The Iranian Nexus: Peace as a Substantive and Complex Value in the History of Iran

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Abstract
This study explores Iran’s political and cultural history in order to better understand the country’s current stance on international politics and peace. This study asks: what defines peace in Iranian discourse? To this end, this thesis employs a Foucauldian archaeological and genealogical methodology on historical research and contemporary primary sources. The historical data is mainly secondary sources, whilst primary sources are drawn from contemporary speeches, interviews and articles presenting Iranian foreign political thought. First of all, this study uncovers the major research gaps concerning Iran in peace research. This speaks to the general lack of diversity and inclusiveness in the subject of Peace and Conflict studies, and hence contrary to its claim of being universally relevant. Relevance comes with knowledge of other traditions and conversations across divides, which is typically absent in a universalised provincialism. Secondly, contemporary Iranian political discourse represents a continuity from antiquity, incorporating deep-rooted practises of cosmopolitanism and structural peace, represented by 4000-years of experiences in state-building, conflict management, continuous movement of people and changing centres of political power. In short, Iran has a long experience of multi-polarity, multi-ethnicity and multi-religiosity across time and space.
Prologue

In October 1978, Foucault wrote an article in *Le Nouvel Observateur*, where he explains in his own views what the Iranian revolution was all about. His observations were widely criticised. However, in retrospect, his analysis resonates with the conclusions of this thesis. I could not comprehend the essence of the following statement prior to the finalisation of this work:

Indeed, Shiite Islam exhibits a number of characteristics that are likely to give the desire for an "Islamic government" a particular coloration. Concerning its organization, there is an absence of hierarchy in the clergy, a certain independence of the religious leaders from one another, but a dependence (even a financial one) on those who listen to them, and an importance given to purely spiritual authority. The role, both echoing and guiding, that the clergy must play in order to sustain its influence-this is what the organization is all about. As for Shi'ite doctrine, there is the principle that truth was not completed and sealed by the last prophet. After Muhammad, another cycle of revelation begins, the unfinished cycle of the imams, who, through their words, their example, as well as their martyrdom, carry a light, always the same and always changing. It is this light that is capable of illuminating the law from the inside. The latter is made not only to be conserved, but also to release over time the spiritual meaning that it holds. Although invisible before his promised return, the Twelfth Imam is neither radically nor fatally absent. It is the people themselves who make him come back, insofar as the truth to which they awaken further enlightens them.
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1 **INTRODUCTION**

In the wake of the Islamic Revolution of 1979 in Iran, the country’s international role changed significantly. From having been a close ally to the US and enjoying good relations with the world at large (apart from the Soviet Union), Iran quickly found itself isolated and subjected to economic sanctions from its former allies due to incidents, fuelled by anti-Western sentiments occurring during the Revolution and its aftermath. Barely had Iran managed to adjust to its new situation and political restructuring when it was attacked by Saddam Hussein, drawing it into an eight-year long war from 1980-1988. The pariah status of Iran has continued ever since, and in 2002 it was branded as being a part of the “axis of evil” by the U.S. president George W. Bush.

Since the 2013 presidential election in Iran and the subsequent inauguration of the Rouhani administration, one can discern a change in the attitude and presentation of Iran’s foreign policy. The former presidency of Mahmud Ahmadinejad was, at least in the media, characterised by controversial foreign policy statements whereas the presidency of Hassan Rouhani, whose slogan during elections was “moderation and prudence”, one can distinguish a more tactful and cautious approach in Iran’s foreign policy statements. The rhetoric of Mohammad Javad Zarif, the current minister of Foreign Affairs in the Rouhani administration, by employing a post-oriental framework, has been more inclined towards conveying a softer peace oriented approach\(^1\), being highly critical of the current world politics, its implications for Iran and the perceived double standards the country is subjected to. To understand the potentially violent outcome of U.S. – Iranian relations, which would result in a war with Iran, subsequently destabilising the region as well as the world at large, I apply Foucault’s method of archaeology and genealogy on Iran’s history.

Within the field of PACS, there is no previous research on Iranian foreign policy for peace. Iran defines itself as peaceful in strict post-oriental/anti-colonial terms, hence this thesis asks *what defines peace in Iranian discourse?* To find the answer to this question, 5000-years of Iranian political, social and cultural history will be analysed.

Furthermore, as we are descending upon new sets of polarities in world politics (Galtung 2005), Iran is re-entering as a significant political actor in part due to its geopolitical position and a changed political discourse focusing on “security networking”

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\(^1\) This is partly because of his role in the diplomatic negotiations, which resulted in the signing of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in July 2015 between Iran and the United Nations Security Council’s five permanent members plus Germany (and the EU), the so called P5+1.
(Zarif/ORF 2016) and cosmopolitanism-in-practice.

1.1 Relevance to the study of peace

The perceived threat of a collapse of relations between Iran and the US, rooted in diametrically opposing readings of what constitutes peace, represents a danger to the globe as such. The discipline of Peace Studies has yet to accommodate broader epistemological perspectives and knowledge productions concerning peace. This thesis is an attempt to contribute to such an inclusion.

1.2 Delimitations

Due to the methodological approach adopted in this thesis, it is difficult to declare what has not been included. The methods are expansive in nature and therefore bordering on the abysmal. However, the major delimitation has been the inaccessibility of primary historical sources. Another has been the difficulties in squeezing such a massive project into 16500 words, thus, this introduction is extremely short and to the point.

1.3 Outline

This thesis starts with a condensed chapter on theory and methods, followed by a short introduction to Iran. Thereafter chapters 4-6 ensues with archaeological description and genealogical analysis, followed by discussion and conclusion.
2 THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

2.1 Peace in Iranian and Islamic Traditions

Western political theory and practises have revolved around the concept of realism. This fixates theory and political practice on clearly defined centres of power, capable of imposing, controlling and manoeuvring zones in between dominating poles through the instrumental use of economic and military coercion – violence is never exempted from political practises. The question of the use of power, unavoidably, arrives at a might is right continuum (Galtung 2005:50). However, following Foucault and also Ghazzali2 (Nasr and Aminrazavi 2015), power may be seen as essentially dynamic, fluctuating and ever-changing, and not necessarily a force of dominance, as power always produces resistance (Foucault 1981:95:101). At the core of any employed strategic socio-political construct – institutional or casual, hegemonic or inclusive – there are always different forms of application of power, which can stabilise, disrupt or harmonise power. Thus, the way in which the discourse of power is framed, ultimately influences ideas and norms, making the inference and application of political conduct an ever-changing proposition (Kirkegaard 2004:27-8).

More in line with the Foucauldian, and in contrast to the salient realist perspective, the concept of security networking (Zarif 1999), revolves around the replacement of “military block security umbrellas […] for an inclusive and participatory global security, which uses the existing mechanisms in complementary rather than competing schemes” (Zarif 2007:75). Security networking is not grounded in dominance and zero-sum approaches, but based on an inclusive cosmopolitanism-in-practice, which admits and infuses differences into a non-aligned network of actors with unique incentives of network cooperation. Relinquishing the constitutionally zero-sum induced realism paradigm, global security networking

starts with the proposition that security is the indivisible need and demand of the entire human race. […] thus, the adoption of security enhancement by one country or coalition is not tantamount to loss or deprivation for others. Rather, as with components of any network, measures by any group to enhance its security augment the security of the entire network and all its members. (Zarif 1999:4)

Security networking may be understood as grounded in Islamic peace traditions, in which the

2 Ghazzali was active from late 11th century. I am here referring to two of his books, namely The incoherence of the Philosophers and The just mean in belief.
concepts of *ihsan* and *adl*, as well as a cosmopolitanism-in-practice are central. *Ihsan* carries the meanings of virtue, beauty and goodness, while *adl* is based on justice (Kalin 2010:7-9) – for peace is predicated upon the availability of equal rights and the possibility for all to realise their goals and potentials, the opposite of which is similar to, but pre-dating the structural violence concept. *Ihsan* can in itself be sub-categorised in other interrelated concepts such as *adab* (Dabashi 2012:viii), the ability, and art, to act gracefully through the acquisition of knowledge, forming pathways towards the ‘prefect’ being. The combined meaning of *ihsan*, *adl* and *adab* allude to Galtung’s concept of positive peace (Galtung 1969). Peace will be achieved when the above concepts are combined with law, and by extension justice, i.e. security from Evil (Kalin 2010:7) – *sharr* (i.e. negative peace, structural, cultural and direct violence). Understanding of basic Islamic peace-making is grounded in the understanding of a healthy relationship “both with each other and the divine” (Huda 2010:xviii). Conflict destroys this relationship, and restoring it is essential to that understanding. The restoration process involves politicians, clergy, scholars and intellectuals and revolves around dialogue in order to ensure that the authoritative bodies “understands the opinions of others” (ibid.). The emphasis is on how intellectual and cultural pluralism in terms of peace contributed greatly to a “profound respect and reverence for non-Muslims, creating space and time for mutual coexistence” (Huda 2010:xx), i.e. the propensity to pluralism as a method for peacebuilding.

Furthermore, this Islamic understanding of peace may easily be intertwined with the 4000 year-long Iranian tradition of cosmopolitanism-in-practice, grounded in Iran’s cultural-political sphere³ (Alishan 2009:12), based on the experience of diversity:

Iranians are Zoroastrian, Jewish, Catholic, Armenian, Muslim, Sunni, Shi’i, and Baha’i and there are also many blessed atheists among them. Iranians are Arabs, Azaris, Baluchis, Kurds, Persians, Turkmans, and (illegal) immigrants to countries all over the globe. Iranians are socialist, nationalist, Islamist, nativist, internationalist, liberal, radical, and conservative … (Dabashi 2007:19)

The particular cosmopolitanism-in-practice is contrary to the notion of a cosmopolitanism-to-

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³ The Greek cynic Diogenes (412-323 BCE) who lived in the Achaemenid empire (see map 1), developed the concept of cosmopolitanism to describe the nature of that particular empire and the conditions under its rule. Cosmopolitanism is constructed by a combination of two Greek words; *Cosmos*, the world, and *Politis*, citizen – citizen of the world (Dahlen 2016:72).
come (see e.g. Kant 2006 and Appiah 2007)\textsuperscript{4}. As such, cosmopolitanism as philosophy is concerned with sharing the world with strangers; the commitment to understand the other, when encountered; curiosity; the ability to imagine oneself as the other without necessarily seeking consensus; the willingness to experiment with differences; the capacity to include mixture as a part of life. Instead of a clash of civilisations (Huntington 1996), it is the ability to fuse, appreciate and respect diversity. Cosmopolitanism is not just universalism – it is universalism in addition to pluralism – the respect and appreciation of diversity and difference. What makes cosmopolitanism, is the attitudes of people, a confidence with difference, a curiosity towards novelty and the courage to face the challenges of undoing what is already known and making something new from the information, which suddenly appears (i.e. re-archaization). Cosmopolitanism in regards to empire does not include the imposition and ultimately the destruction, but the incorporation of differences into practises of rule. As such, it is in direct opposition to realism as the basis of political action, dominance and modus operandi for empires.

This has throughout the ages fomented the way in which Iran’s perception of peace has been conducive to 4000 years of cosmopolitanism-in-practice. Every form of rule imposed from outside of Iran has been drawn towards the normativity of this particular cosmopolitanism-in-practice. The thesis attempts to demonstrate the development of this cosmopolitanism and its influence on Iran’s foreign policy as it is argued by the current government to be peace oriented.

This orientation cannot be understood through politics alone, but needs to include the literary traditions, in which cosmopolitan peace also developed. Persian literary humanism is a complementary site of resistance to political power, constitutionally un-canonical in its unattainability to political power-brokers as it is located outside the confinements of structural political power. As such, consolidating an ever-present paradigm acquiesce in order to rule, forcing power to relate to morality in a material and immaterial sense – in effect incorporating an element of fragility into the exercising of political power.

\textsuperscript{4} Kant’s notion of a cosmopolitanism-to-come is predicated on Kantian liberalism making it conditional, exclusive and excluding, while Appiah’s notion of a cosmopolitanism-to-come is constitutionally normative and utopian.
2.2 Foucauldian Archaeology and Genealogy

To comprehend a contemporary problem such as the Iran – U.S. conflict, I prescribe the application of Foucault’s methodology. Foucault’s archaeology involves the process of mapping out those aspects of history, which yields justified “truth” claims. The aim is therefore to understand how these “truths” came to be regarded as such without concern as to whether they are true or even make sense. Therefore, the process of archaeological research must remain neutral towards the discursive systems under scrutiny (Prado 2000:25), i.e. seeking only to describe regularities, differences and transformation, avoiding judgement (Kendell & Wickham 1999:26). The intent is to uncover the circumstances under which truth and knowledge are produced (Prado 2000:28).

According to Foucault, history can be divided into two types; total and general history. Total history concerns itself with establishing linear sets of relations and causalities forming a coherent overarching epoch, limited in time and space. On the other hand, general history, which is the concern of Foucault, concentrates on “describing differences, transformations, formation, continuities, mutations, and so forth” (Kendall & Wickham 1999:24). The process of archaeological comparison does not have a unifying but a diversifying effect. The results of a true archaeological inquiry disrupt the conventional view on historical events and at the same time discover new hidden similarities on the topic under investigation.

