Extreme Securitization: U.S. Foreign Policy and the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988)

Maryam Javan Shahraki*

Abstract

This paper seeks to address the impact of the Iran-Iraq War, which took place between 1980 and 1988, on Iran-U.S. relations. For Iran, the legacy of the war included the loss of a generation of men—hundreds of thousands died and many more were wounded. It also included the large-scale destruction of many Iranian cities, and especially their industrial infrastructure. During the eight-year war, U.S. foreign policy highly securitized Iran and its Islamic Revolution as an existential threat to world security. Therefore, war is the fundamental fact on which the antagonistic nature of Iran-U.S. relations has been shaped since 1980. Thirty-two years after the Iran-Iraq War, one might think that the mutual and extreme securitization of Iran in U.S. foreign policy might relent. But the narratives have taken on a life of their own, fed by rumor, rhetoric, and mutual threats. One of the greatest challenges will be to try to bridge the gap between the dueling narratives, and suggest realistic approaches that might begin de-securitize Iran-U.S relations, retrieve it from the domain of emergency politics and return it to the sphere of normal politics. Nothing could be more urgent. If the Americans or the Israelis, or both, attack Iran in an effort to destroy its nuclear facilities, the mother of all Iranian stereotypes of the West will seem to a wide sector of the Iranian population to have been confirmed.

Keywords: U.S. Foreign Policy, Islamic Revolution, Iran-Iraq War, Securitization, de-securitization

* PhD in Political Science, University of Tehran (maryshahraki@gmail.com)

I- The Legacy

The Iran-Iraq War, known as the Imposed War or the Holy Defense in Iran, was one of the bloodiest human tragedies of recent history in the Middle East. Perhaps as many as a million Iranians and Iraqis lost their lives, many more were wounded, and millions became homeless. The resources consumed by the war exceeded what the entire Third World spent on public health in a decade (Cordesman, 1984: 87). In its futility, the Iraqi invasion of Iran on September 1980 mirrored the tragedy of the First World War, though on a more modest scale. Trench warfare, the use of chemical weapons such as mustard gas on a massive scale by Iraq and the inability of either side to claim a decisive victory were shared in common with the tragedy, particularly on the Western Front, during World War

On 17 September 1980, Saddam Hussein, President of Iraq, "unilaterally abrogated the Algiers Treaty of 1975 between Iran and Iraq, which paved the way for the initiation of an all-out war against Iran. Five days later, the war began on September 22, 1980, when the Iraqi troops launched a full-scale invasion by air and land into Iranian territory following a long history of border disputes, and fears of Shia insurgency among Iraq's long-suppressed Shia majority influenced by the Iranian Revolution. Iraqi forces crossed into Iranian territory along the some 800-mile border, waging one of the bloodiest and longest wars since World War II." (Khani, 2010; Karsh & Rautsi.1991:135).

The very first reaction of the international community to the Iraqi invasion came six days after the beginning of the war on

September 28, 1980, when the Iraqis had already achieved a major part of their military goals. Although on September 23, the Secretary-General called for a Security Council meeting to discuss the situation between Iran and Iraq, the result of this meeting was just a statement in which the Council asked the two sides to resolve their disputes peacefully and also announced its support for the Secretary General's good offices (S/STA/ 1980). Eventually, on September 28 1980, the Security Council adopted its first resolution on the Iran-Iraq War in which it called for "both sides to refrain from any further use of force and to settle their disputes by peaceful means (S/RES/479,1980)" (Khani. 2010).

