s discourse as a counter-discourse can be explored as an attempt to further understand his election as president.

This thesis also raises some theoretical and methodological conclusions. The first conclusion that can be made is that when researching Iranian national identity it is essential to analyse and deconstruct how Iranians themselves imagine and perceive their national identity. It must be acknowledged that how the researcher constructs nation and national identity may differ with how it is defined in the researcher’s findings. For

example, while arguing that nation and national identity are fluid and socially constructed phenomena, it is essential to be aware that this is not necessarily how these phenomena are perceived. This is evident in the Iranist, Islamist, and Islamist-Iranian discourses of national identity; their constructions of the Iranian nation are static and perceived as the only “truth” according to the people who prescribe to the discourse. Furthermore, a deconstruction of national identity cannot be restricted to the state level. To gain a fuller picture of the social and political dynamics of Iranian society, both state and non-state constructions of Iranian national identity need to be taken into consideration.

The second factor is the issue of language and terminology. It has been illustrated that an essential aspect of deconstructing how Iranians construct Iranian national identity is to take into account the meanings attached to the terminology in the Persian language. It is clear that the terms used are not necessarily transferable into the English language and that the English language does not have a monopoly on meaning. For example, the meanings attached to the terms *millat*, *huvīyat-i millī* and *dawlat* do not directly correspond to the terms nation, national identity and state in the English language. A deconstruction of this terminology has also shown that different meanings are attached to the notion of *huvīyat-i millī*. For example, notions such as *farhang* (culture), *tamadun* (civilisation), *mardumsālārī* (democracy), *nasionalism* (particular type of nationalism), *Īslāmī garāyī* (Islamism), and *īrāni garāyī* (Iranism) are fundamental to a better understanding of different constructions of Iranian national identity.

A third factor that must be considered in a deconstruction of how Iranians construct their national identity is an appreciation of the historical and intellectual context. It has been demonstrated that the discourses of Iranian national identity during the period of Khatami’s presidency are intrinsically linked to Iran’s historical experience. The construction of national identity cannot be considered in isolation. This thesis has shown that a consideration of Iran’s history, going as far back as antiquity, has been vital to gaining a better understanding of how national identity is constructed. This enables us to examine how ideas and ideologies evolve and influence the dynamics of the Khatami period.

This thesis has also assumed the diaspora play a role in the construction of national identity; it is not restricted to those within the territorial boundaries of Iran. This is reflected in the discussions highlighted in Chapter Six. The relationship between the construction of Iranian national identity in Iran and that of the Iranian diaspora in Britain and/or the United States of America is a subject worthy of further research. To this regard,

an issue that is worth addressing is how the discourses of diaspora relate to those in Iran. Of particular interest is the relationship between the diaspora and the discourse of civic Iranian national identity and the prospects for social and political change in Iran. In addition to this, it is also worth considering whether or not the diaspora in Britain have any kind of influence on or role in British public discourse regarding the Islamic Republic of Iran.

All these factors demonstrate that political identity in general and in the case of Iran in particular is indeed extremely complex. An appreciation of the complexity of political identity moves away from essentialist and reductionist approaches to Iranian national identity in particular and Iranian society and politics in general. The use of discourse analysis has enabled us to gain a deeper understanding of the complexity of political identity. For example, a factor that contributes to this complexity is ideology, and more importantly 'ideological diversity'. Thus, since discourse is a means of articulating and communicating ideology, a discourse approach to national identity enables the multiple ideologies embedded in the various constructions of Iranian national identity to be identified and deconstructed.

This complexity and the renegotiation of national identity also tells us something about the nature of the state. The poststructuralist approach to the state, as well as society and politics in general, was outlined in Chapter Two. By deconstructing the relationship between two state discourses of national identity on the one hand, and the relationship between the three non-state discourses and the state discourses this thesis has demonstrated how provided an analysis of the nature of the Islamic Republic's state. This has been done on the one hand by demonstrated how each discourse of national identity advocates a particular state apparatus, and also by using the poststructuralist approach to the state as part of the theoretical framework of the thesis.