Whereas archaeology can be seen as a non-interpretive inquiry into history (Kendall & Wickham 1999:26), such as uncovering systems of thought, genealogy in turn, is the strategic development of archaeological research and accounts for the strategic deployment of an historical analysis seeking to trace the genealogy of a history of thought, by uncovering concreate practices. The universals, i.e. discourses of power taken for granted (veridictions), must pass through a grid of uncovered practices, subsequently destabilising universals through alternative readings of historical processes (Foucault 2010a:41), which e.g. enables the avoidance of the universalisation of provincialism. To analyse practises, three “focal points of experience” must be linked together: 1) Forms of possible knowledge, 2) normative frameworks of behaviour, and 3) potential modes of experience (Foucault 2010a:3). This modus operandi of historical inquiry, seeks to trace modes of cultural, social, political and economic practices – technologies of power, which helps us understand bio-political practises justifying normative behaviour in a specific time-space-context – from which constantly negotiated continuities can be traced, fomenting specific kinds of statification (étatisation),
which is a focal point in this thesis. Thus, the state and thereby its practices is no more than the effect of the context in which it came to exist (Foucault 2010b:77).

To fully implement the first step of this method – archaeology, a vast array of data must be collected and scrutinised. To this end, I have relied on secondary historical accounts and analyses spanning 5000 years of Iranian social, religious, political, linguistic and literary history, which is reflected in the bibliography, as well as a few primary sources. The primary sources consist of documents written and speeches given by the Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, President Rouhani and the Spiritual Leader; translations of the multi-lingual Behistun inscriptions from Achaemenid times and the Cyrus cylinder; as well as Iranian propaganda posters from the Iran-Iraq war.

The process of archaeological and genealogical research can be likened to field work, albeit, in the form of an extensive desk study. A Foucauldian archaeological study prescribes as point of departure, a focus on a problem rather than a historical period, in this case, the conflict between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the U.S.-Israel-British-French-Saudi interests based in Iran’s self-identification as a staunch post-colonial state. To this end, the accumulated data must be thoroughly assessed without pre-conceived ideas in order to uncover surprising links and developments (Kendall & Wickham 1999:23). Archaeological research is a constant back and forth zig-zag process of reading and re-reading, evaluating and re-evaluating and repeated searches for new sources.

According to Kendall and Wickham (1999:31), “genealogy [is] not so much a method as a way of putting archaeology to work, a way of linking it to our present concerns”. The results of the archaeological investigation are assessed through a lens accounting for invisibilities, disreputable and unpalatable functions fomenting a process linking the past to the present (Kendall & Wickham 1999:34). To think historically in Foucauldian terms, means focusing on relationships, discontinuities and continuities, paying attention to detail and complexities, searching out dis-junctures in order to trace the emergence of discourses and practises.

In retrospect, I do not recommend this method for a 15 credits and 16500 words limited Bachelor thesis, as it is very time consuming and expansive, however, enlightening in regards to methodology and academic scholarship, knowledge production and humility towards differing perspectives as the world is a universe of ideas.
3 **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: WHAT IS IRAN?**

The point of departure for Iran as a state formation, is the epochal Achaemenid empire (559-330 BCE), which had two simultaneous effects. Firstly, creating the conditions for globalisation through the mobilisation of a multi-ethnic and multilingual workforce, manageable due to the creation of cosmopolitan metropoles and provincial centres, allowing the free movement of people. Secondly, the absence of the imposition of an imperial identity enabled people throughout the empire to choose from a multitude of cultural streams (Vlassopoulos 2013:325), which is a continuous feature of Iranian political life, as will be demonstrated in the analysis below.

![Map of the Achaemenid Empire](image)

*Map 1. The Achaemenid empire (559-330 BCE).*

However, the opening narrative will take its cue from the Muslim conquest of Iran, which led to the ultimate conversion of Iran to Islam. This was a period in which the terms ‘Persia’ and ‘Persians’ were widely used. A considerable number of contemporary scholars use the term ‘Persia’ in order to refer to geographical borders. In pre-Islamic times, during the Achaemenian (559-330 BCE) and Sasanian (224-651 CE) era, ‘Persia’ was used as a term to refer to people living in southwestern Iran (i.e. the Fars/Pars province), as well as to the vast empire along with its cultural influence. Furthermore, the Greeks used the word ‘Persai’ to describe the empire. It was not until the Sasanian Empire that the origins related to the idea of Iran (Middle Persian, Ėrān) started to arise and give clarifications to what Iran really was.
The idea of Iran during the Sasanians included features, which sought to glorify the ties, via the Parthian empire (247 BCE-226 CE) with the Achaemenian Empire (Pourshariati 2008:26:33). The Sasanians implemented a propaganda machine, which created a sense of identification with Achaemenian origins, a heritage which suited the new Sasanian dynasty and the social forces at its core (Savant 2008:74). The Sasanians also coded religious scriptures according to selection and censure that suited the Sasanian clergy, which was also influential in state institutions (Daryaee 2014:66-7; Nordberg 1979:81-3), amounting to a clear example of a religio-political technology of power.

This led to the introduction of Middle Persian titles of Shāhān shah (King of Kings), Ėran and Ėrānshahr, used to define the physical space of the Sasanian Empire (Savant 2008:74).

Map 2. The Sassanid empire (224 – 651 CE) at its highest extent.

The birth of these titles correlates with the idea of Iran as a political, cultural and religious entity. The Sasanians coined the term in order to refer to the arya and the Zoroastrian past, thereby aiming to consolidate their political agenda and to stand out historically (Savant 2008:76). The Sasanian term Ėran was revived by the Pahlavi dynasty (1925-1979), by Reza Shah in particular, during the 1930s as ‘Iran’ (Keddie 2006:2), with the goal of reviving Iranian pre-Islamic past.

However, according to Dabashi, the Persian term vatan, now meaning nation or homeland, was redefined by literary Iranian intellectuals living outside modern Iran describing an emerging, abstract public sphere, which was not limited to the emerging and
still unsettled boundaries of Iran as a nation-state during the 19th century (1833-1908). This term was instrumental in forging the idea of the nation-state due to and during the colonial incursion, leading to the constitutional revolution in 1906-1911 (Dabashi 2012:247). Iranian poetry in early 20th century gave birth to the idea of vatan; ‘homeland’ or ‘nation’, and vatanparasti, which means ‘nationalism’ or more accurately, ‘nation-worship’, as the word parasti means worship and is often used with religious connotations. The word for nation or nationalism did not exist in the Persian vocabulary prior to this poetic invention (Dabashi 2012, 267).

Their history is to be found in their poets and philosophers, their artists, artisans, and architects; in the masterpieces of their literary, visual, and performing arts; and the beauty of their landscape and the abundance of their natural recourses; and in the fact that unlike other people in the region, their homeland is not based on the broken back of another people.

If the departure point is taken from a prominent poet such as Sa’di (1210-1292 CE), who is regarded as a custodian of Iranian culture during the Mongol invasion of Iran and lived his life as a voyager, it is apparent that defining ‘Iranian culture’ or Iran as a national concept is rendered completely useless. A definition of Iran can only be achieved through ever-changing suggestions, which will never be able to define Iran through a concrete framework. The Iranian culture is diffuse in its disposition, but simultaneously leans towards a focal point derived from collective will. Iranian culture is so widespread and diverse that nation-states such as Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Tajikistan and obviously Iran, all have legitimate claims on it. Rumi, another major poet in Iranian culture may portray this complexity by constituting and contradicting his Iranian identity – born in Afghanistan, fled from the Mongol invasion to Turkey and wrote in Persian (Dabashi 2007:16-17). Any definition of Iran fails to comprehend its actual cultural complexity and intermingled history, coupled with a wide spectrum of people’s experiences. This culture stems from the crossroads of history - Greek, Roman, Arab, Mongol, Turkish and European invasions; Zoroastrian, Manichaean, Mazdakian, Buddhist, Jewish, Christian, and Islamic religions; Asian, African, and European traders from these areas have all left an imprint on a culture, which is syncretic and hybrid in its nature (Dabashi 2007, 19).

The area that is now Iran, is a blend of opposing ideas and narratives, which are all unified in a constructed phenomenon with defined borders of a state. The Iranian culture
stems from Achaemenian rulers such as Cyrus II\(^5\) (559-530 B.C.), who laid the foundation of a culturally diverse empire, leading to a present-day shared history between peoples and cultures in the region. That common culture is grounded on what Dabashi terms ‘literary humanism’ – produced by men and women from diverse ethnicities and religious affiliations, creating an imaginary, ever-changing centre which has collectively been named “Iran” (Dabashi 2007, 19-20). The problem with limiting Iran to a unilateral cultural context is that it contradicts the factual evidence of the regions’ multicultural, syncretic and multifaceted cultural identity. The manufacturing of Iran as a nation-state originates from the “European formation of national economies, national polities, and ultimately national cultures” (Dabashi 2007, 21).

\[5\] Cyrus II is the author of the ‘Cyrus Cylinder’ (539-538 BCE) – the first recorded political declaration on Human Rights (British Museum 2010).

\[6\] After each era of a claimed definition constituting an ‘Iranian’ empire, there have been eras of other ‘non-Iranian’ rulers. As time passes and new ‘Iranian’ empires seek to reclaim dominance, their respective rulers strive towards reviving previous eras and deriving parts of their legitimacy through the adaptation of cultural features dominant during those eras. As every new ‘Iranian’ empire is situated within their own respective time and their own cultural predisposition, the process of revisiting the past and combining it with the present, creating a new set of cultural-political traditions. This is what Bausani terms as a process of re-archaization, enabled by and grounded on a syncretic disposition leading to a continued cultural-political transmutation. This is typical in Iranian political traditions and is a form of an eternal return to claimed historical roots (Bausani 1975).
Orientalism has promoted the construction of “Iran” as a fixed identity and the same narrative is presently reproduced by scholars within the field of Iranian studies, misrepresenting the historical assimilation of Iran into the broader and more accurate regional geopolitics (Dabashi 2007, 22). It is therefore important to consider historical epochs such as those of the Achaemenian and Sassanid empires – among many, in order to understand the historical experiences of people who lived during eras and regions of cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism.
4 Linguistics of Spiritual Resistance

The history of a people or a region can be viewed along a timeline, which accounts for main actors, events, stages and consequences to produce a sense of understanding of what has transpired. Although, from one point in time up to another, a certain viewpoint can also run the risk of overlooking aspects that constituting the cultural disposition and social momentum, which play a part in the processual developments. When doing an archaeology on the historical unfolding of a culture, multiple layers needs to be unravelled in order to form a comprehensive sense of it. Considering the institutions of a society and how they reflect and inform values by their formation and existence, stated and possibly covert purposes, proclamations, functions, powers and transformations can bring to light elements that further speak of the conditions of a society. Language is another layer, which through, for instance, literature and oral tradition, preserves the profusion of ideas, philosophies, sentiments, moralities, identities, religious views and political discourses, which in themselves are formations of causal streams of projected consciousness. Grasping the sensibilities of the Persian speaking peoples’ moral imaginations, attitudes and customs by drawing upon the role of their literature, myths, epics and poetry allows for tracing possible reoccurring and recurrent features and their coming into play in Iran’s cultural-political history. Moreover, the historical context of the production of Persian literature is entirely imperial, and it is within that imperial context that the history of the Persian language must be understood, including the many people, cultures and languages, which transcends the contemporary geographical boundaries of nations.

After the Sassanid empire was defeated by Muslim armies at Qaddisiyya in 636 CE, the Persian speaking people found themselves under the imposition of a new identity and language under Ummayad rule, encompassing an era known as the “200 years of silence” (Fozi 2014:26) within the Persian speaking realm. In essence, the exclusionary political edifice of the Arab-centric Umayyad rule in previous Sasanian territories and the revocation of former power structures, ushered in a new order. The Umayyad dynasty (651-750) effectively changed the administrative language of the defeated, from Persian to Arabic, through a process of severe purging of the remaining elements of Iranian culture (Fozi 2014: 16-17). Thus, once empowered identities and power holders were forced to the margins of a new political landscape. Peoples of a former superpower effectively becoming clients – a shocking impact to the cognitive understanding of self. The overturning of power did however span resistance in numerous ways, as clamour for reforms mobilised the masses and
culminated after 100 years in the multifaceted Abbasid revolution, which in turn gave birth to what is commonly known as the Golden Age of Islam.

Map3. The spread of Islam and the Umayyad empire ending 750 CE.

The conversion to Islam made for the eventual emergence of a transregional Muslim identity coming to fruition during the Abbasids, who deposed the Arab Umayyads in 750 CE. Basing their rule more on the Sasanian model of government, particularly with the construction of a new capital at Baghdad in 762 CE (Meskoob 1992:29), the Abbasids centralised power, instituted a hereditary line of succession and implemented the intermediary office to the caliphs of the vizierate, which consisted of mostly Persian speaking people. The relocation of the political and economic centre of the Arab empire from Damascus to Baghdad and the transformation of the administrative apparatus from a tribal mode to a cosmopolitan imperial one: Baghdad became a cosmopolitan city where there was no need to be a Muslim to participate in the affairs of the Abbasid Caliphate. With the Abbasids, the Arab language itself benefited from multiple languages and cultures influencing it. Iranian elites soon contributed significantly to Islamic scholasticism, science and Arab literature (Dabashi 2012:45-7), for various reasons ranging from personal-political advancement within the Caliphate to sheer scholarly devotion, to the preservation of culture (Meskoob 1992:29-30). Hence, Iranian myths, legends and cultural-political practises earned legitimacy in the Islamic environment.
Map 4. The three Caliphates.

