

UNIVERSIDAD COMPLUTENSE DE MADRID
FACULTAD DE CIENCIAS POLÍTICAS Y SOCIOLOGÍA
Departamento de Historia, Teorías y Geografías Políticas



TESIS DOCTORAL

**Iran and the geopolitical imagination: a discourse analysis of
the Spanish contribution to the debate on the meaning of
modern Iran**

**Irán y la imaginación geopolítica: un análisis del discurso en
torno a la contribución española al debate sobre el significado
del Irán Moderno**

MEMORIA PARA OPTAR AL GRADO DE DOCTOR

PRESENTADA POR

Marina Díaz Sanz

Director

Heriberto Cairo Carou

Madrid

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we are never the sole authors of our own narratives
(Czarniawska, 2004)

Agradecimientos

Hacer una tesis es una cosa que una no sabe lo que es hasta que la hace, o lo está haciendo, o ya está acabando. Es decir, que es una cosa que una no sabe... Pero bueno, supongo que como todo en la vida, que no sabes. Aunque supongo que sí había una cosa que yo sabía, y es que quería contar algo. Y me he empeñado y empeñado y empeñado para poder contarlo. Con peor o mejor fortuna, con más o menos acierto, pero con mucha convicción. Una no sabe de dónde vienen estas convicciones tan raras. Pero antes de narrar la gran historia, relataré sucintamente mi trayectoria académica, las oportunidades que he tenido estos años y algunas personas que me han acompañado.

Tras licenciarme en Ciencias Políticas y de la Administración y realizar estudios de Máster en la Facultad de Ciencias Políticas y Sociología en la Universidad Complutense de Madrid, entre los años 2010 y 2014 fui beneficiaria de una beca del Programa de Formación del Profesorado Universitario (FPU) del Ministerio de Educación, Ciencia y Desarrollo (MECD). El departamento de Ciencia Política III (Teorías y Formas Políticas y Geografía Humana) —rebautizado como Historia, Teorías y Geografía Políticas— me acogió para llevar a cabo mis estudios de doctorado. Agradezco al Ministerio por brindarme la ayuda financiera y al departamento, en especial a los miembros del área de Geografía Humana —Heriberto Cairo, María Lois, Almudena Cabezas y Rosa de la Fuente—, por incluirme a lo largo de estos años en actividades de investigación y docencia propias de la vida predoctoral.

Dentro del programa FPU-MECD pude realizar estancias de investigación en dos centros que han marcado el devenir de esta tesis tanto como mi paso por el Campus de Somosaguas (y eso ya es mucho). En el año 2012 y durante cuatro meses, el Departamento de Ciencia Política de la Universidad de Copenhague me acogió como estudiante de investigación. En el año 2013 y durante otros cuatro meses fui investigadora visitante en el Departamento de Política y Relaciones Internacionales de la Escuela de Estudios Orientales y Africanos (SOAS por sus siglas en inglés) de la Universidad de Londres.

Durante el verano de 2014, pasé un par de meses en el Instituto de Estudios Islámicos de la Universidad McGill en Montreal (Canadá). Mi última estancia de investigación predoctoral fue en el Departamento Mixto (de Ciencia Política y otras disciplinas) de la Facultad de Derecho en la Universidad de Murcia durante seis meses

en el año 2015. Agradezco al departamento —en especial al profesor Antonio Garrido— la acogida y la posibilidad de ocupar un espacio donde pasé largas horas dándole vueltas a este trabajo. En la Universidad de Murcia empecé a estudiar Ciencias Políticas cuando prácticamente arrancaba la licenciatura, y allí comencé a saber que en el mundo de las Ciencias Sociales pasaban cosas que me interesaban. En Murcia también me licencié en Filología Inglesa y quizá no sabía pero ahora sé que lo que me llevó allí fue una inconsciente atracción por el Imperio, su sintaxis y los sujetos que produce. Y, en fin, una podría decir que esta tesis persigue entender hasta algún punto cómo el Imperio nos produce.

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1. Introduction

Iran is an enigma. It's a complete enigma. It's not easy.
(Interview with a Spanish diplomat)

In casual comment, but also in serious reporting or academic writing—in ‘the West’—, it is not uncommon to find those who interpret that Iran is a country not easily understandable or readily explicable. The temptation is strong to read this genre of evaluations as a reflection of the Orientalist mindset that reworks the familiar visions of the mysterious Orient which for centuries have nourished the imagination of Europeans and Westerners, and mobilises them to read the affairs of modern world politics—in our case, the affairs of present-day Iran. Yet, one is also aware that, other than by the images of the Orient disseminated by literary and artistic production in the West, the texture of Iran’s ‘enigma’ is determined by two major 20th-century happenings—the ‘Islamic’ revolution and the construction of the Islamic Republic. Thus, rather than random or neutral, the vision of an ‘enigmatic’ Iran stems from a particular mode of interpreting and representing the politics, society and culture of Others in the non-Western world.

For the purposes of this discussion, the question of Iran’s ‘enigma’ shall in fact be placed in the context of the full-scale competition to determine the meaning of modern Iran, which Adib-Moghaddam (2008) addresses in an illuminating book: *Iran in World Politics: the Question of the Islamic Republic*. Adib-Moghaddam’s (2008) thesis is that the happening of Iran’s ‘Islamic’ revolution gave way to an intense battle to fix the meaning of the ‘new’ Iran—the Islamic Republic’s Iran— against its forerunner— Pahlavi Iran. It is known that the triumph of the revolution in the early days of February 1979 terminated abruptly with Iran’s monarchy tradition—and in particular with the Pahlavi dynasty, which had ruled over the country since the mid-1920s.