The empirical data of this thesis demonstrates that indeed, in the case of Iran during the Khatami period, it is not possible to 'establish fixed rules of thought or language, tradition and community that underpin all or some political institutions or groups'.⁵⁵² This is evident in the fact there exists five discourses of national identity all of which prescribe different systems of government. Furthermore, a deconstruction of the two state discourses shows that there are calls for both an Islamic theocracy and an Islamic democracy. Therefore, not only are the rules of thought and language fluid, but also it is clear that the very nature of the apparatus of the Islamic Republic is going through a

⁵⁵² Op. cit. **Finlayson and Martin 2006, p. 159**

process of evolution and reconstruction. This is evident not only during the Khatami period, but also throughout the twentieth century and early twenty-first century if the Pahlavi and Ahmadinezhad eras are also taken into consideration.

This thesis has also shown that the state of the Islamic Republic also demonstrates that it is indeed made up of 'systems of meaning that are the object and the mechanism of social control and contestation.'⁵⁵³ The '*object* of social control and contestation' is evident in the fact that although the state discourses are hegemonic, they are resisted. It cannot be disputed that the power of the state discourses is resisted on more than one level; within the state itself and from the non-state level in number of ways. In other words, the very existence of counter-discourses of national identity that resist the state discourses means that the state is the '*object* of social control and contestation'. However, on the other hand, it is clear the state is also 'the mechanism of social control and contestation.' This is evident in the hegemonic nature of the state discourses of national identity.

The deconstruction of the discourses of national identity identified for discussion in this thesis illustrates that on the state level 'all actions and objects are meaningful' and 'derive their meaning from their relationship to other actions and objects'.⁵⁵⁴ On the one hand, it is apparent that the discourses do not exist in isolation. Rather they are constructed in relation to each other and in relation to external factors. This is evident in the hegemonic and counter-hegemonic dynamic illustrated throughout the analysis. It is unmistakable that the meanings attached to the discourses are constructed in relation to each other. For example, as has been shown, the Islamist discourse of national identity is constructed in relation to both an internal and an external 'other'. Additionally, the meanings attached to the Islamist discourse of national identity are constructed in relation to the pre-1979 Pahlavi Iranian discourse of national identity and also in relation to the West, which is apparent in the anti-imperialist nature of the discourse. Thus, it is clear that the state as an "actor" does not exist independently of "frameworks" or systems of meaning'.⁵⁵⁵

It can also be concluded that discourse analysis is beneficial because it enables a consideration of the power relations between the different discourses identified. It is argued that 'conventions routinely drawn up in discourse embody ideological assumptions which come to be taken as mere "common sense"'.⁵⁵⁶ This in turn helps maintain power. By using this methodological approach it has been possible to explore

⁵⁵³ **Ibid.**

⁵⁵⁴ **Ibid.**

⁵⁵⁵ **Ibid.**

⁵⁵⁶ Op. cit. Fairclough, p. 77

how the ideologies embedded in the various constructions of Iranian national identity maintain power. In other words, the hegemonic character of the discourse can be identified by determining how ideology is established as common sense. For example, it has been made apparent that *Īslāmīyat* and *Īrānīyat*, for the Islamist and Iranist discourses respectively, are assumed as common sense with regard to the nation's "authentic" and "true" identity. In addition to this, since 'discourse always requires a discursive "outside" to constitute itself'⁵⁵⁷, it has also been possible to consider the relationship between the different discourses in terms of a 'self-other' dynamic. The power relations between the discourses have also been illustrated by showing that not only is there a hegemonic dynamic, but also a counter-hegemonic dynamic; the perceived hegemony of one discourse can be resisted by another discourse.