Due to a history of devastation, in particular of cultural manifestations and written material starting with Alexander’s conquest of the Achaemenid empire, made for the importance of oral traditions as means of eternalising intellectual and cultural material, rendering it more sustainable and akin to a broader stream of social influences (Fozi 2014:32), as readership was not contingent on literacy. With the emergence of Islam in the Persian-speaking world, the artefacts of cultural meaning turned into memories that, in turn, were infused into Iran’s ancient poetic traditions. The ecology of oral and poetic traditions, better preserved than texts, became accessible and embraced by a variety of individuals from the halls of power to the soil of the poor, as poetry and architecture were the only expressions sanctioned under the Umayyad orthodox Islamic rule (Fozi 2014:26).

This created a framework for a resistance strategy that in effect, fused poetic expression with political text (Fozi 2014:26:32:112). Consequentially, veiling political discourse in between Islamic socio-moral teachings, artistic expression and the esoteric knowledge of the reader, rendering literary traditions as a momentous instrument of political resistance and political legitimation for the emerging Iranian dynasties in the eastern peripheries of the Islamic empires, where the Arabic language did not become dominant. In effect, the poetic ecology of cultural preservation, then, culminated after 200 years in the Persian cultural renaissance, resisting cultural dominance by asserting a new political sphere of influence that was informed by the myths of the past, reconstructed into its contemporary context.

Therefore, from the late Umayyad period well into the Abbasid, there remained a
defiance brewing among some leading Iranian intellectuals who resisted and rejected acculturation. This fostered the cultural, literary and poetic Shu’ubiyyah movement, spanning roughly from the middle of the 8th to the middle of the 9th century. This movement used Qur’anic verses (43:19) about the equality of nations and peoples as namesake and impetus. In believing that the Prophet had claimed that “He that speaks Arabic is thereby an Arab”, they constructed prophetic traditions to support their mission (Dabashi 2012:47). As they insisted on the equality of Muslims and openly boasted their Iranian heritage and noble origins, they displayed another form of resistance and expression of re-archaization. Parts of the movement also showed elements of reverse racism, voicing their cultural and revolutionary dissent within the Islamic empires (ibid.). In effect, with the Shu’ubiyyah movement the Persian language became an ethnic proposition.

Political uprisings against Umayyad and Abbasid rule were not all strictly Islamic sectarian variations. Syncretic, proto-Zoroastrian, religious ideas gave ideological momentum to movements where Islam and Zoroastrianism were fused, as in the revolt led by Sundbath against Abbasid rule. This rebellion was crushed, but recurred multiple times in different forms with syncretic, proto-Zoroastrian and the proto-socialistic Mazdakite ideologies as core (Dabashi 2012:48-9), where old and new religious ideas were blended with the collectivism and egalitarianism of the Mazdakites to fuel resistance.

Following many varied but persistent uprisings was the formation of several competing and successive Persian-speaking dynasties in the eastern parts of the Islamic world, starting from the 9th century CE. These dynasties were effectively in charge of their territories under nominal homage to the Abbasid Caliphate – establishing autonomous royal courts of the Persian-speaking world after the introduction of Islam, furthering political momentum to Iranian cultural autonomy and sovereignty. These dynasties actively promoted Persian language and culture, intermingling Persian literature with the evolving dynastic politics in the efforts to secure legitimacy and autonomy in the peripheries of the Arab Caliphate (Dabashi 2012:49-50). Hence, the production of Persian literature and the Persian language itself became entirely a political proposition – a mechanism for the justification and legitimacy of the monarch. An example being the mediaeval version of what we today call political tweets, Do Beiti, consisting of 2 lines, which are easy to remember due to the interplay of rhythm, melody and simple subjects, trickling down form the courts to the public space and vice versa.

From the latter part of the 9th century CE, the interest in compiling Iranian mythology and history had been rising steadily, in a process of re-archaization looking to the past to
inform its presence. *Shahname, Book of Kings* were books that consisted of heroic epics and narratives relating to the Iranian past, which in the contemporary Persian-speaking world is still widely recited aloud (Kathryn Babayan 2002:xxix in Fozi 2014:26):

In the *Shāhnāme*, the late tenth-century poet Ferdowsi crystallized an image of an Iranian past that lived on in the imaginations of those who came to embrace Persianate culture, from the rulers and courtiers of Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal courts, to the Turk or Iranian (Tajik) perfume seller who participated in the culture of storytelling in the coffee houses of larger cities and towns in central and eastern Islamdom

The Samanids (819-1005 CE) were the chief patrons of these works, and most significantly, the great Iranian poet Ferdowsi (d. ca. 1025), who contributed significantly to the revival of the Persian language in his poem *Shahname*, in which he combined oral myths, historiography and legends from pre-Islamic Iranian history using almost exclusively Persian words, and were compiled in Khorasan (Meskoob 1992:35).

Map 5. This map illustrates the fluctuating political situation during competing independent Iranian dynasties (Lorentz 2007, xxviii), with the two most significant dynasties displayed here. The Buyids, in effect, controlled the Abbasid Caliphate politically.

The subsequent *Shahname*-fever broke the “two centuries of silence” (Dabashi 2012:45) mentioned above. This was a monumental process of re-archaization and symbolic, cultural
resistance. Reflecting the importance of the *Shahname* legacy in today’s Iran, the IRI exchanged $137.5 million worth de Kooning painting in 1994 for the remnants of a 16th century book of miniatures known as the *Shaname of Shah Thamasp* of the Safavid dynasty (Waldman & Motevalli 2015).

Production of Persian literature was an apparatus for political legitimation, as it was one of the main ideological forces at the disposal of dynasties such as the Ghaznavids (977-1186), the Seljuqs (1038-1194), the II-Khanids (1256-1336) and even the Ottomans (1281-1924). Persian poetry later became courtly artefacts in India under the Mughals (1526-1858), as the Shi’i Safavids (1501-1732) were more interested in Islamic scholasticism and showed little interest in Persian poetry and the poets migrated to more hospitable courts and rewarding places in India and in the Ottoman world (Dabashi 2012:54).

The fall of Baghdad to the Mongols in 1258 was the culmination of an invasion, which saw the fall of the Abbasids and established the reign of the Mongol Empire divided between different Khanates (1256-1353) in the Muslim world throughout West and Central Asia, but also beyond all the way to China – the seat of Mongol authority.

[Map 6. The Ghaznavid dynasty was later conquered by the Seljuqs. The Hashshashin order (The Nizaris) carried out political assassinations for various interests including the Crusaders throughout West Asia (Daftary 1994:72-77).]
Under the Mongols and the reign of their successors, the Il-Khanids (1256-1353) and the Timurids (1370-1505), the Persian language continued and expanded its role as the “lingua franca of power and wisdom, grace and humility, admonition to justice and claim to legitimacy” (Dabashi 2012:67). The literary humanism it carried forth continued its vital role serving as legitimation in the areas of “philosophy, mysticism, arts, sciences, poetry and architecture” (Dabashi 2012, 133). Hence, under the Mongols, the Persian language became a signifier of ethos, with a particular normativity of ethical principles imbedded in the view of language.

After the initial rapid Mongol conquest, which was reminiscent of the WW2 blitzkrieg and the shock and awe doctrine used in Iraq 2003, resulting in massive conquest encompassing Asia and Europe, the nomadic Mongols sought to establish a civilisation of their own. As medieval Europe was less attractive in comparison to the Asian cultures, the nomadic Mongols chose to settle in notably developed and lucrative political and economic centres, where tolerance and the Mongol syncretic disposition could yield higher rewards for the civilizational visions and underpinnings of the Mongol Empire. Hence, East, Central and West Asia became the centre of Mongol power, as they turned to ancient Asian traditions of interconnected trade-networks. The Mongol revival of what is known as the Silk Roads, was a strategy geared towards stabilising a vast empire ruled by competing dynasties by establishing common security interests in maintaining the flow of vital economic exchange. This interconnectivity was facilitated by Persian as the lingua franca of trade and tolerance,
serving power while asserting its own survivability by the eventual “Iranisation” and incorporation of the Il-Khanids into the Iranian cultural-political sphere (Nordberg 1979:166) and expanding the domains of the Persian-speaking world, ultimately replacing the status of Arabic as the lingua franca of power and grace.

The year of 1258 was also the year when the Iranian poet and Sufi mystic Rumi (1207-1273), born in modern day Afghanistan, began composing his mystical poem *Masnavi*, dubbed by other Sufis as “the Qur’an in Persian” (Dabashi 2012:147). As Persian increasingly became a second language of Islam, primarily owing to the Muslim Gnostics – Sufi poets and writers – and people serving in the courts and bureaucracies, this brought to it a certain measure of sanctity, and it was a vital link among the many peoples that spoke it (Meskoob 1992, 11). *Masnavi* is “considered the second most influential text in the Islamic world” and “so influential that in Ottoman times, a network of institutions was devoted to its study” (Ciabattari 2014).

The genre of *Persian Mirrors for Princes*, refering to texts in Persian, such as the *Qabusnameh* (or *The Book of Advice*), composed in 1080 CE by ibn al-Ziyar, represents realist political theory by authors such as Nizam al-Mulk (1018-1092), a tradition later reflected by European analogues such as Niccoló Machiavelli (1469-1527) and Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679). The *Persian Mirrors for Princes* is a further manifestation of a political culture in close proximity to Islamic political culture, as “they are all, in varied degrees, either directly rooted in a retrieval of pre-Islamic, Sassanid theories of kingship, or else pragmatic as how to run an empire” (Dabashi 2012:75-6). A civilizational act intended to mitigate the initial militaristic disposition of dynasties, which in the wake of their ascension to power leaned heavily on military might and destructive capabilities, this literary genre was exclusively intended for the ruler, and in essence, to moderate and stabilise their rule in a newly emerging vast context by placing the focal point on a soft power approach, depicting the sovereign as a mirror to God’s vicar on Earth. In effect, both the Seljuks and the Ghaznavids came to power through military coups where the Turkic tribes had reached a hegemonic position within the military institutions of the Iranian dynasties. Their unification and the ensuing swift and violent transition of power demanded an infusion of mechanisms of moderation in order to smooth the power transition, ensuring the survivability of the Persian cultural renaissance coming into effect during the latter part of the 9th century, successfully positioning the Persian language as an integral part of the power apparatus of the Turkic and later the Mongol dynasties – linking the Persian language to the halls of political power in Central and West Asia and later with the Mongols also beyond these regions. With the
establishment of the Turkic dynasties, the Persian language ceased to have any ethnic reference and became a lingual proposition as Persian advanced to be owned by whoever speaks it. Furthermore, in the pursuit of establishing an effective and sustainable rule, these successive dynasties through the use of the Persian language, associated political power to the cultural disposition of the governed as a way to attain legitimacy. Following the revival and compilation of pre-Islamic Iranian history, myths and legends at the end of the 9th century CE, the production of fake lineages and family trees derived from pre-Islamic times became a legitimating norm and an ideological tool for any dynasty, hence forth – claiming to rule the Persian-speaking world (Leoni 2008). Through the Shahname, the political edifice of Iran was intimately connected to the Persian language and the institution of kingship which came to an end and transmuted with the fall of the Pahlavi dynasty in 1979.

The economic and cultural exchanges within the Islamic Empire flourished and as continual commerce facilitated professional mobility, some cities such as Baghdad, Nishapur, Basra, Bokhara, Damascus and Cairo, among others, experienced notable population growth and cultural and economic vitality. For the cities’ rulers to assure a prosperous economy, there had to exist laws and customs that were universal regardless of people’s origin, language, religion or sect, although it is certain that conflict existed. These urban settings were the seats of Gnostic Islam, where it served a sense of fellowship and encouraged leniency (Meskoob 1992:164-6), facilitating the syncretic traits of cosmopolitan empires.

What has been outlined above is consequently how the Persian language and literature becomes, via different means and settings in society, through the centuries, expanding with the empires it served, embroidered and admonished, a cosmopolitan aesthetical and political realm. As such, it is rebirthed from defeat, cast in ethical ideals and syncretic traits, coloured by the peoples of vast territories, a moral imagination pervading the mundane and the mystic, retaining the fragility of humanity and a spiritual resistance for all to draw upon. At first forging the rebirth of a sense of ethnic and cultural heritage, but quickly moving beyond that, becoming a linguistic space where all who speak it are part of a wide syncretic realm for people to evolve a moral imagination outside strict governmental and theocratic rules; where grand lyricism and the unspecified nature of the Persian pronoun mingled the divine with the worldly and provided to preserve a humility inspiring and maintaining a cosmopolitanism lending itself to the destabilising yet inclusive force of people’s spirituality (Dabashi 2012). This literary legacy is still absolutely central in the Iranian cultural and political imagination. Extending into the Islamic revolution in 1979, which bound public discourse and cultural expression into the realm of the sacred under modern Iran’s theocratic rule, as the divine is
attempting to control the public sphere.