Saddam Hussein had all the reasons to believe that a full-scale military attack on Iranian territory would quickly be successful in the absence of a cohesive Iranian government, the weakness of the Iranian military and the Islamic Revolution's antagonism towards Western governments. Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani (2002), perhaps the most powerful member of the Revolutionary Council after Ayatollah Khomeini in 1980, in his memoire describes the Iranian military weaknesses as an important factor in encouraging the Iraqi leadership to launch an attack on Iran in September 1980. According to Hashemi's memoire, before the Revolution, "Iran had the most modernized military in the Middle East that along with the Shah's close ties to the superpowers, they had shaped the two pillars of the Iranian deterrence strategy against Arab neighbors in the region. By the collapse of the Shah's regime in 1979, both of these pillars suddenly disappeared" (Hashemi Rafsanjani, 2002: 46). Hashemi portrays the Iranian military's situation in his book as disbanded, and with most of its important commanders and experts exiled or imprisoned while American military experts and consultants had also left Iran without leaving any back-up information for re-establishing the army. Shahpour Bakhtiar - the last Iranian prime minister before the Revolution - had canceled most of the military agreements that could revive the military (Ibid.) In short, for Tehran officials: "The

war in 1980 was a global attack on the Revolution" (Doroodian. 2003).

Barry Lando argues that "Saddam hoped for a lightning victory against an internationally isolated neighbor in the throes of revolutionary upheaval" (Lando, 2007:123). But despite Iraq's initial successes, the Iranians scrambled into action and, taking advantage of their greater size, population and resources, were able by mid-1982 to expel the Iraqi invaders. In June 1982, the Iranians went on the offensive, and struck back by attacking tankers carrying Iraqi oil from Kuwait. But Iraq, with a significant advantage in heavy weaponry provided by the Soviet and the U.S.-led Western countries, was able to prevent a decisive Iranian breakthrough.

During the eight-year war, "U.S. policy with respect to Iran was complicated, and often confusing, because it followed two antithetical tracks at once" (Shalom, 2007:13). On the one hand, U.S. officials saw "a great potential" for a covert program to undermine the government in Tehran. On the other hand, Washington tried to build ties, and some even sought to normalize relations with the same government (The Tower Commission Report, 1987: 294-95). Neither track succeeded; each undermined the other, every step of the way.

Zbigniew Brzezinski, National Security Advisor to President Jimmy Carter, had a favorable view of Saddam Hussein as a potential counterweight to Ayatollah Khomeini and as a force to contain Soviet expansionism in the region (Teicher, 1993). In fact, it appears in retrospect that Brzezinski favored giving the "green light" to Saddam for his invasion of Iran. In any case, the U.S. gave no explicit "red light" to Iraq (Blight [et al.], 2012:76). According to Brzezinski, "the United States initially took a largely neutral position on the Iran–Iraq War, with some minor exceptions. First, the U.S. acted in an attempt to prevent the confrontation from widening, largely in order to prevent additional disruption to world oil supplies and to honor U.S. security assurances to Saudi Arabia. As a result, the U.S. reacted to Soviet troop movements on the border of Iran by informing the

Soviet Union that it would defend Iran in the event of a Soviet invasion. The U.S. also acted to defend Saudi Arabia, and lobbied the surrounding states not to become involved in the war." Brzezinski characterizes this recognition of the Middle East as a "vital strategic region on a par with Western Europe and the Far East as a fundamental shift in U.S. strategic policy". Second, the United States explored "whether the Iran–Iraq War would offer leverage with which to resolve the Iranian Hostage Crisis. In this regard, the Carter administration explored the use of both "carrots," by suggesting that they might offer military assistance to Iran upon release of the hostages and suggesting that they might offer military assistance to Iraq if the Iranians did not release the hostages. Third, as the war progressed, freedom of navigation, especially through the Strait of Hormuz, was deemed a critical priority" (Brzezinski, 1983: 290).

U.S. support for the Iraqi government became more pronounced in 1982, when Iran succeeded on the battlefield. The U.S. supported Iraq with Intelligence as well as economic and diplomatic aid after normalizing relations with the Iraqi government (which had been cut since the 1967 Six Day War) and also supplying "dual-use" equipment and vehicles (Teicher, 1993). President Ronald Reagan decided that the United States "could not afford to allow Iraq to lose the war to Iran", and that the United States "would do whatever was necessary to prevent Iraq from losing the war with Iran" (King, 2003:60). In fact, support from the U.S. for Iraq was not a secret and was frequently discussed openly in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives. "The Reagan and George H.W. Bush administrations permitted—and frequently encouraged—the flow of money, agricultural credits, dual-use technology, chemicals, and weapons to Iraq" (Koppel,1992).