In hindsight, it is easy to interpret that, with Khomeini returning to Iran from his Paris exile on 1 February 1979, Iranians continued to write thrilling episodes of their convoluted modern political history. These episodes might have appeared new or sudden to casual observers, but had, as a matter of fact, deep roots in major events and processes taking place in and around the territory of Persia (Iran) all throughout the 20th century—more significantly, the Constitutional revolution (1905-09) and the so-called ‘White revolution’ (1962) (Abrahamian, 1983; Keddie, 2007). Indeed, Khomeini’s

leadership role in 1979 cannot be understood without awareness of his rise to prominence during the protests against the early 1960s programme of reforms furthered by Mohammad Reza Pahlavi; or without understanding of how the position of the *ulema* within Iran's political scene was resignified in the decades prior to the 1979 revolution (Tabari, 1983).

Going back to Adib-Moghaddam (2008)'s argument, it needs to be underlined that, during four decades, the battle for meaning has confronted various groups inside Iran pursuing to settle on the identity of post-Pahlavi Iran; namely, the 'authentic' definitional elements, the symbols, and the religious, cultural and historical referents of the polity adumbrated by the crossbred 1979 revolution (Farhi, 1988; Skocpol, 1982):

The revolution gave impetus to an almost immutable, emotionally charged struggle for the meaning of modern Iran. [...] On the one side, there is the Iran whose 'cultural essence' is considered 'Persian', in which the country's ancient, pre-Islamic civilisation and the poetry of Hafiz, Rumi and Khayyam is artificially divorced from contemporary life in the country. This is the Iran favoured in the 'West'. It is the picture of Iran that continues to have a 'celebrated', if distorted presence in mass-culture fed by Hollywood productions [...] On the other side, there is the Iran whose Islamic and revolutionary identities are in conflict with those representations. This is the 'Hussein's Iran', the land of sacrifice in the name of Islam, the birthplace of the 'party of God' (Hezbollah), the country that celebrates Ashura with immense cultural sincerity, the place where Muhammad, Jesus and Moses become revolutionary figures in an eternal struggle for justice and spiritual atavism. These emotive ideas, at least, are central to the way the Islamic Republic wishes to portray itself (Adib-Moghaddam, 2008, p. 14).

Aware of the full-scale battle being fought inside Iran concerning the establishment of the official narratives of the 'Islamic' Iran in spite of the 'Persian' or the 'pagan' (and vice versa), the focus in this thesis is on the international dimension of the battle. The international ('external') negotiation of Iran's meaning is another fundamental aspect of Adib-Moghaddam's (2008) argument stating that whatever post-1979 Iran means is not only a fabrication of indigenous groups, but also a 'reality' co-produced from without, especially from the 'West' and by 'Westerners' trying to come to grips with the cultural and geopolitical uncertainty brought about by the artefact born out of the 'ayatollahs' revolution'.

1.1 Narrating modern Iran in the ‘West’

In the late 2000s, when one read or watched news of Iran in mainstream newspapers and TV broadcasts, one could easily have the impression that, rather than enigmatic, the Islamic Republic represented some kind of imminent threat to ‘Us’ (‘Westerners’). During those years, which were not so distant from the impactful 9/11 events—leading to the overall enhancement of the West’s suspicious vision of the ‘Islamic’ world—, the stories of Iran disseminated by global media were mostly concerned with some of the following issues:

- *Iran’s leadership.* Mahmoud Ahmadinejad had been elected president of the Islamic Republic in 2005. He was largely regarded as an extreme ‘conservative’ politician and a ‘hardliner’. His overtly anti-Zionist rhetoric and the pursuit of anti-imperialist alliances with leaders of the Global South (Hugo Chávez, Evo Morales, Daniel Ortega) were largely distrusted by Western democracies.
- *The nuclear crisis.* In 2002, news broke out that Iran had resumed the development of its nuclear programme, whose origins dated back to the Cold War; that is, to the days of U.S.-Iranian strategic alliances. Many the West (especially in the U.S.) warned about the risks implicit in Iran’s nuclear aspirations. Europe’s initial reaction was to use diplomacy to foster an understanding with Iranian authorities. For many years the situation remained tense and several rounds of sanctions were imposed on Tehran. Finally, the signature of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) between Iran and the P5+1 in July 2015 raised hopes on the crisis’ resolution.
- *The Iran-Israel confrontation.* Generally since 1979, relations between Israel and Iran had been aloof, yet not completely broken. Things worsened during the Ahmadinejad era (2005-2013) when there was often the feeling that Israel and Iran were on the brink of war. Ahmadinejad was reported for having denied the Holocaust and for wishing to ‘wipe Israel off the map’, which boosted his formidable reputation as Israel’s enemy.
- *Iran’s democratic deficit.* Ahmadinejad’s re-election as president of Iran in 2009 was followed by allegations of fraud and the repression of protestors. The scenes of violence during the protests hit media headlines generating the vision that the

‘regime of ayatollahs’ was unable to deliver to popular demands for democracy. The Islamic Republic’s reputation as an ‘intractable theocracy’ grew in consequence.

- *Iran’s negative human rights record.* In these years, Iran was also often in the news for violations of human rights, for the passing of death sentences (on criminals, homosexuals or terrorists) and for perpetuating women’s subdued position within society through policies such as compulsory veiling.