Persian literature facilitated the development of a literary realm, informed through the ages, whereas the Persian language, with its propensity for the poetic and the philosophical – standing beside the scholastic, theological and scientific Arabic – has been an ever-growing cultural site of both an imperial way of communicating to the masses and also a space to harbour the defeated.
5 CONTINUITY AND CHANGE: THE MAKING OF MODERN IRAN

5.1 The Shi’i Divergence

Shi’i means the party or the faction of Ali, cousin and son-in-law of the prophet Mohammad. Shi’ism stems from early on in Islamic history, when a minority splinter group contended that the prophet Muhammad had assigned Ali as a successor in leading the emerging Muslim community. This contrasted with the majority of the growing Muslim community, who instead welcomed the authority of Abu Bakr as a successor as leader. This initial political factionalism and its ensuing civil wars was to become convictional keystones developed by later Shi’i scholars and communities consolidating the beliefs into a complete doctrinal position, establishing the normative basis and teachings of Shi’ism. While Shi’i Muslims have elemental beliefs and observances per the Islamic holy book, the Qur’an, and the teachings of the prophet Mohammad in common with other Muslims, they differ in their lasting love and respect for the prophet’s family, particularly for his daughter Fatima, her husband Ali and all their descendants. For Shi’is, Ali is considered the first of the twelve infallible Imams recognised in Twelver Shi’ism, and his words and deeds are regarded nearly as eminent as those of the prophet Mohammad (Dabashi 2011). For the Twelve-Imami Shi’a, which is the belief of the majority in present day Iran, the line of Imams begins with Ali and ends with the occultation of Muhammad al-Mahdi, referred to as the Imam of Time (Emam-e Zaman). In this tradition, Hadith includes both the sayings of the prophet Muhammad and those of the 12 Imams, albeit a clear discrepancy is made between them. Moreover, the followers of Twelver Shi’ism ultimately came to a soteriological conclusion: the occulted 12th imam, al-Mahdi, who disappeared in 874 – allegedly by going into hiding – will bring salvation and establish the everlasting reign of peace and justice in the world, following his return hand-in-hand with Jesus at the end of time (Dabashi 2011:63), reflecting a messianic eschatological theology. For Shi’as, Ali’s troubled reign of five years as Caliph remained, and continues to be regarded as, a sacrosanct and ideal way of rule to strive for, yet too divine, symbolic, morally principled and exemplary to be attained (Dabashi 2011:61).

From the onset of Shi’ism, the branch showed a propensity to continuously splinter; reflecting the aspects of Muhammad as a charismatic revolutionary as well as a law-giver, and his Qur’an, which incited rebellion while simultaneously commanding obedience (Dabashi 2011:60). After the Muslim World’s first civil war in 657 CE (the first Fitna) – in which Ali opposed his main contender for the Caliphate, Mu’awiyah – Ali’s early followers
split into two groups. A group of his followers fiercely disagreed on both political and theological grounds with his choice to compromise with Mu‘awiyah, and therefore splintered off, forming the Kharijites (meaning, those who revolted against Ali). Later on, with the assassination of Ali (the fourth Caliph) in 661 CE by a Kharajite, his followers splintered anew into different factions. The assassination of Ali subsequently resulted in the establishment of the Umayyad dynasty and Caliphate (661-750) in Damascus (Fukuyama 2012:193), regarded by the Shi’is as usurpers to the rightful hereditary line of Caliphs of the Islamic community (umma) belonging to Imam Ali and Fatima’s direct decedents. This pattern was repeated after the death of each subsequent Shi’i Imam; his followers breaking into two or more adverse factions in a rapid political and theological transition, each with their claimed narratives regarding the fate of their respective late Imams (Dabashi 2011:61).

As a result of the apparent and inherent penchant for splintering into adverse and incongruent sectarian cells characterising Shi’ism, the branch ultimately manifested itself in twelve different sects of which there are three still existing today. The Five-Imami (Zaydi Shi’is) and the Seven-Imami (Isma’ili Shi’is) both have active communities in various parts of the world such as Yemen, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India and Syria (Tabataba’i 1988: 56). The majority branch of Shi’ism, Twelve-Imami (Ja’fari Shi’is) have active communities in present day Lebanon, Iran and Iraq. However, the vast majority of the Muslim population are still followers of Sunni Islam along with its branches7.

From a contextual point of view, the splintering of Shi’ism into various factions early on in Islamic history carries strong political inclinations. The establishment of the Umayyad dynasty (651-750) as a consequence of the Arab conquest, following the death of Ali and the subsequent uprising and martyrdom of Ali’s grandson Imam Hossein (the third Imam and the prince of martyrdom) against the second Umayyad Caliph, Yazid, at the battle of Karbala in 680, marks a quintessential symbolic event in the Shi’a moral and political disposition, regardless of Shi’a factional inclinations.

5.2 Islamic Conquest and Cultural Fusion

Following the unification of the Arab tribes under the banner of the Prophet Muhammad, the newfound Islamic community of the Arabic peninsula turned their attention east and

7 It was estimated by 2009 that Shi’ism is represented by approximately 10-13% of the 1.57 billion Muslim population worldwide (Pew Research Center 2009:1-8).
westwards to the Sasanian and Byzantine empires—the regional superpowers of the time. The Arab armies shocked the foundation of its contemporaneous world-order by crushing the Sassanid empire at its western frontiers, while forcing the Byzantines to the fringes of west Asia, never to rise again. With the symbolic and decisive victory over the Sasanians at the battle of Qadisiyyah in 636 the Sasanian state, by contrast, quickly crumbled (Lapidus 2002:31-3) mnemonic of Alexanders conquest of the Achaemenid empire, which also fell apart once decisively defeated in open battle, as the centres of their administrative and political power— their imperial cities—lacked military fortifications, which seems to hold true even later during the Safavid era (Farrokh 2011:39). It was not the force of the state, which halted the Arab conquest of remote Iranian satrapies (Pourshariati 2008), but inaccessible mountains and deserts (Lapidus 2002:33), and the devolved autonomous political structures coming into effect once the central state had disintegrated. As discussed above, these areas later became the localities of revolts against the Caliphates where Iranian polities and cultural traditions long outlasted the passing of the Sasanian dynasty (Pourshariati 2008:5), which could not uphold its pillars of legitimacy: the power of the state, the crown and the orthodox Zoroastrian church, manifested in Sasanian imperial cities throughout Mesopotamia.

There is a pattern, thus far, suggesting that once united by a centralised state, Iran does not collapse from within but rather due to external military invasions, provided that the pillars of legitimacy were left intact. Historically, Iran tends to de-militarise internally (Matthee 2015b:442; Lapidus 2002:33) once united by a legitimate dominant state with the capacity to command control through its institutions of power. From the time of the Parthian dynasty and empire (247 BCE-226 CE), which was incorporated into the Sasanian state (206-650 CE) through a confederacy (Pourshariati 2008), Iran had existed more than 600 years without major instability, due to the state-centred political structure. Nevertheless, the rapid Arab conquest and the ensuing spread of Arab Islamic culture induced by the revolutionary and egalitarian message of Muhammad, was not to be impeded by any contemporaneous power. By the time of the power transition of the Caliphate in the emerging Islamic empire to the Umayyad clan (661-750), Islam became a defining element in the religious, intellectual, economic, political and societal trajectory spanning three continents: Africa, Asia, the Caucasus and Europe. Ultimately, the Umayyads were stopped in France in 732 (Fukuyama 2012:193) and at the borders of China (Kennedy 2016:106-7). In other words, theoretically,

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8 Quasi-independent principalities of the Sasanian empire in Khorasan and north-western Iran.
Islam ceased to be an ethnic proposition as it became fundamentally inclusive and universal at its core (Meskoob 1992:104). However, as the Umayyads geared their imperial resources to the military machinery while emulating Sasanian and Byzantine statecraft along with their tribal political inclinations (Lapidus 2002:36), they did not observe the principles of equitability prescribed by the Prophet and his Qur’an. The radical massage of Islam as given by the Prophet—empowering the powerless—was not a principle observed by the Umayyads. They imposed a hierarchy along ethnic lines with higher taxes for non-Arabic Muslims (mawali), establishing Arabic hegemony by institutionalised racism writ large into their imperialism. This aroused opposition amid the larger multi-ethnic and multi-religious commonality, in part accounting for the substantial support behind the Abbasid revolution in 740 with its main thrust emanating, as mentioned, from Persian-speaking lands, eventually resulting in the overthrow of the Umayyad Caliphate (Nordberg 1979:95-7). The Abbasids (750-1250) adopted Sasanian governmental ideals via the intermediary, mostly Persian speaking political office to the Caliph of the vizierate, and increased state centralisation (Fukuyama 2012:193-6), transforming the tribally based Islamic conquest towards an imperial cosmopolitanism (Dabashi 2012:13). Moreover, in their attempt to appease the population at large and the multifaceted movements supporting their ascension to power, the Abbasids claimed direct linkage to the family of the Prophet, which rekindled Sasanian practice while additionally gaining legitimacy vis-a-vis the Shi’a movements, constituting part of the core to the success of the initial Abbasid uprising (Dabashi 2012:109-10).

Nevertheless, the Abbasid dynasty soon instituted Sunni jurisprudence throughout its state, abandoning its multidenominational approach. The Umayyad’s feudalism was extended by the Abbasid dynasty and transmuted into their imperial cosmopolitanism, now including Iranian elite among others in their governmental edifice.

Within a year after the Abbasids had prevailed over the Umayyads, Shi’i rebellion against the new rulers gained momentum, especially in the regions mentioned above, where in the year of 755 the insurrection consisted of affiliated revolutionary movements of Shi’i, Mazdakite and proto-Zoroastrian denominations. Shi’ism carried the primary and guiding ideological thrust of dissent and revolt, resonating mainly with the indigent peasantry, the urban poor and the Mawali—namely masses of impoverished Arabs and non-Arabs left disenfranchised by the rising tribal fortunes of the political elite, all while drawing various revolutionary movements to itself. All this accumulated, as mentioned, to the marginalisation

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9 The Mawli class included merchants, landlords and peasants (Dabashi 2011:109).
of the central Abbasid Caliphate under the nominal homage of independent Iranian dynasties participating in the multifaceted revolt against the central Caliphate (Dabashi 2011:110-11).

What is outlined above, sheds light on a propensity to rapidly resist political power imposed externally and from above, emanating from the Iranian cultural sphere early on in Islamic history. The syncretic disposition allowed multi-religious movements regardless of their internal religious inclinations to bound in unified political opposition. The will to oppose a common unsolicited external factor as a unified force, rendered the internal religious dynamics of various movements secondary to that of a forceful resistance, which drew different groups in a common direction. The revolts in and of themselves were not necessarily grounded in Shi’ism, but it provided the creed to oppose, both externally and internally. This also explains the propensity of Shi’ism to splinter from within due to its internal dynamics, which highlights the importance of the occultation of the 12th Imam-Mahdi as an attempt to partially end the splintering tendencies—the will to unify and control the democratic predispositions resulting in its diverse appearances of which there are only three branches existing today. It is important to remember the all-encompassing radical impact Islam had on Iranian society at large and why the resistance and piety of Imam Ali and the revolt of Imam Hossain (the prince of martyrs) from within the Islamic community gained attendance as an oppositional religious and political force to that of the dominant one; a force of attraction common to all Shi’a factions. However, the question of successive Imams following Hossein’s martyrdom at Karbala differed, as each claimed Imam was made sovereign post-mortem by the force of the internal dynamics from within the Shi’i community at large. As evident by the results of the unfolding of Shi’i and Iranian history to present time, the power to balance differences became the blueprint for sustainability. Thus, during Mongol rule, which encompassed the centres of economic and political power in Asia and beyond, the mystical and highly syncretic, individualised and romanticised spiritualism of Sufism flourished as an opposing and complimentary pole to Islamic scholasticism. The far-reaching advancement of Sufism was facilitated by the religious tolerance, characteristic of Mongol and, specifically, the Il-Khanids (1256-1336 CE) rule in Iran (Meskoob 1992:126-7). Revolutionary movements such as the Sarbedaran (1332-1386), became the rebellious apex of a fusion of Sufism and Shi’ism with an enduring impact on the rest of Shi’i history. As noted by a historian of the Sarbedaran movement; “we encounter the phenomenon of Shi’ite Sufi militancy, which was to occur a century later with the Safavid order” (Arjomand 1984:70). This monumental expansion of the Shi’a philosophical universe by its integration with Sufism from the 13th century onwards, generated space for the mixture of pre-Islamic
Iranian genealogy; myths, history and legends to Shi’ism itself. The Mongol era in Iran, constituted the presage of syncretic philosophies and epistemic manoeuvres that were later reproached at the royal philosophical, political and theological institutions of the Twelver Shi’i Safavid state (1501-1722) (Dabashi 2011:135-42).

As discussed, the way in which such resistance manifests differed both in time and space. From soft resistance as portrayed in the literary movements to actual direct violent revolt elucidated here. However, the multifaceted forms of resistance created a synergy effect, whereby aspects of differences, or uniqueness were absorbed into individual movements; a form of a nexus of absorption, predominant in Shi’ism, a flow, facilitated by the contextual syncretic disposition salient within this given cultural sphere. A clear example of this being the communalism or the proto-socialism of the Mazdakites engrossed into Shi’ism\(^{10}\) (Nizām al-Mulk and Darke 1960) as an enabler for the organisation of the grassroots, which was and still is the main force of Shi’a influence. This is a trait, that in time would come to change the course of Shi’ism from a communal sense of minority status to the upper echelon of power while still being highly relevant to the grassroots communities. The ability of a top-down-bottom-up reciprocation over the unfolding of history, resulted in the institutionalisation of Shi’i power – the ulama (see appendix 3), throughout Iranian society and in time, subsequently descending on mechanisms of regulatory power (Moussavi 2004), which we will turn to below.