Taking the advantage of support from the U.S., Saddam Hussein openly used 101,000 chemical munitions. "The U.S. once in a while would peep and say chemical weapons were bad but at the same time was providing Saddam with intelligence that laid out where Iranian

troops were massing" (Kingsbury, 2009:345). Charles Duelfer was the principal author of the Iraq Survey Group's final report in 2004. The document became known, in fact, as the Duelfer Report. Duelfer notes: "If you were Saddam, you wonder: How is it that between August 1990 and April 1991 the U.S. became so interested in weapons of mass destruction" (Duelfer, 2009:97). After March 16 1988, a chemical attack by Iraq killed approximately 5,000 Kurds in Halabja and injured thousands more. The Reagan administration actually tried to obscure Iraqi culpability by suggesting, inaccurately, that "the Iranians may have carried out the attack" (Hiltermann, 2003:150).

In February 1986, Iran achieved the big victory it had long sought when it captured the strategically valuable Faw peninsula from Iraq. But as Blight and Lang, et al (2012: 152) note: "Almost immediately, however, Tehran began to observe with alarm, then in something approaching a panic, that their great victory seemed unexpectedly to be leading toward a direct military confrontation with the United States. The Iraqi victories in 1987 were due in large part to their greatly increased, and more militarily effective, use of chemical weapons". In addition, by July 1987 the U.S. and other Western countries greatly increased their support for Iraq. Also in 1987, Soviet military support for Baghdad increased. It seems in retrospect that the great powers in the West and the East were becoming panicky in the face of a possible Iranian victory over Saddam's Iraq. Beginning in July 1987, the massive and virtually indiscriminatory Iraqi use of chemical weapons commenced. This new threat—massive chemical attacks in the field, combined with Iraq's stepped up bombardment of Iran's major population centers—led to widespread panic in Iran's major cities. By July, it seemed that a major war was about to break out between the U.S. and Iran. On July 3 1988, Iran Air Flight 655, a civilian airliner, was shot down by the USS Vincennes as it flew over the Strait of Hormuz, an act that was perceived in Tehran as possibly the penultimate step to a U.S.-Iran war. (Doroodian, 2011: 233). The guns finally fell silent on August 20, 1988, with Iran and Iraq in more

or less the same geographical positions they occupied in 1980, but leaving both societies ravaged, weakened and bitter.

In Iran, more or less continuously from the triumph of the Revolution in early 1979, the U.S. has been regarded by Tehran as Threat Number One—an enemy more threatening than all of Iran's Arab neighbors combined, all of whom supported Saddam in the Iran-Iraq war. The Arab governments, made up mostly of Sunni Muslims, were thus united in their opposition to revolutionary Iran, which is mostly Persian and Shia. Unconditional U.S. support for Saddam, especially from 1982 to 1989, convinced Iranian leaders that the U.S. was seeking nothing less than the total destruction of the Iranian Revolution, however long it took, and by whatever means were available. (Ayatollah Khamenei speech in the UN General Assembly, 1988).

There is a large literature that traces the roots of enmity between Iran and the U.S. to the immediate aftermath of the revolution in 1979. These involve the so-called "original sins" of the U.S. and Iran: That of Iran is said to be the sanctioning of the students' hostage-taking at the U.S. embassy in November 1979; and the U.S. "sin" was admitting the deposed Shah of Iran into the U.S. for medical treatment, rather than sending him to Iran to be put on trial. But it is impossible to understand the Iranian narrative without scrutinizing the role of the U.S. in Iranian domestic politics before the Revolution. The U.S. has in fact played an active role in Iran's domestic politics since it covertly supported a coup to remove the popularly elected Mohammed Mossadeq, the architect of Iran's energy nationalization drive, in 1953. By reinstating the Shah in Iran, Washington manipulated and killed the first Iranian national uprising against the monarchy.