An argument some would agree with is that these matters being repeatedly covered in media stories of Iran generated an overall negative vision of the country. Iran was pictured as little else than the ‘regime of ayatollahs’, a ‘nuclear proliferator’, an ‘existential threat’ to Israel, a ‘theocratic dictatorship’ and a ‘human rights violator’. Not that some accusations against the Islamic Republic were not founded on ‘evidence’, but what becomes apparent more generally is that the public debate on Iran in the West was saturated with negative stories of the country and its ‘regime’, which possibly obstructed—and continue to obstruct today—the proliferation of alternative points of view and narrations about the politics, society and culture ‘over there’. Could post-revolutionary Iran be reduced to the representations and visions offered by global media corporations? Aprioristically, one would say that this cannot be the case—just like any other country, state or society, Iran is not a monolithic entity.

This thesis is concerned with the tendency to represent Iran as if it was a uniform thing in narrations that often fail to give account of the lights and shadows, the contradictions and paradoxes, and the continuities and discontinuities inside Iran nowadays, promoting the fiction that Iran’s ‘present’ and ‘past’ identities were dramatically disjointed by the spectacular happening of the ‘Islamic’ revolution.

Prominent scholars have pondered over these matters in a multitude of brilliant manners, in fact providing students of Iran and world politics at large with a solid ground from which to manage the consumption of global media stories, and also of Hollywood blockbusters such as *300* (Dir. Zack Snyder, 2006) or *ARGO* (Dir. Ben Affleck, 2012). Adib-Moghaddam’s (2008) elaboration on this is that ‘discourse on Iran is saturated with policy-relevant, think-tank-types analyses, which are too often designed to reify the caricatures of Iran as a monolithic, unchangeable, eternally

anarchic place’ (p. 15); and also ‘that there is an almost unbridgeable difference between the way Iran is translated to us by the international media, political functionaries and academics and the reality on the ground, the complex existence of the post-revolutionary Iranian polity’ (p. 15).

In this vein, it would seem that the problem that enframes our discussion has to do with the ‘translations’ —with how Iran’s semantic material is rendered legible to/by Western/global audiences not necessarily familiar with Iran’s broader system of signification; and with how, in fact, these translations are essentially ‘flawed’, unable to mend the disjuncture between the universes of meaning they set out to communicate. One could read here a warning against the work of ‘translators’ —of scholars, journalists, state agents, film-makers, etc.— directly involved in the definition of ‘The Question of the Islamic Republic’ (Adib-Moghaddam, 2008); or perhaps just simply, a call to be mindful of how the ‘expert’ performance of ‘translators’ shapes the global understanding of post-1979 Iran. In Derridean terms, a performance of this kind can be nothing but a sequence of violent acts of interpretation (Shapiro, 1999, p. 57).

It might also be inferred from the foregoing argument that some people are committed to offering biased visions of Khomeini’s Iran (and of Iran after 1989)¹, as well as to deliberately demonising the regime of the ‘mad mullahs’ (Beeman, 2005). This is probably so in some cases. Yet, I am not implying that Adib-Moghaddam’s (2008) thinking should be reduced to this, nor do I intend to take this as an absolute premise for my work. The question is more complex and concerns the long-term tendency to imbue stories of the ‘Muslim’ world with the discourse of conflict, barbarism and danger for the West. Over the last few decades, a good deal of critical scholarship (Achcar, 2006; Adib-Moghaddam, 2011; Esposito, 1999; Halliday, 2003/1995; Said, 1978/2003, 1981/1997) has tried to counter this tendency by offering students of world politics the means to dismantling many of the myths that inform ‘Western’ narratives of the ‘Muslim’ world and, in particular, the ‘totalitarian’ aspiration (Adib-Moghaddam, 2011) inscribed in such narratives; the aspiration to establish the truth about ‘Muslims’, ‘Arabs’ and ‘Middle Easterns’, about how they live, their engagement with democracy and religion, and even about how they look like

¹ Khomeini died in June 1989.

(Culcasi & Gokmen, 2011). Some of these popular narratives have developed in recent years from discourses such as the ‘clash of civilisations’, impregnating the ‘Western’ gaze in multifold consequential manners.

Since the late 1970s, the overall demonising tendency affecting the Muslim world—and the construction of the ‘West’ vs. ‘Islam’ divide—seems, in the case of Iran, irredeemably difficult to uncouple from the happening of the revolution and the birth of the Islamic Republic. Reflecting upon contemporary fabrications of the West/Islam antagonism, Said (1981/1997) spoke of a global trend going back to the early 1970s, when Western visions of ‘Islam’ adopted peculiar overtones pointing at the emergence of a new consciousness about the Muslim world. This new consciousness was essentially related to happenings such as the 1973 oil supply crisis, the resurgence of radical nationalism in various ‘Muslim’ countries and the very Islamic revolution in Iran. These events spurred the awareness that the West could not afford to turn its back on the politics of the Gulf and the Middle East, if anything because Soviet aspirations to widen their sphere of influence in the area were considerable. Not that this trend did not have a more ancient genealogy linked to Europe’s imaginings of the Orient, a subject that had been suggestively addressed by Said (1978/2003) in his seminal *Orientalism*; yet, well into the second half of the 20th century, the tendency to represent ‘Islam’ as essentially ‘troubled and problematic’ (Said, 1981/1997, p. 1) was grounded on a distinct economic-material basis, served different power projects and used different means.

The role played by media in the dissemination of these troubling images of the ‘Islamic’ world was addressed at length by Said (1981/1997) in the book *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts determine how we see the rest of the world*. In this work, the incredible power of media organisations and of so-called ‘Middle East experts’ (in the U.S.) for orienting people’s imagination of the ‘Muslim’ world were largely attended to. Of particular relevance for our discussion is the argument *Covering Islam* develops concerning the fabrication of the ‘Iran story’.