5.3 The Consolidation of Twelver Shi’ism in Iran

Following the global conquest of the Mongols and the successive civilizing episodes, a premodern universalist Islam emerged with the simultaneous rise of the Mughals (1526-1748) in India, descendants of Genghis Khan and Tamerlane; the Ottomans (1453-1922) to the west, housing the Sunni Caliphate; the Safavids (1500-1722), a Sunni-Sufi order, initially

\(^{10}\) This understanding derives in part from the political theorist of the Seljuqids, the high vezir Nizam al-Mulk (1018 - 1092), who feared Shi’i communities due to their destabilising impact on the authority of the Sultanate. He portrayed the Shi’is as hidden communities within the Seljuqid empire always seeking to overthrow the authority of the Sultan and, thus, the order of the state by drawing on analogies from Sasanian sources, equating the Mazdakite revolution during Sasanian times with the Shi’is and concluding that they are so opposed to private ownership (i.e the authority of the Sultan) that they even share their wives among themselves (Nizām al-Mulk and Darke 1960). A clear discursive practice of exclusion from state power. Interestingly, a similar perspective was later announced by Khomeini in his Last will and Testament, now directed towards the socialists, part of the core to the initial success of the revolution in 1979: “Islam differs sharply from communism. Whereas we respect private property, communism advocates the sharing of all things – including wives and homosexuals” (Khomeini 1989 in Abrahamian 2008:179), reflecting Nizam’s denouncement of Shi’ism centuries earlier.
transformed into a militant Sufi-Shi`i mystical movement centred between the Mughals and the Ottomans.

Map 8. The map of the Safavid empire illustrates approximate boundaries of the Safavid state, as they constantly fluctuated. Eastern Afghanistan was in most cases under Safavid control. The revolutionary movements leading to the fall of the Safavid state, emanated from the Kabul area.

The accession of the Safavid dynasty was the political counterpart to the philosophical development of Islamic universalism, both propelled the revolutionary fusion of Shi`ism and Sufism. The Safavid state emerged with Islam’s ceaseless dream of itself as a universalising religion, which in time transposed Safavid rule from its initial militant disposition to an internally moderate cosmopolitan state. During Safavid reign, Twelver Shi`ism was redefined as a state religion under the patronage of the Safavid Shahs and its intellectual and artistic horizons broadened, fostering an urbane cosmopolitanism of a far more universal variety in transcendence of Mongol and pre-Mongol scholastic subjection (Dabsahi 2011:142 -152), “as it was manifested in Safavid-era art and architecture, science and technology, commerce and industry, and foreign diplomacy and international relations” (Dabashi 2011:153).

The Safavid state emerged in a geopolitically multipolar and increasingly globalised world. Converged on by regional, imperial and religious powers, such as the Ottoman empire in the west, the Uzbeki Khanate in the north east, the Mughal empire in the east and competing European maritime powers in the southern Persian Gulf area, such as the Portuguese empire, The British empire and the Dutch East India Company (Newman 2009:61) and the religious missionary institutions of the Catholic Church (Matthee 2015a) and, finally, the emerging Russian empire pressing into the Caucasus. The Safavid state,
during more than two centuries in power had a bundle of internal and external congregating political and economic interests to mitigate between, situated as it were, at the crossroads of not only regional and global trade, but also a wide spectrum of cultural influence and exchange (Bausani 1975:43-4).

The Safavid movements accession to power in 1501 and the subsequent establishment of the Safavid dynasty and state can be understood by several corresponding factors. During the interposing centuries, from its outset as a pious Sunni-sufi mystical order in the 13th century, the Safavids had transformed and effectively incorporated their extremist (Ghulat) Shi’ism with Sufism (Yildirim 2015:128-133). Thus, by the 15th century, the Safavid movement could draw on both the mystical emotional force portraying their leader as Morad\textsuperscript{11} (Newman 2009:14) and the Shi’a appeal to the oppressed masses to gain a large number of dedicated adherents among those who were alienated from the Ottoman empire (Yildirim 2015:131) and their nascent claim to pan-Islamic unity. Furthermore, following the political storms appearing with the demise of Mongol rule in Iran, the political structures, which the Safavid order would descend upon, were divided along competing local dynasties and emirates, thus, rife with power-vacuums. Apart from their appealing religio-political disposition, the Safavid order successfully assured further loyalty by the force of their community based structure (the community in effective control of the sovereign) and their distribution of wealth policy. In a time of wide-spread poverty and impoverished vagabond armies, the Safavid movement after several successful military campaigns, ensured loyalty and security by the vast distribution of wealth among their followers (Anooshahr 2015:259). This accumulated to a force of attraction in a period of political breakdown and the abundance of plunder-hungry vagabond armies, which came to swell the Safavid ranks, thus, increasing the output of Safavid power. The combination of a mystical appealing religious doctrine, which drew on a political discourse that united different elements within Iranian society coupled with a grassroots oriented socio-economic policy (Anooshahr 2015), would come to be the foundation upon which the Safavid state would be structured in order to bolster ideological cohesion throughout the state (Moazzen 2016:563). Furthermore, once they moved to consolidate power, patronage was assured by granting favourable economic and political positions to elites supporting the Safavid agenda (Newman 2009:15-25). In retrospect, the rise of the Safavids to power, was not a wild messianic apocalyptic explosion, which numerous external sources have long maintained, but a carefully planned campaign

\textsuperscript{11} Mystic and divine leader, commanding absolute loyalty by its core members.
run by the Safavid constituency (Anooshahr 2015).

The establishment of the Safavid dynasty in 1501 came as the logical conclusion of prior epistemic manoeuvres that brought Sufism and Shi’ism together, facilitated by Mongol rule, which adopted “local customs and beliefs, […] religious arts and architecture” (Ahmadi 2013:180). At this point, the Safavids had successfully concealed their Sunni orthodox linage (Dabashi 2011:143) and contrived a linkage between themselves and the Seventh Shi’i Imam, hence, claiming divine authority as decedents of infallible Imams (Nordberg 1979:229). This opening of an Iranian genealogy to Shi’ism, led to the historical rumour – in particular among Persian speaking communities (Meskoob 1992:116) – that the third Imam, Hossain, had married a Sasanian princess as a way of protecting Zoroastrianism under the Shi’a mantle (Fozi 2014:122). Thus, the ancient pre-Islamic mythical institution of Iranian Kingship was subsequently associated to the institution of the Imamate. In effect, the Safavid Shahs claimed a form of double legitimacy; as vice regents of the 12th Imam al-Mahdi, tasked with establishing a just rule in waiting for his return (Newman 2009:14-5) and, as rightful heirs to Sasanian Shahs (Abrahamian 2008:16; Keddie 1969:40-3).

For such rule to be established, the Safavids relied on Islamic scholasticism and Persian poetry as a signifier at the courts had to emigrate to more hospital environments within the Islamic world (Dabashi 2011:145). The Safavids alienated the Iranian literati by excelling the position of Islamic scholasticism at the halls of political power. This was essential for the Safavids in their bid to consolidate their claim to rule (Grigoriadis 2013:375) and enabling state power to penetrate society at large (Moussavi 2004; Moazzen 2016:558), by drawing upon the horizontal and vertical socio-economic networks of the ulama. For the Safavids, the inculcation of Shi’ism as state ideology was carried forth by Islamic (Shi’i) scholasticism, which attracted scholars from around the Islamic world (Abisaab 1994:103; Farrokh 2011:15; Keddie 1969:37-8), turning the Safavids to maecenas for the theological and philosophical negotiation and evolution of Twelver Shi’ism, in effect, creating a defined and unified corpus of Twelver Shi’ism. This accumulated to a force of attraction for the ulama, as well as the Safavids, who could thereby attract and attain recognition of their political project from the population at large. Thus, with the ulama as an integral part of the governmental edifice, the Safavid gained access to a religious-economic ecology of power (Abisaab 1994:103-4; Moussavi 2004; Nordberg 1988:163-4; Grigoriadis 2013; Moazzen 2016). In effect, the marriage of the institution of Kingship with the institution of the ulama, resulted in the trinity of political, religious and economic power.

Thus far, the unfolding of Iranian history suggests that Iran’s longevity is grounded in
multifaceted forms of resistance and constant negotiations between religious, political and economic actors in relation to the populous. Two major separate but coinciding currents of resistance can be discerned from the discussion above; intellectual resistance in combination with opposition to power through revolt. Central to the intellectual resistance was Persian literary traditions, which ultimately, with the Safavid state was intertwined with the religious and political sphere, resulting in an ideologically unified state with the capacity to direct the revolutionary tendencies to external factors.
6 TECHNOLOGIES OF POWER – POLITICS, RELIGION AND ECONOMY

The Safavid state came into effect through the inculcation of a unifying state ideology, which drew on both Islamic (Shi’a) scholasticism, Sufism and Iranian pre-Islamic myths, history and legends. Hence, we will discuss technologies of power, which have been employed since the Safavids and still in effect today. These aspects will shed light on a continuity of a political discourse adhering to a resistance continuum and a universal predisposition, always positioning Iran within its larger geopolitical context.

This institutionalisation of a state ideology and religion, reflected a strategy, which reclaimed and contemporised a shared past and identity, thus effectively transforming a community characterised by multiple loyalties in the post-Mongol era. The creation of a community as a unified organism revolving around a common past was achieved by fusing pre-Islamic history, myths, legends and traditions into Shi’ism itself. In effect, establishing a charismatic and dynamic system of authority as it “evolved over the course of the dynasty’s 220-year rule, changing to particular political and historical contingencies” (Rizvi 2010).

The foundational keystones of modern Iran can be traced to the Safavid state. The Safavid state effectively drew upon Islamic theory of peace (Kalin 2010:7-9) and stability, in which the state’s role is seen as one of maximising collective welfare by its commitment to security, the redistribution of wealth and public ownership (Grigoriadis 2013:371). To this end, the Safavids relied heavily on the institution of the ulama, which also enabled the Safavids to draw on their economic ecology. The madrasa-mosque-shrine-complex (Moazzen 2016:556; Farhat 2014) collected and invested revenues in social welfare, infrastructural projects, art and education and, moreover, supervised and administered by the ulama. The control of these sites of economic, professional and religious importance, accumulates to both material and imaginative ideological power, which since the Safavid state was and is inherited by generations of ulama outside governmental control. The orchestrated implementation of political, religious and economic technologies of power between the Safavid state and the ulama will be discussed below.

6.1.1 The Shi’a State: The Foundation of Contemporary Iran

The ulama was positioned in between the state and society, facilitating administrative and bureaucratic reforms, leading to a stable state formation under two centuries of Safavid rule.
The ulama consisted of two interdependent structures; one being part of the Safavid administrative and court elite, whilst the other drew its legitimacy from the grassroots society, pointing towards patterns of top-down-bottom-up reciprocal structures, guaranteeing a constant flow of politically vital information about the conditions under which people lived, as well as of economic resources to mitigate possible discontent and to provide the state means of centralised rule. The Safavid state reached its greatest level of centralisation at the end of the 16th century by successfully implementing state institutionalisation among its peripheral provinces, effectively turning them into state domain through internal security (Matthee 2015b:435). Following the Safavid consolidation of power, Isfahan became its pompous capital (Sani 2013) – the centre of gravity and control reaching all corners of the empire. Politically significant Safavid cities were planned to maximise communal socialising, religious activities and entertainment in conjunction with economic activity (Dabashi 2011:146-9; Rizvi 2010; Sani 2013; Farhat 2014:213), contributing to the strengthening of state power and legitimacy. The popular expression in Persian that “Isfahan is the centre of the universe” (Dabashi 2011: 148) illuminates a discourse of a perceived image of a strong, multi-dimensional, flourishing, cosmopolitan and stable state, in effect, controlling the crossroads of global trade. Cities across Safavid domains became the territorial units of Safavid economy (Ranjar & Manesh 2016:2; Grigoriadis 2013:378-9; Dabashi 2011:149), which in turn, was grounded in an economic ideology focused on social justice (Grigoriadis 2013:371; Farhat 2014:211) with a cosmopolitan disposition, evident by the multi-ethnic and religious structure of their administrative infrastructure and the nature of its societal composition.

Furthermore, the Safavid state strengthened the ulama’s role in civic and educational institutions, which became salient throughout the Safavid period as they actively engaged in prompting knowledge institutions as vessels to achieve compliance with state ideology and, subsequently, creating a common trajectory throughout the Safavid state (Gregoriadis 2013:376; Moazzen 2016:556; Dabashi 2011:149).

Instrumental to Safavid state building was also the construction and restoration of public institutions, in which they were actively involved, serving to represent a shared past. They assigned sizeable amounts for commemorating Shi’a events, festivities and rituals, which were enacted on a shared remembrance of past events made sacred. The narratives provided by the Safavid state was not aimed to reveal past events with accuracy, but in such a way that it “resonated as meaningful, persuasive and true” (Moazzen 2016:567) in their contemporaneous context. Hence, in order to consolidate state power, not only education, but
also cultural politics such as organised public festivities, commemorative rituals, art and architecture contributed to expanding the authority and legitimacy of the Safavid Shahs and the Shi‘i ulama (Abisaab 1994:103-4; Ahmadi 2013:178; Farhat 2014; Moazzen 2016; Rizvi 2012:226).