Dreams of building an independent and democratic state had to be put on hold. Twenty-seven years later, when Iranians successfully overthrew the Shah, the fear of a U.S. intervention was palpable, a move whose purpose would be to put the Shah back on his Peacock

Throne. These fears seemed realized, as the U.S. got involved in another coup attempt—this one against the revolutionary government—led by the Iranian military officers, known as the Nojeh Coup, which was crushed.

The U.S. severed its diplomatic relations with Iran following the seizure of American diplomats in Tehran on November 4 1979. Relations between Washington and Tehran soon hit rock bottom. The Iranian students who captured the U.S. embassy in Tehran found substantial evidence that the U.S. embassy staff both during and after the reign of the Shah were "spies". The Iranian leadership concluded on the basis of this and other evidence that the U.S. government was plotting to overthrow the revolutionary regime. On April 12 1980, in the midst of the furor over the American hostages and the Shah's fate, Ayatollah Khomeini stated, possibly for the first time, that the U.S. was a threat to the very existence of the Islamic Revolution. (Khomeini speech 12 April 1980)

From Tehran's viewpoint, U.S enthusiasm for regime change in Iran has been a constant and defining feature of U.S policy toward Iran during the past 34 years. In the chaos and confusion of the revolutionary environment, the Iranian revolutionaries re-conceptualized Iranian identity in the face of what they took to be a mortal threat to their continued existence. Officials did not have the luxury of constructing a new identity in a deliberate, peaceful and calm environment. Instead, they defined themselves in the context of a state of virtual war with the U.S. and its allies. Many high-level officials and scholars in Iran believe that revolutionary Iran was and remains defined primarily in the cauldron of the ongoing war with the US-led West—often covert, always threatening, sometimes seem to be on the verge of a shooting war. (See, for instance Mousavian 2012:245).

II- Extreme Securitization
The relationship between Iran and the US possesses the principal

traits of what Copenhagen Constructivist School theorist Ole Waever and his associates referred to as a *securitized* relationship. (Buzan, Waever and Wilde, 1998). According to the securitization theory, when a state feels its very existence is threatened by another state, it often claims the right to enact extraordinary measures to ensure its survival. Therefore, securitization is the management of threat that appears both urgent and important. Sometimes the state is, for various reasons, called the "referent object," in part to convey the intensely psychological or perceptual nature of the phenomenon. Those working within the framework of securitization do not deny that threats exist in the real world of national borders and military machines. But they focus on particularly dire constructions of such threats in speech acts, which can be fully conscious or unconscious, and spoken or merely thought or felt. When relationships are securitized, what may begin as merely conflicts of interest begin to evolve into the perception of life and death struggles, of a fight to the finish, however the fight may be fought—diplomatically, militarily and psychologically.

According to the securitization point of view, the issue is then moved out of the sphere of *normal* politics into the realm of *emergency* politics, where it can be dealt with swiftly and without the normal (more or less democratic) rules and regulations of policy making (Buzan & Wæver.2003). "The securitization process consists of three steps: (1) Identification of existential threats; (2) Emergency action; and (3) Effects on inter-unit relations (involving established bureaucratic procedures) by breaking free of rules" (Buzan et al. 1998: 6). To present an issue as an existential threat is to say that: "If we do not tackle this problem, everything else will be irrelevant (because we will not be here or will not be free to deal with it in our own way)" (Buzan et al. 1998: 24). As Taureck (2006: 56) argues: "This first step towards a successful securitization is called a *securitizing move*. A securitizing move is in theory an option open to any unit. Only after an actor has "convinced an audience (aka "inter-unit relations") of its legitimate need to go beyond

otherwise binding rules and regulations (emergency mode) can we identify a case of securitization''. In practice, therefore, securitization is an option far from being open to all units and their respective subjective threats. Instead, prospects for successful securitization of a relationship are based mostly on power and capability and the associated means to securitize a threat, socially and politically.