Coming out two years after the Islamic revolution, Said’s (1981/1997) investigation on the capacity deployed by media and experts to define the contours of the West’s imagination of the Muslim world was grounded, in part, on extensive monitoring of how media have covered the Iranian crisis (1978-79), experienced by

many as ‘the U.S. crisis in Iran’. One of Said’s (1981/1997) theses was that media corporations in the U.S. and the army of experts who participated in TV and radio shows, or wrote in newspapers —experts with seemingly informed opinions on the politics, society and history of Iran in fact contributed massively to the promotion of a pessimistic mood against Iran and her revolution. Mostly, this was achieved by imposing a standpoint of interpretation on Iran’s ‘reality’ which came out of U.S. concerns with being rolled back from the Persian Gulf, and by glossing over the complexity and plurality of Iran’s political moment. In this spirit, Said (1981/1997) noted that ‘the American consumer of news’ was fed with ‘a sustained diet of information about a people, a culture, a religion [...] represented as militant, dangerous, and anti-American’ (p. 83). True, one cannot ignore that the ‘Hostage Crisis’ (initiated by the seizure of the U.S. embassy in Tehran and the confinement of some 60 American citizens held captive for 444 days since 4 November 1979) provided the ground for the breeding of U.S.-Iran hostility in the years to come, but it was the construction of the ‘event’ —and not the real ‘fact’ of the embassy seizure— what planted the seed of the U.S.-Iran enduring standoff.

These points underscored, it is important to note that by drawing attention to the performance of ‘translators’ and ‘experts’ on Iranian affairs —Middle Eastern affairs, for that matter—, neither Said (1981/1997) nor Adib-Moghaddam (2008) intend to say that there is a truer Iran, a truer Islam or a truer Middle East that can be covered/represented in a way that will satisfy all, or in a way that is truly fair —nor do these authors seem willing to accept that all representations are equally valid. Stories (and story-tellers) proliferate in formal and informal settings that represent Iran or the Muslim world with absolute bias and distortion. Yet, in spite of this, anyone attempting to grasp the epistemology of story-telling needs to realise that ‘the media’s Islam, the Western scholar’s Islam, the Western reporter’s Islam, and the Muslims Islam’s are all acts of will and interpretation that take place in history, and can only be dealt with in history as acts of will and interpretation’ (Said, 1981/1997, p. 45). In sum, no story or account and no vision or representation of Iran (or ‘Islam’) emanates from an empty place. There is no such thing as ‘a view from nowhere’ (Agnew, 1998/2003) that allows neutral narrations of world politics; and so, one basic epistemological premise in this work is that all stories are told from a particular point of view; all practices of representation are ‘situated’ in a particular temporal, cultural, social and political

momentum (Haraway, 1988) and, thus, shall be dealt with as outcomes of the interpretive performance of their makers.

1.2 Imagination, discourse and the making of global space

The standpoints from which people imagine global space and set off to interpret ‘what goes on in the world’ have been subjected to intense scrutiny in critical remits within Political Geography and International Relations (IR). Scholars working in the fields of so-called ‘Critical Geopolitics’ (Agnew, 1997/2003; Dalby, 1990; Ó Tuathail, 1996a, etc.) and critical IR (Campbell, 1992/1998, 1993; Hansen, 2006, Neumann, 1999) have, over the last few decades, shown an enduring commitment with the study of world/global politics; but also, significantly, with what Foucauldians name ‘the problematic of subjectivity’ (Campbell, 1992/1998, p. x) —namely, the ‘problem’ of the interpretative, narrative and imaginative practices that make world politics. As part and parcel of their shared critical project, both groups of scholars have also provided meditations on the ontological, epistemological and theoretical assumptions that have traditionally underpinned the discourse and practice of world politics, often to unearth the embedding of the modern imagination in classical approaches to geopolitics and IR (Agnew, 1998/2003).

Two key reconceptualisations happening within these related disciplines are of critical relevance for this dissertation. One is the reconceptualisation that affects the definition of geopolitics as a discursive practice. Another is the reconceptualisation affecting the understanding of international relations as Self/Other relations (Neumann, 1999) —the argument that international relations is about the different engagements between ‘Selves’ and ‘Others’. Despite having distinct disciplinary histories, both reconceptualisations come out from critical enquiries into the ontologies and epistemologies that uphold the core of traditional geopolitics and IR.

In the case of geography/geopolitics, it is very clear that the development of a critical consciousness about the meaning of geopolitics initiated a current of non-positivist scholarship which set out to say that, rather than ‘a fixed and objective geography constraining and directing the activities of states’ (Agnew & Corbridge, 1995, p. 3) or a ‘neutral and objective practice of surveying global space’ (Ó Tuathail &

Dalby, 1998, p. 2), geopolitics is ‘a particular mode of representing global space’ (Ó Tuathail, 1998b, p. 22) and ‘a decentred set of practices with elitist and popular forms and expressions’ (Ó Tuathail & Dalby, 1998, p. 4). The Cold War, in fact, was much responsible for the epistemological shift that critical geographers advanced, once it became apparent that the phrase ‘Cold War’ contained not a neutral evaluation about the conflict between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, but rather a situated narration —an ideology-based geopolitical discourse— which inflated the capacity of the ‘capitalist West’ vs. ‘communist’ divide to comprehensively represent global space. From this argument two key theoretical premises derive that are essential for this thesis: i) hegemonic states establish the terms of geopolitical discourse; ii) the *loci of enunciation* of geopolitical discourse are multiple.