Apart from building new mosques, madrasa, renovating the shrines of the Imams and their posterities and unrestrainedly founding commemorative rituals, the Shahs also sponsored tomb visiting and regional pilgrimage (Farhat 2014:201-15), furnished towards upholding dynastic legitimacy, hampering economic outflow and to transcend “sectarian divisions and religious affiliation” (Farhat 2014:202). The Safavid courts image was geared towards the religo-cultural arena and the public sphere, combining morality and religiosity, using religio-cultural entertainment and institutions of learning as instruments for discrediting and neutralising extremist Shi‘ism (Keddie 2006:11), while drawing the revolutionary tendencies towards external threats (Moazzen 2016:569). These institutions also served as a forum for dialogue between the grassroots, academics, religious and political classes as well as a focal point for dialogue between the past and the present (Moazzen 2016:558).

The Safavids understood Shi‘a Islam as complementary to economic development and social stratification, excelling Shi‘ism to gain bureaucratic state power in addition to political power; it would not have been possible to maintain an Islamic economic system without a vertical monitoring system (Grigoriadis 2013:379). The endurance of Shi‘a Islam as state ideology required a sufficient level of economic coordination between the state and city authorities. Even during the last decades when the grip of central power had diminished, the Shahs ordered investigations of local corruption, often at the request of an increasingly troubled population (Matthee 2015b:436).

The role of the ulama in the formation of a centralised government proved to be instrumental for the survival of the Safavid state. Correspondingly, its withdrawal from the administrative structure at the end of Safavid rule, can be associated with the increased role of the private royal households in state affairs (Grigoriadis 2013:375) and an overall increase of military repression in response to public unrest (Matthee 2015b). This resulted in the decay of state power as well as the control of its peripheries (Dabashi 2011:162; Matthee 2015b; Ghereghlou 2017:46), since the ulama no longer functioned as the intermediaries within the governmental edifice, which thereby lost the capacity to amicably resolve surging discontent and conflicts at grassroots level. This in part explains the nascent revolts in peripheral territories culminating in the Afghan revolutionary movements and the fall of the Safavid imperial city of Isfahan, subsequently ending Safavid state rule.
6.1.2 The Economic Underpinnings of Political Power

As some parts of the ulama bestowed and grew to accept at large the Safavid dynasty as vice-regents in waiting for the return of the 12th Imam, the Safavids could access religious taxation through the ulama, rights that had been given to them before the Safavid era (Keddie 1969: 43-5; Moussavi 2004), conceding a solid base for revenue directly to the state coffers. While the Safavid state had access to religious taxation, they propelled the autonomy of the ulama (Grigoriadis 2013:372-3) by re-distributing wealth through the institutionalisation of *waqf* as an integral part of economic state practice. *Waqf* properties, constitutes charitable endowments given to the madrasa-mosque-shrine-complex (Moazzen 2016; Farhat 2014; Nordberg 1988, 237-55). These public assets yields regular returns, which were directly controlled by the ulama. *Waqf* assets, were re-invested within the complex in areas such as cultural reproduction, physical infrastructure and social welfare (Grigoriadis 2013; Farhat; 2014; Moazzen 2016). Furthermore, to ensure a stable stream of agricultural revenue, essential to a domestically driven economy (Ranjbar & Manesh 2016), the Safavids instigated the so called *panjgane*-system (Nordberg 1988:222-3), which divided land revenues into five equal parts, in effect, safeguarding local food security while ensuring revenues to land owners and the state. These revenues received by the state would then be re-distributed throughout state structures, including the madrasa-mosque-shrine-complex.

Ultimately, the endorsement of the ulama by the Safavids included contributions to the economic power of the ulama, through donations of *waqf* property (Keddie 1969:43), backing ulama control over religious taxes and payments for their official and religious functions. The economic and political power granted by the Shahs to the ulama worked in the favour of both the crown and the ulama as long as the Shahs could also maintain a self-governing source of power. With the decline of Safavid power and the withdrawal of the ulama from the state edifice, some prompted denial of Safavid religious legitimacy (Ward 2014:49), claiming that high-ranking ulamas should attain the office of vice-regency (Keddie 1964:43-5), thus, allegeable to claim religious taxation. Importantly, at the end of the Safavid era, the ulama had attained sufficient control over a wide range of economic revenues, which enabled them to confront the divine legitimacy of the crown. They had evolved into an autonomous institution with a grand ecology of economic power in addition to an economy of penance, rooted in grassroots society and the merchant class (Keddie 2006:30), sprouting

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12 *Waqf* properties still yields revenues under the same system (Adelkha 2012:23-32).
13 An economic ecology attached to spiritual functions and religious guidance.
into a network, which “was not limited to major cities or even public domains, but in fact extended into the inner sanctum of families” (Dabashi 2007:141), throughout Iranian society.

6.1.3 Resistance Continuity

In order for the Safavid state to effectively cement a unifying ideology – fomenting a regulatory mechanism upon the individual and by extension, stabilising the subject-sovereign relationship – they had to create functions, practises and discourses binding the individual to the realm of the sacred. The institutionalism of Shi’ism as a unifying force, necessitated a specific imaginative paradigm, which could draw the revolutionary logic of Shi’ism into a cosmic continuum of resisting the oppressive contingencies of a world, seeking to collapse upon the defenders of truth and the oppressed. To this end, the Safavids and the ulama shaped commemorative rituals by enacting upon a corpus of Karbala oriented texts, appropriated to the religo-cultural disposition of the Iranian sphere and infused into “the master of uprising” (Yildirim 2015:127) – Imam Hossain.

The continuous rebellious disposition of Shi’ism, which entails its capacity to both foster and appropriate the sentiments of the disenfranchised, oppressed and impoverished, and successively acting to consolidate and catalyse the discontent of the people in revolt is represented in “the Karbala complex”, a perpetual re-enactment of the fate of Hossein, the Prince of Martyrs (Dabashi 2011:75), at the battle of Karbala. This complex, founded on the notions of mazlumiyyat (innocence and literally: “having been wronged”) and shahadat (martyrdom) (Dabashi 2011:80), which are attributed to, and in part derived from, Imam Hossein and his fate. The innate protestive nature of Shi’ism stems from an abiding sense of wrong that must, but never can, be righted; originating in the recognition of both the political breach of Imam Ali not being allowed to immediately follow after Prophet Muhammad as the ruler of the initial Muslim community – and thus simultaneously a violation of the spirit of Islamic divine revelation, which altered the course of Islam and by extension, human history – and that of Hossein failing to fulfil their divine mission becoming leaders of the Muslim community, which was justly his and his father’s. Hossein’s revolt against Yazid exemplifies (a moral and spiritual) success in failure, while his father Imam Ali, actually becoming a Caliph typifies a failure in success (him becoming Caliph yet in the wrong order; his death via assassination; his mercy on Mu’awiyah): a paradox embodying these events with greater metaphysical magnitude, embellishing the Shi’i doctrines throughout history (Dabashi 2011:81-5). Mazlumiyyat entails for Shi’ism that its truthfulness and legitimacy is bound to it
being combative and speaking truth to power, while conversely loosing that legitimacy when it comes to power. Power is intimately associated with the concept of *zulm* (tyranny), which is seen as rife in the world ever since the time of Yazid, who in the Shi’i historical memory personifies evil and injustice and forever tainted whoever has dominion. Thus, since the battle of Karbala, all who wield political power are deemed illegitimate and must be resisted, unless power is employed in the absence of its polluting contingencies. This mandatory resistance is rooted in the story of Hossein leading a small band of revolutionaries against Yazid, and so resistance is tied to the concept of *qiyam* (insurrection). The idea of defeat is inherent in the battle of Karbala, and with *zulm* and *qiyam*, it forms an archetypal presence in the Shi’i political subconscious, making revolt, a sense of victimhood and minority complex intrinsic to its historical presence.

The aforementioned concepts and notions, along with the guilt implicated in the viewpoint of the Shi’i community seeing themselves as having instigated Hossein to revolt and ultimately responsible for him being murdered, and being like the people of Kufa, having abandoned their beloved Imam, constitute the Shi’i driving force and are conceptualised in the ‘Karbala complex’. Defiance is always lurking, smouldering abeyant; a potential respawning, unrealized within the Shi’i essentiality. The archetypal father and son (Imam Ali and Imam Hossein) negating each other’s meaningful progeny inspires a communal mentality of self-defeat awaiting revenge. The moment the illusion of having succeeded in attaining justice arrives, the primal wound of their faith returns to anguish them; every new scenario finds a correlation to the primordial past, and the act of resisting begins anew to nourish the faith (Dabashi 2011:80-4). The context of perpetual *intizar* (expectation) emanating from the *ghaybah* (occultation), the “disappearance of the Twelfth Imam”, encloses the Shi’i paradigm in an unresolvable catch-22, only to be concluded when Imam Muhammad al-Mahdi emerges at the end of time to establish everlasting peace.

The Karbala complex is resonant with kindred themes in various movements and cultures, including Iranian pre-Islamic legends carrying similar motifs, displaying a propensity to appropriate and transmute. The notion of *shahadat* is blended into the Sufi conception of *fana* (annihilation) in historical instances of Iranian and Muslim mystics who suffered execution after expressing contempt for political tyranny and juridical dogmatism, endowing them with a martyrly aura akin to Hossein. Zoroastrianism, Platonism,
Neoplatonism, and Aristotelian-Avicenna philosophy constructed the foundation of the Illuminationist school of Islamic philosophy by Shahab al-Din Yahya Suhrawardi in the 12th century (Suhrawardi, also known as al-Shahid – ‘the Martyred’), which itself contributed greatly to the foundation of the School of Isfahan, established during the Safavids. In Ferdowsi's national epic Shahname, the Magi character of Seyyavash has strong similarities to Imam Hossein, symbolising courage and innocence (Ferdowsi and Davis 2004). In more recent times, the Shi'i iconography has lent itself to, for example, nationalist and Marxist concepts, transmuted and appropriated secular socialism and served in movements vying for influence, change, justice and revolution (Dabashi 2011:87-94).

From the 16th century, the Safavids in effect formally installed commemorative ceremonies as a Shi‘i ritual, which ever since, has been performed in different locations around the world; from India to Iran, Iraq and Lebanon, all the way around to Trinidad, Spain and France (Biet 2012). The suffering at the heart of Shi’ism, as expressed by the ceremony of Muharram, bears resemblance to pre-Islamic Iranian tradition: the passion plays of Ta‘ziyeh. Similarities between the mourning for Imam Hossein and Seyyavash in pre-Islamic sources and Shahname have been pointed out by many scholars (Dabashi 2011:8-9).

### 6.2 The Development of the Post-Safavid Ulama Power Base

The demise of the Safavid state prelude the chain of collapse of Islamic empires. Following the breakdown of the Safavid state at the centre of the three Islamic empires, Iran was to be ruled for a short time by Nader Shah (1735-1747). His short reign can be summarised by Clausewitz (1997) term total war (reminiscent in scale of the later Napoleonic wars). Nader Shah’s rule was focused on war, ravaging and disrupting west, central, east and south Asia. He reconquered territories lost after the fall of the Safavid state and greatly expanded further, fomenting a vast superficial empire (Nordberg 1988:75; Farrokh 2011:86-126; Ward 2009:51-60; Dabashi 2011:164). The magnitude of destruction befalling the region totally broke and eroded the Mughal state as well as the region at large, amplifying political uncertainties and disorder ensuing from the collapse of two major centralised states in Iran and India. Nader Shah’s conquests, ultimately, resulted in the destruction of the Mughal armies and the sack of Delhi in 1739, disintegrating the Mughal state and leaving it open for any one power seeking to loot and raid India. The revenues taken from India amassed to such an extent that it prompted Nader Shah to exempt taxation for two years.
The breakdown and erosion of Mughal India, paved the way for British conquest, which created a sphere of British influence and power from India to Afghanistan and into eastern present-day Iran. However, the British empire’s protracted warfare in Afghanistan, resulted in failure to effectively instigate direct colonial rule, which led to a policy of compliance with the Qajar monarchy (1789-1926), who needed imperial assistance to maintain their insignificant power (Ewans 2002).

Map 9. For Iran, the inception of European imperial domination (Dabashi 2015:102). Iran at the beginning of the 19th century during the Qajar dynasty. The Ottoman empire spanning into North African and Eastern Europe.

The commencement of European imperial power throughout Asia – the intercontinental power struggle, “the Great Game”, revoked and transformed the age-old connectivity of the region into a structure of economic submission (Jönsson 2011:11), as the Qajar dynasty served imperial geopolitical and economic interests by handing out favourable concessions to European powers (Keddie 2006; Nordberg 1979:387-9). Iran, was to be economically and geopolitically dominated (Dabashi 2007:34) from all directions; imperial Britain from the East, imperial Russia into north-central Asia and the Caucasus, and finally, the collapse of the 600-year Ottoman world and Caliphate in the 20th century spanning three continents, cut the west of Iran into bits and pieces under the watchful care of European imperial powers (Lapidus 2014:527). Islam as a transregional entity and universal factor was no more as the age of nations materialised.