In this way the study of security remains wide, but with restrictions pertaining to 'who' can securitize it is neither unmanageable nor incoherent. So: securitization requires a perception of dire threat; the power to suspend established rules to respond to the threat; and the ability to persuade others of both the threat perception and the need to break the rules in the interest of survival. Securitization theory, at least the Copenhagen School variety, has been criticized for being Eurocentric and thus irrelevant to international relations between states outside the Euro-zone, which may lack a history of democratization, and all the rules and regulations, which are associated with more or less democratic governments and societies (Aradau, 2004). Copenhagen School stalwarts Barry Buzan and Ole Waever have recently attempted to address this problem of the limited relevance of their viewpoint to a non-European environment. However, the process of securitization still remains under-discussed in their work (Waever and Buzan, 2009).

This is an important issue for researchers such as this author, who seek to apply the securitization framework to the Islamic Republic of Iran's relations with the United States. Once, however, the theoretical disputations eventually are resolved, one finds the securitization framework powerful and relevant to the subject of this research. The securitization outlook is a valuable framework within which to understand the process of mutual securitization and eventually demonization between Iran and the U.S., one could go so far as to claim that the framework—as a framework for understanding the real world, rather than a set of putatively testable propositions—gives a scholar valuable tools to address the inter-subjective nature of the social and

political dynamics involved in security policy making.

This paper seeks to illuminate the ways and the degree to which the mutual securitizing of threat appeared and took hold in both the Iranian and American narratives of their mutual enmity. Accordingly, the hope of this research is to shed light on one of the most troubled and durably hostile relationships in recent history between Iran and the U.S. Ultimately, this research seeks clues for how the enmity of U.S.-Iran securitization might be transcended, and thus moved into the sphere of normal politics, in which mutual interests and not securitization are the basis of Iran's relations with the U.S. This research addresses the dueling narratives in Iran and the U.S about the Iran-Iraq War. The Iranian narrative about all aspects of the securitization of its relations with the U.S. is virtually unknown in the West. Among the few scholars who are familiar with aspects of it, it is discredited as somehow fake, or propagandistic. A key reason for this lays in the cosmic asymmetry between Iran and the U.S. regarding the the Iran-Iraq War. The U.S. was consumed with the East-West Cold War. Even while the Iran-Iraq War was being fought, few in the U.S. were even aware of its existence, let alone the centrality that the war would assume for Iranian national identity. That is one matter. On the other hand, many Iranians saw in the war merely the latest in a pattern of attempts by the U.S. and the West to destroy any attempt to build an independent, autonomous Iranian state along the lines thought to be acceptable to Iranians.

The Iranians, however, were determined not to surrender this time, not to give in to pressure, even when the pressure was exerted by many countries of the world. One of the most fascinating aspects of looking at these developments via the lens of securitization theory is the unexpected and reciprocal way in which the U.S.-led West securitized its relations with Iran. In other words, not only did Iran fear destruction from the U.S.-led West, but the U.S. and the West also, counter-intuitively, feared their destruction, in some fashion, due to Iranian hostility. This is an astounding development, when one

considers the asymmetry in military power between Iran and the U.S.

In the context of the Iran-U.S. relations, and Iran's relation with the West in general, the distinction between the degree of threat coming from an *adversary and an enemy* is fundamental. An enemy who is devoted to your utter destruction cannot be reasoned with, cannot be trusted, and thus can only be dealt with by counter-threat and force of arms. If such an enemy also concludes, or seems to conclude, that you are a threat to his existence, then the relationship begins to resemble that of the famous Cold War metaphor of mutual assured destruction: Two scorpions in a bottle, each maniacally determined to destroy the other at the first opportunity. *"Enemy,"* in the sense used by Barry Buzan, Ole Waever (1998) and their associates, has a specific meaning, not limited to its colloquial use, indicating some level of conflict. In the sense in which the term enemy is used in this research, states whose relations are governed entirely by level of threat regard each other from the blackest hole of international relations, where all games are zero sum games, where dog eat dog is the mutual modus operandi.