Drawing on the Gramscian notion of hegemony, Marx-inspired economic analysis and Lefebvre’s spatial theory, a major accomplishment of authors whose works form the substance of Critical Geopolitics (Agnew & Corbridge, 1995; Agnew, 1998/2003; Ó Tuathail & Agnew, 1992; Ó Tuathail, 1996a, etc.) is to have exposed the grammar of the historic-discursive contingency of the ‘modern geopolitical imagination’, noting that each ‘geopolitical order’ is dominated by a particular mode of representing the world (a ‘geopolitical discourse’) (Agnew & Corbridge, 1995; Agnew, 1998/2003). As far as we are concerned now, the geopolitical discourse of the Cold War would be, according to this rationale, a hegemonic way of narrating ‘the spatiality of world politics’ (Ó Tuathail, 1998b, p. 18) possible because the U.S. also occupied a hegemonic position in the world-economy during the post-Second World War (Taylor & Flint, 2002). This renders the ideological discourse of the Cold War a U.S. fabrication that exemplifies the contingent relationship between the material and discursive power of the hegemon, which not only establishes the terms for narrating world politics dramas for itself but, crucially, ‘can help create the conditions whereby peripheral and semiperipheral states actively adopt and use the geopolitical reasoning of the hegemon’ (Ó Tuathail & Agnew, 1992, p. 195).

Resultant from this, for Ó Tuathail & Agnew (1992), it is very clear that ‘the study of geopolitics is the study of the spatialization of international politics by core powers and hegemonic states’ (p. 192); but in particular, the examination of how ‘intellectuals of statecraft’ “spatialize” international politics in such a way as to

represent it as a “world” characterized by particular types of places, peoples and dramas’ (p. 192), which leads me to the question of the different *loci* from which geopolitical discourse is enounced.

For what has been said thus far, Critical Geopolitics appears to give prominence to the state (and its intellectuals) for its capacity to mobilise social, symbolic, material and power resources in the generation of readings of international politics that aim to establish hegemonic representations of global space. Yet, it has also been anticipated that geopolitics is a ‘decentred set of practices with elitist forms and expressions’ (Ó Tuathail & Dalby, 1998, p. 4). Indeed, later works (Ó Tuathail, 1996a) accept that critical geopolitics investigations might want to move the focus away from the centre — the centre of orthodox political analysis and praxis— and chart the production of global space in sites different from ‘the state’. Thereby, it is not suggested that the analysis of states’ spatial practices should be abandoned, but rather that the exploration of ‘elitist’ geopolitical practices be combined with attention to the ‘popular’. Critical Geopolitics theorise this by asserting that geopolitical discourse can be broken down into three analytical domains: ‘practical’, ‘formal’ and ‘popular’ (Ó Tuathail & Dalby, 1998, pp. 1-15) —where ‘practical’ refers to the geographical/geopolitical arguments that subtend the visions of statepersons, politicians and military commanders in foreign policy circles, the bureaucracy and political institutions; ‘formal’ refers to the geographical/geopolitical arguments which underlie the models produced in think tanks, strategic institutes and the academia, thus by strategic thinkers and public intellectuals (Ó Tuathail, 1996a, p. 60); and ‘popular’ stands for the geographical/geopolitical arguments inserted in sites such as the media, cinema, literature or cartoons (Ó Tuathail & Dalby, 1998, p. 5).

In short, it is widely accepted today that the spatialisation of international politics or global space is a collective enterprise in which a multitude of social and political subjects partake other than ‘intellectuals of statecraft’. Importantly also, what the spatialisation argument conceals is an epistemological claim about a particular mode of knowing/representing the world that distributes difference across the world’s surface. Difference is distributed in the form of ‘binary pairs’ —pairs of terms that oppose or exclude each other establishing hierarchies between ‘places, peoples and dramas’ (Ó Tuathail & Agnew, 1992, p. 192), in ways as familiar as: ‘European’/‘non-European’,

‘male’/‘female’, ‘civilised’/‘barbaric’, ‘developed’/‘underdeveloped’, ‘modern’/‘traditional’, etc. Charged with major performative effects, a basic challenge of any critical enquiry is to denaturalise the ontological status of the ‘binary pairs’ that populate everyday political language and thinking. Thus, thinking critically about the geographical arguments and geopolitical assumptions that permeate formal and informal representations of global space begins with the realisation that naming the world and its distinct parts is a powerful act of representation that creates —and not describes— the world ‘out there’.

Now, John Agnew (1998/2003) calls this mode of knowing the ‘modern geopolitical imagination’ and says that it started to develop with the ‘discovery’ of America by Europeans. Two centuries later, it had become the dominant framework for interpreting the human experience of the modern/contemporary world and of all things in it. Resting upon four fundamentals —‘the visualisation of global space’, ‘the turning of time into space’, ‘the world of territorial states’ and ‘the pursuit of primacy’—, the modern geopolitical imagination established itself as a ‘system of visualising the world’ (Agnew, 1998/2003, p. 6) which provided ‘modern men’ with a language to narrate their own experience of the world, but also the experiences of Others, therefore promoting a profoundly colonial epistemology that renders itself visible in geopolitical discourse.

By the time the ‘Islamic’ revolution happened in 1979, the ideological discourse of the Cold War was the hegemonic structure of intelligibility orienting the theory and practice of world politics. Cold War discourse bore on the idea that global space was divided into two politico-ideological coherent areas: the ‘capitalist’ West and the ‘communist’ East. For at least four decades, this clear-cut spatial structure provided a persuasive framework in which to ground the practical enactments and narrative acts related to world politics. This argument having been broadly accepted, scholars (Agnew & Corbridge, 1995; Agnew, 1998/2003; Ó Tuathail, 1998a, 1998b) also argue that, when the Cold War ended, global space had to be re-written, thus opening up itself to readings that would depart from what had been the norm in the period following the Second World War. Yet, in the post-Cold War era, many discourses flourished without there being a hegemonic one. Agnew (1998/2003), for instance, noted the relevance of discourses that focus on transnational economic processes, clashing civilisations and the continued relevance of the U.S. in the conduct of world politics. And Ó Tuathail

(1998b), for his part, identified that the ‘New World Order’ brought about discourses such as ‘enlargement geopolitics’ and ‘environmental geopolitics’. Interestingly for us, the discourse of enlargement geopolitics has adopted forms of expression such as ‘the end of history’, ‘rogue states’ or ‘the clash of civilisations’ (Ó Tuathail, 1998a, p. 5). The explanation of this is ‘simple’: the post-Cold War era is ‘a geopolitical order without hegemon’ (Ó Tuathail, 1998b, p. 19).