The findings of this thesis in terms of the importance of Iranian *national* identity challenge the argument put forward by academics, politicians and journalists regarding the so-called ascendancy of a "Shi'i Crescent" or "Shi'a Revival". These are terms being used to explain the current and future regional politics and dynamics in the Middle East and the cooperation of and relationship between Shi'i communities in Iraq, Lebanon, Syria and Iran. This approach suggests that national governments, and therefore national identity, will not define regional dynamics. Rather, it will be defined by a "Shi'a Revival" among communities where their political identity is only perceived in terms of religion. Since Iran is considered as part of the "Shi'i Crescent", it suggests that Iranian national identity is of no importance on the international level because it fails to take into consideration the Iranianness of Islam as advocated by the state. The Iranian aspect of the state identity, which differentiates Iran from its Arab, Turkish, Pakistani and Afghani neighbours, needs to be taken into consideration. If indeed further research demonstrates that Iranian and Shi'i identity are intrinsically linked, then the notions of "Shi'a Crescent" or "Shi'a Revival" are flawed. Furthermore, considering the importance of anti-imperialism in the state discourses of national identity addressed here, the impact of Iran's indirect colonial experience should continue to be taken into consideration during the presidencies of both Khatami and Ahmadinezhad.

Such research would also raise theoretical issues with regard to the field of International Relations. Of particular interest here is the influence or role of political identity. It would contribute to the growing appreciation of the importance of post-colonial approaches in International Relations in the Middle East. As mentioned above, methodologically speaking it has become clear that when a study of the Middle East in general and of Iran

⁵⁵⁷ Op. Cit. Howarth, p. 102

in particular is carried out it should be taken into consideration that ‘the views of politics held by ... [the West] may not correspond to the experiences of non-Western societies.’⁵⁵⁸

This research also raises theoretical issues with regards to the field of nationalism.

This thesis is a contribution to knowledge because it expands the discussion on Iranian national identity into Khatami’s presidency. This has been done by providing an empirical focus on the construction of Iranian national identity during this period. This has been achieved through a detailed discourse analysis of a variety of texts including speeches, academic and non-academic articles and interviews. This detailed analysis has illustrated that there is a new indigenous Iranist discourse of national identity based on Sasanian Iran. It has also been demonstrated that the Khatami period is unique in terms of the state articulation of Iranian national identity because certain values embedded in the construction of national identity have been brought together in the Islamist-Iranian discourse and established as an official discourse. This thesis has also shown that Khatami’s and his Islamist-Iranian discourse have allowed for a more open articulation of two alternative discourses: a civic discourse of Iranian national identity and a cosmopolitan discourse of Iranian national identity. In addition to these findings, the detailed discourse analysis has also highlighted a complex set of relationships between the five discourses discussed.

⁵⁵⁸ Gronogui, Siba N. ‘Postcolonialism’ in Dunne, Tim, Kurki, Milja and Smith, Steve. (eds) *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2007. pp. 229-246, p. 229

Glossary

| | |
|--|--|
| <i>Allah</i> | God |
| <i>‘ālim</i> | scholars |
| <i>Anjuman-i Farhangi-yi Īrānzamīn (Afrāz)</i> | The Cultural Society of Iranzamin |
| <i>‘azīz</i> | dear – term of endearment |
| <i>bā ‘itiqād</i> | with belief |
| <i>bānū</i> | lady |
| <i>bazārī(s)</i> | merchant(s) |
| <i>chap-i Īslāmī</i> | the Islamic left |
| <i>chap-i mudīrn</i> | modern left |
| <i>dawlat</i> | state (government) |
| <i>dawlatī</i> | state-owned, of the state |
| <i>dīn</i> | religion or Islam as opposed to non-Islamic (<i>millī</i>) |
| <i>dīn kardan-i jāmi ‘ih</i> | remaking of society into a religious one |
| <i>dīnī</i> | religious |
| <i>faqīh</i> | religious jurists |
| <i>farhang</i> | culture |
| <i>gharbzadagī</i> | westoxification |
| <i>hizbullāhi</i> | of the party of God |
| <i>hukūmat- i Īslāmī</i> | Islamic government |
| <i>huvīyat</i> | identity |
| <i>huvīyat-i dawlat</i> | state identity |
| <i>huvīyat-i millī</i> | national identity |
| <i>huwzih</i> | seminary |
| <i>inqilāb</i> | revolution |
| <i>Inqilāb-i Īslāmī</i> | Islamic Revolution |