This is what is called, in this paper, "extreme securitization". The word "extreme" is used in a sense analogous to the way it is used to apply to sporting events that are very dangerous, or very bloody, or very punishing, like running 100-mile ultra-marathons, or bare-knuckle extreme boxing. It is all about threat and force, involving little or no nuance, subtlety or finesse. What is remarkable about Iran's relations with the U.S. since the 1979 revolution is that it appeared quite suddenly after the fall of the Shah and almost immediately took the extreme form that characterizes it to this day. Almost from the earliest days of the revolution, Tehran and Washington referred to each other via slogans and stereotypes, each has securitized the existence of the other. Each exists for the other always, and only, as a security threat.

This extreme form of securitization, especially on the Iranian side, is an outcome of the Iran-Iraq War. The war is the event that transformed adversaries with conflicting interests into threatening

enemies who believe real security is possible only when the other is destroyed or reduced to harmless insignificance.

III- Dueling Narratives

What is significant about the Iran-Iraq War from the Iranian perspective is the nearly universal endorsement of two principles:

First, the bloody eight-year war was *imposed* on their country not only by Iraq, but essentially by the entire world. From the Iranian point of view, the Western countries' universal unwillingness to condemn the Iraqi invasion of Iran in September 1980, is proof of deep global enmity toward Iran and its Islamic Revolution. Iranians generally regard themselves as victimized in this regard, and as proof that virtually the entire world, led by the U.S., was and remains out to get Iran. This is why the common designation of the conflict as "The Iran-Iraq War" is misleading regarding the Iranian perspective. To most Iranians, it was the *Iran-Iraq-U.S./West War.* And that, in the Iranian view, is what is meant by "the Imposed War," which is most common Iranian designation of the conflict.

Second, during the eight years of war that followed the September 1980 Iraqi invasion, the U.S. and its allies provided Saddam Hussein's regime with vital economic, logistical, intelligence, political and military support. Thus not only was the initiation of the war imposed on Iranians by Iraq and its western and Arab allies, so was the outcome—the terrible casualties and the final stalemate—that prevented Iran from achieving its primary objective, which was eliminating the brutal and threatening regime of Saddam Hussein.

Schematically, the main components of the Iranian narrative about the war may be summarized as follows: First, the war was imposed on Iran, due to the world's hostility toward its revolution. Second, the West refused to acknowledge Iraq as the aggressor and never condemned the invasion, even though the war was imposed in Iran at a very unstable and difficult time for the new revolutionary state. Third, the West applied a double standard with regard to the

war. The UN Security Council failed to condemn the invasion and refused to condemn Iraqi use of chemical weapons. In the Iranian narrative, there was also no acknowledgement by the international community of the severity of the chemical weapon attacks. Iranian officials believed (and believe now) that compared to the U.S. interest in keeping oil flowing from the Persian Gulf, all other U.S. priorities in the region fade to insignificance.

Therefore, the U.S.-led global opposition to the Islamic Republic's existence led not only to the unjust terms imposed on Iran at the end of the war, but also to the unjust peace that has existed throughout the nearly quarter century since the war ended in 1988. The present state of affairs, from the view of officials in Tehran, is best understood as a state of siege: not quite a shooting war, a relationship unmediated by significant diplomacy, without embassies or ambassadors, and the presence in each country of powerful advocates of maintaining relations based exclusively on total, unremitting securitization.

The U.S./Western securitization of relations with Iran centrally involves the fear of losing access to Middle East oil, but oil is far from the only factor leading the West to regard Iran as an incontrovertible enemy. Perhaps equally important was the psychological factor. A great friend of the U.S., the pro-western Shah was overthrown and replaced by what seemed to many in the U.S. and West as an almost medieval group of clerics intent on establishing a theocracy. In addition, the Iranian leaders seemed determined to try to export their revolution throughout the Middle East. Should this come to pass, many believed, other great friends of the U.S. might collapse, or bend to the will of the Iranian zealots, which in turn might result in a cut-off of oil flowing to the West.