Now, Critical Geopolitics is naturally not the only discipline that developed an interest for the study of discourse. In the neighbouring International Relations, the metaphor of the ‘world as text’ (Der Derian & Shapiro, 1989) also inspired critical developments committed to explore the modern epistemology underpinning the political theory which informs IR (George, 1994; Walker, 1993). But what is particularly interesting for this thesis is that, other than engaging in the theoretical and epistemological reconsideration of IR theory and practice, so-called critical IR scholars (related to poststructuralism and critical constructivism) also advanced a methodological agenda for the study of international relations as Self/Other relations (Neumann, 1999). Insofar as this thesis understands that geopolitical discourse inscribes difference onto global space, it is assumed that geopolitical discourse produces ‘Selves’ and ‘Others’ committed to naturalise certain distributions of power. Works that look at the inscription of identity/difference discourse in foreign policy perform a similar service (Campbell, 1992/1998; Hansen, 2006) and, therefore, are a major inspiration in this work.

1.3 Empirical trouble: Spain and the meaning of modern Iran

How do people imagine faraway places? How do people make sense of the life and politics in distant places? Where do visions of the international world come from? Who is involved in the production of such visions? Why some visions become dominant and not others? How do geopolitical discourses picture the relations between ‘Us-here’ and ‘Them-there’? How do ‘We’ make sense of the places and people which, paradoxically, do not seem to make sense to ‘Us’?

Critical Geopolitics offers preliminary answers to these questions. As seen, for Critical Geopolitics, the geopolitical discourse of hegemonic states contains the

representation of the world that in turn becomes the framework of reference for peripheral and semi-peripheral states. What is thereby meant is that the geopolitical imagination of non-hegemonic states is ‘under the jurisdiction’ of the images, visions, and friend/foe identifications embedded in the geopolitical discourse fabricated in the hegemon’s production sites. During the Cold War, this translated in that the geopolitical imagination was under the jurisdiction of ideological geopolitics, and that it was the vision of total conflict between West and East that provided a framework for ordering accounts of international politics. The ‘hegemonic order without a dominant state hegemon’ of the Post-Cold War era (Ó Tuathail, 1998b, p.18) anticipates, by contrast, the absence of hegemonic geopolitical discourse.

Concerned with the debate about modern Iran’s meaning, the general purpose of this dissertation is to investigate the way in which post-revolutionary Iran has been represented in ‘elitist and popular forms and expressions’ of Spanish geopolitical discourse (Ó Tuathail, 1998, p. 4). Importantly, what follows from the theoretical assumptions laid out thus far is that our study is involved in the exploration of non-hegemonic geopolitical discourse (in fact, the production of geopolitical discourse in a semi-peripheral state) and in a context (the post-Cold War) defined by the profusion of discourses competing to establish a dominant narrative of world politics. Having defined the empirical trouble that concerns us, let me offer a general introduction to some of the most relevant practical, formal and popular sites of representation engaged with the production of the meaning of modern Iran. The empirical part of this study looks at some of these sites.

Arguably today, the most influential site for the production of visions of the ‘faraway place’ Iran in Spain is the media (mainly, TV and newspapers). The influence I am talking about refers to the capacity of media to reach out to broad audiences, which could hasten the conclusion that media are the principal ‘translators’ of Iran’s meaning(s) for Spanish audiences (an assertion that nonetheless would require empirical testing). Regardless of this, it is also true that media deal with Iranian affairs very intensely in times of crisis and less so when events in other parts of the world demand that the focus is moved elsewhere. In recent years, Iran has come under the spotlight of media for reasons such as the nuclear programme, conflicts in the Middle East (Syria, Yemen, and the rivalry with Saudi Arabia), or episodes of domestic instability such as

the post-2009 election days. In accord with what Said (1981/1997) expounded in *Covering Islam*, during these critical times, the role of media (also in Spain) has turned pivotal in generally disseminating troubling representations of ‘the country of ayatollahs’ —a most consequential act considering that for most people Iran mainly exists *via* media stories. Within the broad field of media stories, one must not forget to mention satirical media stories, about which this thesis will discuss largely.

Another major site of popular imagination production of Iran is travel literature. Books of journeys across Iran written by Spanish authors have been coming out mainly since the early 1980s. This is not too surprising and should be interpreted as an outcome of the ‘shock’ following from the happening of the Islamic revolution —thus as a reaction of men and women travellers eager to unveil the mysteries of Khomeini’s republic. The year 1982 saw the publication of *El Escándalo del Islam* by José María Gironella; then came *Negro sobre Negro* (1996/2000) and *La Cueva de Alí Babá* (2002) by Ana María Briongos; and *L’opi que fa oblidar. Un viatge a l’Iran, país de poetes i mullas* (2002) by Santi Riera and Mònica Baró; after this, *El Chador Azul* (2009) by Beatriz Pitarch; *El Jardín del Fin. Un Viaje por el Irán de ayer y hoy* (2011) by Ángela Rodicio; *El País Esquizofrénico* (2012) by Jordi Pérez Colomé; and *Escuchar Irán* (2016) and *Conocer Irán* (2018) by Patricia Almarcegui. The representation of Iran in travel stories will also be subjected to scrutiny in this thesis.