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| <i>Īrān</i> | Iran |
| <i>īrāni garāyī</i> | Iranism |
| <i>Īrān parastān</i> | Iran worshipers |
| <i>Īrānīyat</i> | being Iranian or Iran's pre-Islamic culture or being Iranian |
| <i>Īslāmī</i> | Islamic in political terms; Islamist |
| <i>Īslāmī garāyī</i> | tendency towards the Islamic in political terms; prioritisation of <i>Īslāmīyat</i> ; Islamism |
| <i>Īslāmīyat</i> | being Islamic or Islamic culture or being Islamic |
| <i>'itmād-i millī</i> | national confidence |
| <i>khālq-i Īrān</i> | people of Iran |
| <i>khāk-i Īrān</i> | soil of Iran |
| <i>Īrān khān-i māst</i> | Iran is our home |
| <i>Jahān</i> | world |
| <i>Jahāndār</i> | possessor of the world |
| <i>Jibhi-yi Millī -yi Īrān</i> | National Front |
| <i>madanī kardan-i jāmi 'ih</i> | "citizenisation" of society or the making of society for the citizen |
| <i>madīnat al-nabī</i> | the city of the Prophet Mohammad |
| <i>Majlis</i> | parliament/council |
| <i>majma '-i ruhāniyūn-i mubārīz</i> | Combatant Clerics Society |
| <i>mālik al-mulūk</i> | king of kings |
| <i>mamālik-i Īrān</i> | Iranian lands |
| <i>mām-i mīhan</i> | motherland |
| <i>mardumsālārī</i> | democracy |
| <i>marja '-i taqlīd</i> | Religious Reference |
| <i>millat</i> | nation or citizenry |
| <i>millī</i> | national or non-Islamic culture |
| <i>millī garāyī</i> | tendency towards the national; nationalist in a non- |

| | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| | nationalist way |
| <i>millīyat</i> | nationhood or nationality |
| <i>millīyūn</i> | those who support Musaddiq's aim to establish Iran as an independent nation |
| <i>m'umin</i> | believer |
| <i>Nahzat--i Āzād-i Īrān</i> | Liberation Movement |
| <i>Nahzat-i Muqāvīmat-i Millī</i> | National Resistance Movement |
| <i>nasionalism</i> | nationalism (taken from the French) in the sense of prioritising <i>Īranīyat</i> |
| <i>nasionalist</i> | nationalist (taken from the French) in the sense of prioritising <i>Īranīyat</i> |
| <i>nasionalist-i musbat</i> | positive nationalist |
| <i>naw rūz</i> | New Year celebrated on 21 March |
| <i>nizām-i Īslāmī</i> | Islamic political system |
| <i>nizhād</i> | race |
| <i>nizhād parast</i> | race worshiper |
| <i>nizhād parastān</i> | race worshipers |
| <i>parastan</i> | to worship |
| <i>qānūn</i> | laws |
| <i>rāst-i mudīrn</i> | modernist right |
| <i>rāst-i sunnatī</i> | the traditionalist right |
| <i>Rawshānfikrān-i Dīnī</i> | Religions Intellectuals |
| <i>rūhānīyat</i> | clericism |
| <i>saltanat</i> | monarchy |
| <i>savārān</i> | those on horseback |
| <i>Shāh-i Zamīn</i> | king of the land |
| <i>Shahnameh</i> | Book of Kings |
| <i>Shahr-i Īrān</i> | Town/country of Iran |
| <i>tahajum-i farhangī-yi gharb</i> | Western cultural invasion |

| | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <i>tamaddun</i> | civilisation |
| <i>tamaddun-i Īrānī-Īslāmī</i> | Iranian-Islamic civilisation |
| <i>'ummah</i> | community (Islamic) |
| <i>valī</i> | representative |
| <i>vatan</i> | mother/fatherland |
| <i>vilāyat-i faqīh</i> | the jurist's guardianship |
| <i>Zabān Zanān</i> | Women's Language |
| <i>yazdān</i> | creator |

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