Charles Cogan was the chief of the Near East and South Asia Division in the Operations Directorate of the CIA from 1979-1984. According to Cogan, the revolution "came as a big shock to the U.S., we did not expect it, we did not understand it, and we did not know what to

do about it… We did not know what was happening. This was a new phenomenon … It was simply a fact that Iran had no friend at that time, anywhere, least of all in the West" (Blight and Lang, et al., 2012: 55). From the U.S. perspective, the emergence of the " Islamic revolution in Iran in February 1979 upset the entire strategic equation in the region with America's principal ally in the Persian Gulf, the Shah, swept aside overnight, and no one else on the horizon could replace him as the guarantor of U.S. interests in the region" (Timmerman, 1991).

It should be borne in mind that by 1979, the year Ayatollah Khomeini and his associates assumed power in Iran, the U.S. had just been kicked out of Vietnam by the Vietnamese communists. The last American soldier left in April 1975. Washington had, moreover, basically given up trying to unseat yet another recalcitrant enemy, Fidel Castro, in Cuba. Castro came to power in 1959 and seemed, by the late 1970s, to be more entrenched and successful than ever. The U.S., the great superpower, was on a losing streak with regard to independent-minded smaller nations it had tried to bend to its will. The Islamic revolutionaries added to this sense of psychological unease among Americans.

But the American feeling of malaise in its foreign policy was not entirely psychological. The East-West Cold War was getting nasty. The Soviets invaded Afghanistan in December 1979, a month and a half after the hostage taking at the U.S. embassy in Tehran. Many wondered: will the Soviets now try to take over in Iran? Were that to occur, the Soviets might be able to control the flow of oil through the Persian Gulf, thence to the West. Potentially, therefore, many in Washington began to spin dark scenarios in which either Islamic fanatics or Russian Cold Warriors threatened the economic foundations of the West.

For all three sorts of reasons—philosophical, psychological and material—the U.S. regarded the Iranian revolutionary regime as a threat to the Persian Gulf as much greater threat to its interests than the Iraqi regime. So powerful was U.S. and Western fear of Iran spreading its

revolutionary zeal that officials in Washington even found it possible to abide Saddam Hussein's massive use of chemical weapons against Iranians and Kurds during the war. One of the curiosities of the recent history of U.S. and Western foreign and defense policy is that Washington viewed Tehran as a greater threat than the Iraqi development of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons.

Conclusion

The Cold War has been over for more than twenty years. Thirty-two years after the Iran-Iraq War, one might think that the mutual and extreme securitization of Iran in U.S. foreign policy might relent. But the narratives have taken on a life of their own, fed by rumor, rhetoric, and mutual threats. Neither country has had an embassy in the other's capital for more than three decades. Few Iranians have been to the U.S. Few Americans and Europeans have been to Iran. Narratives flourish in the absence of facts that might cause people to question old beliefs. At the moment, therefore, relations between Iran and the West are as extremely securitized and dangerous as they have been at any time since the Islamic Revolution of 1979.

One of the greatest challenges will be to try to bridge the gap between the dueling narratives, and suggest realistic approaches that might begin de-securitize Iran-U.S relations, retrieve it from the domain of emergency politics and return it to the sphere of normal politics. Nothing could be more urgent. If the Americans or the Israelis, or both, attack Iran in an effort to destroy its nuclear facilities, the mother of all Iranian stereotypes of the West will seem to a wide sector of the Iranian population to have been confirmed. They will conclude that, in fact, the evil West really is out to destroy them and their revolution. In the inevitable Iranian retaliation that will follow such an attack, the U.S. and the West's stereotypes will also seem to be confirmed: the fanatical Iranians are really just a bunch of terrorists seeking to spread their evil doctrines by killing innocent civilians all over the Middle East, and possibly beyond.

References

Aradau, Claudia. 2001. *Beyond Good and Evil: Ethics and securitization/Desecuritization Techniques*. Rubikon: International Forum of Electronic Publications.

Aradau, Claudia. 2004. *Security and the Democratic Scene: Desecuritization and Emancipation*. Journal of International Relations and Development 7(4): 388–413.