The attempt by Nader Shah to curtail the power of the Shi’i ulama by introducing
Sunna as state religion (Nordberg 1988:165 and 1979:240-1; Farrokh 2011:126; Ward 2009:51; Dabashi 2011:164; Keddie 2006:20), endeavouring to establish a super-empire with the Ottomans, was an enterprise, which utterly failed, although, temporarily powering the Shah’s military machine by confiscating waqf (Keddie 1969:48). However, the ulama who basically went into hibernation during Nader Shah's short reign, had already evolved into a transregional entity wielding power in the most essential sectors of the post-Safavid era – the grassroots and the merchant classes. The obligatory nature of large alms – religious tax (khums) – put into doctrine by the Safavids to be administrated by the ulama, became a practice, which the Qajars had to follow in order to attain any cooperation from them, as they paradoxically found their existence increasingly contingent on clerical support: “What had been a pillar for state policy in Safavid times later turned into financial base for anti-governmental action” (Keddie 1969:48). Even though, diplomatically and militarily supported by competing European imperial powers (Keddie 2006:44), the Qajars needed to attain domestic legitimacy. In other words, “ever since 1501, when the Safavids established Shi’ism as the official religion of Iran, they and their successors, including the Qajar dynasty, had systematically patronized Muharram to bridge the gap between themselves and their subjects” (Abrahamian 2008:5). Without the ulama, the secluded Qajar dynasty, had no way of manifesting their hollow imperial claim, both in Islamic and pre-Islamic terms.

6.3 Colonial Imposition and Resistance Continuity

The dependency of the Qajar dynasty on European imperial powers (Dabashi 2011:171-2; Keddie 2006:34-9; Nordberg 1979:387-390; Jahanbegloo 2014:19), further aggravated the situation for the ulama, who then aimed to strengthen their political power in regards to both the Qajar monarch and the populace in general, which had seen their legal status reduced by feudalistic jurisprudence. By evoking the revolutionary character of early Shi’ism to promote popular currents of anticolonial resistance and warfare, the ulama effectively circumvented the Safavids attempted control of this tendency and put the mighty revolting Shi’a spirit vicariously at the Qajar's disposal, whilst simultaneously reinforcing their own power, countering its recent constitutional diminishment (Dabashi 2011:171). The subsequent relational split between the ulama and Qajars, can be identified as the outset of the breach between the clerics and the monarchy (Nordberg 1979:387). Beginning with Mohammad Shah (1834-1848), the monarchy progressively aimed to construe its provenance as pre-Islamic, and by extension non-Islamic (and inherently Zoroastrian and Achaemenid) in origin.
Such sidestepping of the Shi’a clergy by the Qajar and, later, Pahlavi shahs, was encouraged and assisted by European Orientalists (Dabashi 2015:89-90; Keddie 2006:72-3; Abrahamian 2008:19). This political inception for reclaiming an Iranian imperial heritage aggravated the antagonism between the clergy and the monarchy, as the public space was increasingly appropriated by jurists strengthening their monarchical power and self-actuating legitimacy within the public sphere (Dabashi 2011:172). Over the nineteenth century, the ulama steadily secured a powerful relationship towards the colonially besieged Qajar dynasty, which increasingly found the Shi’i clergy essential to its existence while simultaneously seeking European imperial assistance to curtail ulama power, which they paradoxically could not rule without due to the ulama’s saliency within the population at large. Any administrative reforms emanating from the courts seeking to curtail ulama’s influence, were effectively undone (Dabashi 2011:264) due to the relative confined sphere of the de-centralised Qajar power base, spanning Tehran and to some extent northern Iran.

At the end of the 19th century, the extensive concessions given by the Qajars to European imperial powers (Nordberg 1979:387-8) and the increased power base of the ulama in Tehran, intensified the opposition against the foreign imperial besieged dynasty. This culminated into a strong alliance between the merchants and the clergy (Keddie 2006:58-62), effectively forcing the Qajars to dissolve the concessions given and, ultimately, powering the path towards the Constitutional Revolution in 1905-1911 (Keddie 2006:67; Dabashi 2011:264) where Shi’ism joined forces with anti-colonial nationalism and transnational socialism, which by that time commanded considerable force in the region, as pre-revolutionary Bolshevism trickled into Iran15. However, in Iran, the Constitutional Revolution divided the ulama as many opposed it (Dabashi 2011:264-5). The same intra-ulama disagreement regarding direct governmental power (Moussavi 2004) later surfaced in the revolutionary discourses preluding the 1979 events. In 1962, Khomeini publicly denounced the legitimacy of the Shah by equating him with Yazid (Keddie 1969:52) and thereby reawakening revolutionary Shi’ism by evoking the Karabala complex. This prompted his exile to the highly-esteemed seminar and shrine-city of Najaf where the concept of velayat-e faqih16 was developed (see appendix 2).

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15 Later in 1917, the Bolshevik state renounced all concession given (except the Caspian fisheries) to the Russian empire, as part of their anti-imperial policy (Keddie 2006:75; Abrahamian 2008:64). In part explaining the absence of historical grievances’ in IRI and Russian Federation relations.

16 Meaning “from clerical jurisdiction over orphans, widows, and the mentally feeble to clerical supervision over all citizens” (Abrahamian 2008:xxi). A guardianship-based political system, which relies upon a just and capable jurist (faqih) to assume the leadership of the government in the absence of the infallible 12th Imam.
The powerful Shi’a ulama base in Iraq, which cultivated the main thrust of Iraq’s anti-British colonial struggle, came to embrace the pro-constitutionalist Shi’a authority in Iran, advancing to establish Islamic (Shi’i) governance on the constitutional model set forth in 1905. As the British empire supported anti-religious sentiments through, e.g. the promotion of European enlightenment ideals, the transregional ulama-network “saw the link between the decline of religious convictions and the growth of British imperialist influence, which sought to undermine clerical authority” (Dabashi 2011:265). In a similar vein, the Spiritual Leader in 2016 proclaimed the year of the “Economy of Resistance” as a response to continued economic sanctions (Khamenei.ir.2016). This anti-clerical policy, seeking to erode the ecology of ulama power became evident through the establishment of the Pahlavi monarchy in 1926.

The Pahlavi dynasty (1925-1979), adhering to Qajar and British imperial intent, advanced the revocation of ulama power structures, moulded on secular institutionalism, rapid modernisation projects and centralisation of state power (Abrahamian 2008:65) – in a bid to curtail the continuity of ulama power (Abrahamian 2008:65-96; Keddie 2006:89; Moussavi 2004). The Pahlavi dynasty, effectively forced out the institutional power-base of the ulama such as education and the judiciary into the institutions of its centralised monarchical structure by employing a central curriculum and a secularised rule of law. The Shah, reduced the number of ulama in the parliament from 24 to 4, illegalised Shi’a commemorative rituals, confiscated land and property prior given as waqf, prohibited traditional clothing in the public space and authorities, nationalised banks and restructured Iran into provinces and municipalities in order to modernise from above and secularise the political infrastructure of Iran. Following European and primarily German archaeological excavations in Iran (Keddie 2006:73-4), which sought to trace a descent in compliance with European nationalistic discourse (Abrahamian 2008:86), much of the Achaemenid past buried in the nebulous of time was uncovered – providing the bases for a “glorious” pre-Islamic identity in the form of Pahlavian Aryan\(^\text{17}\) and Neo-Achaemenid nationalism (Bausani 1975:46), furthering the institutional marginalisation of the ulama.

The rule of the Pahlavi dynasty was briefly interrupted with the establishment of Iran’s first democracy under the anti-imperialist prime minister, Mosaddeq (1951-1953), whose movement aligned with the ulama to forcefully push for independence and the

\(^{17}\) In the Indo-European family of languages, the term *Aryan* connotes to “noble” or “aristocratic” (Lorentz 2007:1x). In other words, the term did not necessarily carry the same meaning as in modern European discourse.
nationalisation of Iran’s oil industry. However, while supported by the Iranian populace, Mosaddeq’s government fell to a CIA-MI6 led military coup (Kennedy 2016:1; Abrahamian 2004:128), which reinstated Pahlavi rule over Iran. The political consequences of initiating rapid urbanisation and industrialisation undermined state power as the growing number of poor around major cities relied on the centuries-old socio-economic institutions of the ulama. Remember, we are at the time of the struggle against communism with Iran under the Pahlavi-Nixon-Kissinger-Brzezinski partnership (Abrahamian 2008:132; Alvandi 2014:173-176; Oberdorfer 1980) as the strategic bastion of anti-communism in West and Central Asia (Abrahamian 2008:118-124; Alvandi 2014:3-20). This anti-socialist and heavily militarised posture of the dynasty along with severe repression against internal socialist opposition movements (Abrahamian 2008, 126; Keddie 2006:135; Alvandi 2014), provided the ulama with more political space of manoeuvre (Moussavi 2004; Abrahamian 2008:138-140; Keddie 2006:189). Growing inequalities around city centres\(^\text{18}\) and a wide-spread discourse of “west-toxification” brought the socialists and the revolutionary ulama together, as the infusion by leftist intellectuals of Sufism into socialism (Dabashi 2011:53), effectively, romanticised the latter. The changing paradigm of iconography such as the inception of indecency promoted through cultural, political and economic imperialism was perceived to erode the foundational keystones of social cohesion, displaying a submissive position vis-à-vis Euro-American cultural exports. Khomeini, manifesting the anti-thesis to that imposition, joined forces with anti-imperial socialist movements, where icons such as Che Guevara transfigured into Hossein. Inspired by global social movements, Iranian intellectuals and parts of the ulama alike, transmuted revolutionary icons of social emancipation, anti-imperialism and egalitarianism into the Karbala Complex – transcending the boundaries of a political universe set in place by elitist driven globalising colonial imperialism, shaken to its core during the post-world war era by the emancipatory movements following in its wake. This is the scene, which the Iranian revolution of 1978-1979 descended upon, calling for a reversal of the colonial imposition ensnaring the world at large. Iran and Islam was to become a universe anew hand in hand with South-American transnational socialism and anti-colonial movements coupled with liberation theology – the re-birth of spiritual politics as Foucault (1978) called it.

The commemorative rituals and ceremonies emanating from the Karbala Complex –

\(^{18}\)By the 1970s, per the International Labor Office, Iran’s income distribution “was one of the very worst in the whole world” (Abrahamian 2008:140-1).
enacting a cosmic moral context, where the common religious iconographic themes of primordial guilt and duty to speak up and resist was blended with political situations and characters, evoking a peoples’ sense of forthrightness, denouncing and resisting injustice, praising piousness and solidarity in the cities and villages alike (Hegland 2009:49) — in effect becoming a political forum: “The energy of the crowd during the month of Muharram in 1978 and 1979 spilled over into protest that eventually turned into a popular uprising that toppled the Pahlavi monarchy” (Rauh 2011). After the fall of the Pahlavi dynasty, the subsequent purge of royalist elements in the Iranian armed forces and the internal political struggles (Keddie 2006:246) led external actors to speculate about a possible collapse of the Islamic Republic (Lindahl & Karlsson 2015:20). Military provisions to Saddam Hussein by world powers (Hartung 2013:444) impelled the invasion of Iran in 1980, whereby a quick and decisive victory was expected. While Saddam Hussein ethnicised the conflict by dubbing it the second Qaddisiyya (Al-Marashi, 2003:2-3), creating a “Persian” versus Arab dichotomy, the Islamic Republic of Iran cast the conflict in Shi’i mythological terms, unfolding its sacred history into the present. Ceremonies akin to those of Muharram were employed to foster mobilization during the Iran-Iraq war; an environment of intoxicating martyrology impelled men to join and mothers to send their sons into a massive sacrificial infantry, drawing on the Karbala complex to drive the logic of deadly sacrifice (Rauh 2011) while confronted by overwhelming fire-power.

After the Iranian revolution of 1978 – 1979, Iran was initially a revolutionary multi-party state (Keddie 2006:241). However, the Iran-Iraq war proved to be a useful factor in aiding factions of the Shi’i clergy to consolidate their reign and monopolize their power (Samuel 2011:6), cementing their vision of a multipolar meliorating Islamic Republic of Iran.
7 COSMOPOLITAN PEACE IN CONTEMPORARY IRAN

...a subversive disposition by being ipso facto narrated from a hidden and denied, repressed, and thus paradoxically flamboyant and defiant vantage point. (Dabashi 2012:ix)

If we are to depart from the common European idea of the nature of man as chaotic and drawn towards disorder, we cannot understand the nature of Iran. Contrary to the normative understanding of this concept as conveyed by Aquinas, Hobbes and Augustine, whom all lived rather tumultuous and secluded existences, Rome wasted by decades of plunder and Brittan ravaged by civil war, we arrive at a universalised understanding of the nature of man constructed from a narrow provincial framework. However, the ‘nature’ of man in the Iranian sphere and by extension – Islamic – completely differs from this normativity as it has always been drawn to civilisation as discussed above. As an example, since the Achaemenid empire, Iran has been an organised state with physical infrastructure, fully functional bank system and centralised governmental structures, albeit, with times of discontinuities, but always drawn towards that normativity of a cosmopolitan civilizational existence. When Zarif states that “Iran, since antiquity, has enjoyed a preeminent position in its region and beyond” (Zarif 2014) he alludes to a civilizational capital with deep historical roots built on the normativity of a cosmopolitanism-in-practise, both internal and external. This is essential to Iran’s understanding of itself as a central actor in its larger geopolitical context, which is geared towards the east. Historically and contemporarily, the west from an Iranian vantage point represents a threat, which constantly needs to be negotiated from antiquity to present times.