Critical Geopolitics describes the academia as a site where formal representations of the world are produced. The involvement of Spanish academia in the production of formal knowledge of Iran has been traditionally scarce. Indeed, one would say that scholarly attention to Iranian matters in Spain pales in comparison to other countries such as the U.S. and Britain, but also France or Germany. Spanish universities do not offer specialised Iran programmes for either undergraduate or graduate students; yet, Persian courses have been regularly taught in several universities —Complutense and Autónoma de Madrid, Barcelona, Alicante and Salamanca— for more than a decade.

In spite of this, there are a few disperse scholars whose works and analyses have helped to bring the knowledge of Iran’s politics, society and history closer to general and expert readers in Spain: at least, historian María Jesús Merinero; political scientist Luciano Zaccara; and the political analysts Nazanin Armanian and Martha Zein. These

authors have published works, all of which have been coming out during the 2000s, that deal with different aspects of Iran's contemporary politics. Some of these have offered comprehensive introductions to the political system of the Islamic Republic and to the domestic/international dynamics that shape Iran's basic political architecture. Titles such as *Irán: Hacia un desorden prometedor* (2002) and *La República Islámica de Irán: Dinámicas sociopolíticas y relevo de elites* (2004) by Merinero and *Los enigmas de Irán: sociedad y política* (2006) by Luciano Zaccara, exemplify this. In some other instances, the subject of discussion has been U.S. geostrategy in the Middle East and the place of the Islamic Republic in this complex regional scenario. The books written by Armanian and Zein —*Irak, Afganistán e Irán: 40 respuestas al conflicto de Oriente Próximo* (2007) and *Irán: la revolución constante, entre la modernidad y el islam tradicional* (2012)— exemplify the necessity of offering accounts that can help illuminate world politics in the aftermath of 9/11.

Other than this, for over more than a decade, Zaccara has been monitoring Iran's election processes. Zaccara's analyses have become a reference for experts and general audiences seeking to understand the key to Iran's elective processes. Zaccara's analyses are regularly published in specialist journals (*Política Exterior, Afkar, Cuadernos de Estrategia, Anuario Internacional CIDOB*, etc.) and domestic and foreign mass media (TV, radio and broadsheets). In other recent publications, Zaccara (2016) has joined in the effort of other international Iran experts to advance on the study of the Islamic Republic's international orientations and the difficult accommodation of Iran's domestic and foreign policy agendas.

While usually mentioned in the first place in critical geopolitics' analyses, I have left for the end a reference to the role of foreign policy practitioners in the production of the world-visions that inspire the practice of international relations. This is because, in the Spanish case, practical reasonings affecting Hispano-Iranian relations have usually remained away from the public debate on Spain's international relations (generally scarce nonetheless) and, therefore, from people's awareness —whether Iran is a friend or a foe (and why), which is the extent and nature (economic, cultural, political...) of Hispano-Iranian relations, how Spain reacted to the birth of the Islamic Republic, which stance Spain has taken in the West-Iran crises. Given the centrality of practical geopolitical discourse for critical (and conventional) studies of geopolitics,

representations of Iran in Spanish diplomatic discourse are also extensively surveyed in this work.

1.4 Research design: Premises, purposes, question(s), methodology.

Thus, the main purpose of this investigation is to explore the representation of Iran in Spain at two levels where geopolitical discourse is produced: practical and popular geopolitics. Alternatively, this means that the dissertation seeks to explore the constitution of the Iranian subject in narratives involving ‘Us’ and ‘Them’. The narratives I am interested in are developed by Spanish diplomats, travel writers and humourists (stand-up comedians and cartoonists) participating in the broader debate about modern Iran’s meaning. Forcefully, this also means that the thesis sets out to survey the productivity of discourse and the practical-popular discourse nexus..

A number of theoretical-philosophical premises subtend the thesis’ purposes:

- Premise 1: People (‘We’) living in certain places (‘here’) *imagine* other places (‘there’) and the people in those places (‘Them’).
- Premise 2: ‘We-here’ imagine ‘Them-there’ *different* from ‘Us’.
- Premise 3: ‘We-here’ can imagine ‘Them-there’ *more or less different* from ‘Us’.
- Premise 4: People’s imagination is not directly observable; it needs to be investigated via its *representations*.
- Premise 5: Representations of ‘Us’ and ‘Them’ are embedded in *discourse*.

The establishment of three levels of geopolitical discourse (formal, practical and popular) by Critical Geopolitics is a theoretical assumption with important methodological resonances for the design of our research. As seen, this assumption is predated by the more essential axiom concerning the conceptualisation of geopolitics as a ‘mode of representing global space’ (Ó Tuathail, 1998b, p. 22). Another key theoretical axiom is that practical geopolitics shows a greater capacity to establish representations of global space, also because it is more abundant than formal geopolitical discourse (both sites produce geopolitical reasoning) (Ó Tuathail, 1996a, p. 60). In Hansen’s (2006) terminology, practical geopolitical discourse —ergo, ‘official

discourse’— dominates the scripting of world politics because it is usually the state through its foreign policy formulations that is able to establish the different positions in a foreign policy debate. The key consideration that geopolitical discourse can be traced in excentric *loci* of enunciation does not run counter the idea that ‘the state’ is the major narrator of world politics dramas; yet, it opens up the field of discourse production to non-practical realms: formal and popular sites of representation. This engenders epistemic-political implications that constrain the way in which practical, formal and popular texts are written and read, because it is understood that texts produced in different production contexts deploy different engagements with foreign policy debates. To theorise this, Hansen (2006) notes that foreign policy texts establish different ‘modalities of authority’ and are built upon/predicate different ‘modes of knowledge’ (p. 66).