Blight, James. G., [et al.]. 2012. *Becoming Enemies; U.S-Iran Relation and Iran-Iraq War, 1979-1988*. Rowman and Littlefield Publishers. Inc.

Blight, James.G., Lang , Janet. M. 2005. *The Fog of War: Lessons from the Life of Robert S. McNamara*. Rowman and Littlefield Publishers. Inc.

Brzezinski, Zbigniew.1983. Power and Principle, Memoirs of the National Security Advisor 1977-1981. Farrar Straus & Giroux.

Buzan, Barry, Wæver, Ole and Jaap de Wilde.1998. *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.

Cordesman, Anthony H., and Ahmed S. Hashim. 1997. *Iran: dilemmas of dual containment*. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press.

Cordesman, Anthony H., Wanger, Abraham. 1991. *The Lessons Of Modern War: Volume Ii: The Iran-Iraq War*. Westview Press, Jun.

Doroodian, Mohammad. 2003. *From beginning to the End*. Center for War studies and researches. IRGC Press. Iran.

Duelfer, Charles. 2009. Hide and Seek; The Search for Truth in Iraq. Public affairs.

Duelfer, Charles.2004. Comprehensive Report of Special Advisor to the Director of Central Intelligence on Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction. Biological Warfare. 3(21).

Hashemi Rafsanjani, Akbar. 2002. *Passing the Crisis: A Memoir*. Nashr e Ma'aref e Enghelab. Tehran.

Hiltermann, Joost R. 2003. *Halabja : America Didn't Seem to Mind Poison Gas*. International Herald tribune. January 17.

Khani, Mohammad Hassan. 2010. Double Standards in International Organizations: A Comparative Study of the UN Response to Iraqi Invasions of Iran and Kuwait. Imam Sadeq University, Geopolitics Quarterly. 6(4): 218-227.

King, John. 2003. *A Chronology of U.S Involvement in Iran-Iraq War*. Iran Chamber Society. March.

Kingsbury, Alex. 2009. *Charles Duelfer recounts his searches for Iraqi WMD*. U.S. News &

World Report. 19 February

Kingsbury, Alex. 2009. *Iraq, WMD, Bush and the Mind of Saddam Hussei; Charles Duelfer recounts his searches for Iraqi WMD*. US News. Feb 9.

Koppel, Ted. 1992. *The USS Vincennes; Public War, Secret War*. ABC Nightline. July 1.

Lando, Barry. M. 2007. *A Secret War Against Iran ?We 've Done It Once- Why Not again?* Huffington Post. February 27.

Lando, Barry. M. 2007. *Web of Deceit: The History of Western Complicity in Iraq, from Churchill to Kennedy to George W. Bush*. Other Press.

Mousavian, Seyyed Hossein. 2008. *Iran-Europe Challenges and Opportunities*. Durham Modern Middle East and Islamic World Series.

Mousavian, Seyyed Hossein. 2012. *The Iranian Nuclear Crisis ; A Memoir*. Carnegie Endowment For International Peace.

Shalom, Stephen. R. 2007. *Iran History; The United States and Iran-Iraq War 1980-1988*. Iran Chamber Society. July 2.

Teicher, Howard. 1993. *Twin Pillars To Desert Storm*. William Morrow and Company, Inc. New York.

Teicher, Howard. 1995. *Statement by Former National NSC Official to the U.S. District Court*. Southern District of Florida. (http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/ NSAEBB/NSAEBB82/iraq61.pdf)

Timmerman, Kenneth R. 1992. *Testimony before the Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs*. October 27.

Timmerman, Kenneth R. *Fanning the Flames: Guns, Greed & Geopolitics in the Gulf War*. The Iran Brief, 1986-1988.

Timmerman, Kenneth R. 1991. The Death Lobby: How the West Armed Iraq. New York. Houghton Mifflin Company, P.86.

Waever, Ole, Buzan, Barry . 2009. Macrosecuritisation and Security Constellations: Reconsidering Scale In securitisation Theory. Journal of International Studies. 35(02): 253-279.