The history of Iran is rife with resistance in various forms, drawing upon a sense of independence and dignity. Revolts, uprisings and revolutions in response to poverty, political tyranny as well as other forms of perceived injustices are examples of hard forms of resistance. The Shu’ubiyyah movement at the end of the Umayyad era gave voice to an early form of cultural and revolutionary dissent and was a starting point for the Iranian cultural renaissance. Soft resistances on the other hand, corresponds to more abstract matters that disperse across the population through literature, theology, art, mysticism, spirituality and philosophy, which in turn form a counterbalancing moral resolve against oppression, marginalisation and subjugation. The ability to realise individual aspirations lies at the core of Islamic peace – ishan, adl and adab are concepts carrying centuries of knowledge and insight about social cohesion, structural peace and internal as well as external security.

The disrespectful engagement of ‘outsiders’ in the region, unfolding at public display
and marked by anti-cosmopolitanism contradicts existing practices of inclusion, founded on the basic fragility of dignity and respect: “We are faced with a menace in our region, in the Middle East, which is caused not fully but partially by the fact that people in certain areas of the Middle East feel helpless, powerless, intimidated, humiliated by outsiders” (Zarif/ORF 2016:142-144). Zarif here speaks of a breach of the cosmopolitan contract when realism-in-practise is employed. Security networking, based on cosmopolitanism-in-practise is the anti-thesis to realism, seeking horizontal and inclusive cooperation instead of security enforced from above.

The cosmopolitan paradigm of security, exercised by a multiplicity of actors bringing their unique incentives to the fold, build a vast network of trade and global security, rather than seeking dominance. It is based on the insight that “No country can exercise hegemony globally. No country can exercise hegemony regionally. And that is why we believe, that Iran nor any other country in our region should even try to exercise hegemony in this region, because that is impossible” (Zarif/ORF 2016:167-169).

Pan-Arabism is a phenomenon derived from within the colonial imagination, and is contrary to the idea of turning to the region’s internal experiences as a basis for political models. Thus, Iran becomes ‘authentic’ as an ‘acolonial’ state-system derived from within, rather than inside the colonial framework of thinking. In effect, Zarif positions Iran as acolonial in contrast to the Arab state-systems of the region. This is done by emphasising security networking and cosmopolitanism in stark divergence to realism as basis for global and regional political conduct. Thus, realism cannot produce security, ultimately, becoming the anti-thesis to security (Zarif/ORF 2016:217-237). In Zarif’s deliberation on security networking, realism alludes to ‘The Lie’ reflecting not just Islamic Peace, but an ‘imperial discourse’ emanating from an Achaemenid understanding of the foundation of disorder (Kent 1953:119-120). The focus is on elites and their conscious ideological strategy – as a source of disorder – a continuous perspective in Iranian discourse of power. As such, the same type of imperial discourse is evident in Zarif’s and Rouhani’s speeches, the Iran-Iraq war poster-propaganda and Behistun inscriptions, namely a focus on empires and elites as the problem, thus, the non-ethnicity in political discourse.

The concept of security networking can be understood as originating in

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19 Read Sharr in Islamic and Evil in Achaemenid/Zoroastrian terminology.
20 This is alluded to by Zarif (Zarif/ORF 2016; Zarif/EU 2016; Zarif/CNN 2017), and Rouhani (2017) and explicitly by the Achaemenid King Darius II (Kent 1953) and in Rauh’s exhibition of revolutionary and wartime propaganda posters (2011).
The words and concepts used by Zarif throughout his speeches and texts derives from a cosmopolitanism-taken-for-granted: “the obligation to understand those with whom we share the planet […] the idea that we have obligations to others […] that stretch beyond those to whom we are related” (Appiah 2006:xv). According to Zarif, cosmopolitanism requires self-reflexivity, e.g. solutions which are “acceptable to everybody” (Zarif/ORF 2016:455). This is contrary to realist politics and results in the legitimation of harsh measures to root out The Lie: “Hegemonic tendencies are doomed to create disaster” (Zarif/ORF 2016:187) – and it serves Iran’s interests to direct the revolutionary disposition externally, uniting internally. Thus, illuminating a hard and militant form of cosmopolitanism-in-practise as the demands for the realisation of cosmopolitanism is placed on the elites, which are the custodians of truth and knowledge production. Speaking truth to The Lie is symbolised by Zarif’s reference to a ‘cognitive move’ (Zarif/MSC 2017), which is exemplified by regional cooperation, linking centuries of a shared cultural heritage: “we have historical ties, cultural ties, ties of literature, many Indians and Pakistanis of a bit older generation than most of us here, recite Persian poetry. We cannot lose that bond, that bond is too important for us to lose” (Zarif/ORF 2016:537-539).
8 CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

The children of Adam are limbs of but one body,
Having been created of but one essence.
When the calamity of time afflicts one limb,
The other limbs will not remain at ease.
If thou hast no sympathy for the troubles of others,
Thou art unworthy to be named human. (Sa’di 1258 in Dabashi 2012:5-6)

The analysis above renders a different reading of Iran than what is usually presented in international political discourse, which is focused on the Islamic Republic as a threat to regional and global peace and stability. Instead, we find a state which is based on three interwoven pillars of existence, having been in effect for the last 1300 years: cosmopolitanism-in-practice, security networking and Islamic peace.

For its survival as a political entity, Iran has developed a particular cosmopolitanism focused on inclusiveness and acceptance of difference, which has become essential to its persistence when faced with external threats to its existence. This cosmopolitanism is neither awaited nor utopian, but has been in practice since the Achaemenids, and should hence be defined as a cosmopolitanism-in-practice. From this spring the theory of security networking presented by Zarif in 1999, focused on soft power and fomented on Islamic peace, which in essence is concomitant to, yet by far predating Galtung’s concept of positive peace.

Structural violence is mediated by the revolutionary elements of Islam, through the institutionalisation of the ulama, developing into an effective countering of structural violence, while cosmopolitanism-in-practice guarantees the continuity of state cohesiveness. The particular Shi’i propensity to revolt against internal or external oppression, is arbitrated by reciprocity, whereby power is constantly negotiated in a multi-faceted political, economic and religious infrastructure. This form of structural peace (as opposed to structural violence) is grounded in an inclusive framework, where power is reproduced through constant acknowledgment of the predicament of vulnerability of the populous.

The idea of force from above, imposed on Iran to change its behaviour is determined to fail because it activates this resistance propensity, just as political relations in and with Iran must contain an element of fragility, i.e. the adherence to popular demands to avoid internal strife, constantly reproducing reciprocal relationships between the different poles of political power (e.g. the populace, ulama, the bazaar, and the state). Due to the constant discourses of conflict with the USA, and based on an anticolonial disposition, the revolutionary tendencies which carried forth the ‘79-revolution is redirected towards external threats abounding in the
The revolutionary tendencies are hence directed outwards, rather than inwards. With the absence of a hegemonic world order, the avenues for cosmopolitanism-in-practise, security networking and Islamic peace is opened, which is why Iran is moving to globally emphasise their century-long imposition and experience.

8.1 Scientific, Social and Political Implications of the Study

In order to be able to answer the research question I could not lean on previous research as there is none. This, in and of itself speaks to the research gap, partially filled here through combining humanities and social science research. Furthermore, the multidisciplinary approach applied here, shows its necessity: with better knowledge of each other, protracted conflict and warfare may be avoided.

8.2 Further Research

There is much research to be done. However, I would start by conducting a comparative discourse analysis on Brzezinski Nobel Peace Prize Forum speech and Zarif’s speech at ORF (India) to better understand diverting ideas on global politics and inter-state relations. Furthermore, the institution of the ulama, which could be as old as 1700 years, rendering it amongst the oldest continuous institutions of power, upholding Iran’s sustainability as a political soft-power entity, should be studied. In addition, a deep study on security networking have to be conducted, because this theory is currently being set into political reality. Lastly, the particular kind of cosmopolitanism developed in Iran in the form of a cosmopolitanism-in-practise ought to be studied further.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


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Amanpour's full interview with Iran's Javad Zarif. [online] Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0U97mC3JuQ0 [Accessed 21 May 2017].


APPENDIX 1: IRANIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY – LIST OF SIGNIFICANT DYNASTIES, STATES AND EMPIRES

Iranian historiography is usually categorised within two eras – pre-Islamic and Islamic. The focal point within the historiography is 658 CE, when the Sassanid Empire was defeated by the invading Muslim army. The pre-Islamic era has it starting point in the era of the Medes and Elamites, residing in the north and respectively south of present day Iran. These were succeeded by the Persian Achaemenian Empire (550 – 330 BCE), which ruled over a vast empire stretching from the Indus valley to North Africa, Asia Minor and to the fringes of Eastern Europe. The Achaemenian Empire was succeeded by Alexander of Macedonia who brought with him a Hellenic\(^{21}\) period into the Iranian plateau, which survived Alexander during the Seleucids (312 BCE – 247 BCE). The Seleucids were succeeded by the Iranian dynasties of the Parthians (247 BCE – 226 CE) and later the Sassanids (206-658 CE) (Dabashi 2007, 22). The Sassanid era ended with the Muslim conquest of Iranian territories in the mid-seventh century, creating a new era of history for Iranians by including them into a new Islamic history. Thereby, Iranians were placed next to Muslim people such as Arabs, Indians and Turks, that were all governed by globalising Empires, such as the Umayyads (651-750) and the Abbasids (750-1250). During the era of the Abbasid caliphate, there were a series of dynasties that ruled across the Islamic world as well as in Iranian territories. The territories of Iranian dynasties such as the Tahirids (821-873), Samanids (829-999), Saffarids (867-1163) and the Buyids (934-1055) were considerably limited due to constant wars and revolts. During medieval times, the Turkic Ghaznavids (997-1186), the Seljuqs (1040-1220), followed by the heavily Persianised Turkic Khwarezmid dynasty (1077-1231), ruled Iran. The Seljuqs undermined the power of the Abbasid caliphs and managed to create an empire of their own (Dabashi 2007, 23). The Turkic dynasties in turn, were conquered by the Mongols (1219-1258), whose descendants ruled over Iran as the Ilkhanids (1256-1336). Iran was later ruled by the Safavid dynasty (1500-1722) institutionalising Twelver Shi’ism (see chapter 6) as state religion and who ruled simultaneously with the Ottoman\(^{22}\) (1453-1922) and Mughal\(^{23}\) empires (1526-1748). These empires were succeeded by competing European

\(^{21}\) Hellenistic culture represents a fusion of the Ancient Greek world with that of North and East Africa, West, Central and South Asia (Green 2008, xvii).

\(^{22}\) The Ottoman empire stretched from Asia minor to Eastern Europe and North Africa.

\(^{23}\) The Mughal empires ruled over India.
imperialist countries such as, Russia, Britain and France. European imperialism reached Iran during the Qajar dynasty (1789-1926) in the early 19th century (Dabashi 2007, 23-24). Following the Constitutional Revolution in Iran in 1905 (Keddie 2006, 67), the Qajars in turn, were replaced by the Pahlavi dynasty in 1925, sponsored by British imperial interests (Keddie 2006, 86). This period was followed by a democratic election, where Iran became a democracy and president Mosaddeq was elected into office 1951-1953. This short period was interrupted by a British and U.S.-backed military coup toppling Mosaddeq's government (Kennedy 2016, 1). Through the coup, the Pahlavi dynasty regained absolute power. They remained in power until the Iranian revolution of 1978-1979, when a referendum in April 1979 led to the proclamation of Iran as an Islamic Republic (Lindahl & Karlsson 2015, 19).
APPENDIX 2: CHARTER OF THE ISLAMIC CONSTITUTION OF IRAN

Chart of the Islamic Constitution of Iran, displaying a mediated system of democracy (Abrahamian 2008, 165).
APPENDIX 3: THE ULAMA

The ulama is a meritocratic institution, which consists of Islamic scholars, jurists, teachers, exemplars and leaders of Muslim communities. They form vertical networks linking the state with the populace, and horizontal networks between different regional and local ulama establishments, rendering the institution a social, economic and political backbone of Iranian society. It should be noted that the various ulama networks cannot necessarily be equated with uniformity, as they may divert and oppose on theological and political grounds. High-ranking ulama such as an Ayatollah or Grand Ayatollah, commonly function as institutions parallel with the state or similar bureaucratic institutions. The lower-level teachers of the ulama, normally function as spiritual counsellors for the general population and, correspondingly communicate the local state of matters to higher levels (Lapidus 2002, 117-20). Importantly, the term clergy or clerics, sometimes used in this thesis, does not imply a structural hierarchy, which is absent in Islam (Lorentz 2007, xix).

During Safavid times, the (Shi’i) ulama from various localities were brought together and contributed to the consolidation of state power. After the demise of the Safavids, the (Shi’i) ulama in Iran emerged as an autonomous group, assuming leadership of the population, in rural and urban areas alike, subsequently maintaining their influential socio-political and economic role and status within Iranian society (Moussavi 2008).

This is a web-making illustration by Lederach appropriated here to the institution of the Shi’a ulama (Lederach 2010, 82).
The codification and doctrinism of twelver Shi’ism, following the Safavid era, have created a unified transnational Shi’i entity. As an example, the Shi’i establishment in Lebanon now recognise the spiritual authority of the Spiritual Leader (Norton 2007:34-6) (the vice regent of the 12th Imam) in Iran as the highest office of the ulama, thereby subscribing to the authority of velayat-e faghi (Jurists Guardianship) as conceptualised by Khomeini. Khomeini assumed the position of Imam after the revolution, as his opponents from within the ulama were gradually forced aside from direct political power.