While the purpose of the current dissertation is to investigate the representation of Iran in (Spanish) practical and popular discourse, it must be accentuated that the thesis does not place the focus on foreign policy discourse only —although, it is fair to recognise that foreign policy orientations will be considered in the analysis of representations of Iran by practical discourse. The practical level of geopolitical discourse is inspected here by looking at diplomatic discourse.

But, as far as the analysis of popular geopolitical discourse goes, the thesis holds two suppositions. It first presupposes that the representation of Iran by satirical media discourse is enframed by the broader foreign policy debate (Hansen, 2011); hence, the adequacy of discussing humouristic representations of Iran with that backdrop in mind. By contrast, the second supposition is that the production of representations of Iran on the part of travel writers might not be so visibly driven by the necessity of establishing a position in relation to the foreign policy debate.

The table below features the correspondence between the different levels of geopolitical discourse after Critical Geopolitics’ distinction, the subjects who produce discourse and an array of textual genres that could be potentially scrutinised in investigations that seek to explore the intersections between representation and the constitution of identity/difference or Self/Other relations.

Table 1.1 Levels of geopolitical discourse, subjects and genres

Levels of geopolitical discourse	Subject	Genres
<i>Formal geopolitics</i>	Scholars, intellectuals, political analysts	Books, articles, essays, lectures, papers
<i>Practical geopolitics</i>	Presidents, Prime Ministers, MFA officials, diplomats , members of Parliament, military officials, strategists	Presidential speeches, parliamentary debates, reports, military strategies, meeting minutes, interviews
<i>Popular geopolitics</i>	Film-makers, writers , photographers, comedians , journalists, bloggers, webmasters	Motion pictures, TV series, photo exhibitions, travel literature, stand-up comedy, political cartoons , reportage, print, photographic and video journalism, blogs, web pages

Source: Author elaboration

The empirical basis of the dissertation is compounded by texts belonging to four kinds of ‘geopolitical texts’ (Falah, Flint, & Mamadouh, 2006): research interviews with diplomats (Fontana & Frey, 2005; Kuus, 2014), travel books (Lisle, 2006; Todorov, 1995), stand-up comedy (Mintz, 1985) and political cartoons (Diamond, 2010; Dodds 2007b; Hansen, 2011, 2014; Ridanpää, 2012, 2014b). A Discourse Analysis methodology is employed to survey the constitution of the Iranian subject in texts belonging to these categories.

In sum, the thesis main research question is:

- *How do geopolitical discourses inform the Spanish imagination of Iran and how do diplomatic, literary and humour narratives construct the Iranian subject?*

Additional research questions are:

- Which discourses enable predominantly the construction of Iran’s meaning? How are Self and Other positions distributed by geopolitical discourse/discourses of global politics?
- How do practical and popular geopolitical discourse relate empirically?
- Which narratives of Iran do diplomatic, literary and humour discourses develop? Which Self/Other relationship do they enable?
- Which different spatialities, temporalities and/or ethicalities do discourses attribute to Self and Other in representations?

- How does a Discourse Analysis Methodology help to investigate the construction of the Iranian subject by diplomatic, travel and humour discourse in Spain?
- What does the analysis of Iran's representation suggest about the contemporary ways of visualising global space?
- How does Critical Geopolitics help to expand the investigation of representations of Iran in Spain

1.5 Study plan

In Chapters Two to Four (Part I), the dissertation develops the basic ontological, theoretical and methodological architecture which sustains the empirical analyses put forth in Part II (Chapters Five to Eight). Chapters Five, Six and Seven address the representation of post-revolutionary Iran by diplomatic, travel writing, and humour discourses, respectively. The conclusions come in Chapter Eight (Part II).

1.5.1 Part I

Chapter Two expands the argument presented in Section 1.2. It pursues three purposes, all of which relate to the emergence of the vision of geopolitics as practice, and to Premise 1: 'People ("We") living in certain places ("here") *imagine* other places ("there") and the people in those places ("Them")'.

The chapter introduces first the traditional approach to geopolitics, forged in the context of inter-imperial rivalries and the establishment of geography as a scientific discipline. It then deals with the critical revision of the 'tradition of geopolitics' initiated by scholars linked to critical currents within Political Geography (Dalby, 1990; Kuus, 2010; Ó Tuathail, 1996a) and elaborates how Critical Geopolitics revolutionised the discipline's self-awareness with the argument that 'geopolitics is a particular mode of representing global space' (Ó Tuathail, 1998b, p. 17), with meditations on power-knowledge constellations and the critique of modern scientific discourse. Thirdly, the chapter introduces the argument that all theories are subtended) by particular 'geographical imaginations' (Gregory, 1994) —which they in turn promote— and that becoming aware of such geographical imaginations is necessary for a critical social science project. This argument referring mostly to how geographical imaginaries

percolate social theory, the last part of the chapter addresses the ‘problem’ of the imagination in relation to the modern discourses and practices of world politics. It does so by revising the framework of analysis of the ‘modern geopolitical imagination’ (Agnew 1998/2003).

Chapter Three pursues also three main purposes. First, it deals with the poststructuralist critique of mainstream IR and its basic tenets: the centrality of the state, the domestic/foreign division or the assumption that the international world is essentially anarchic (George, 1994). It is underscored that critical approaches to international relations advance an anti-essentialist programme of theory and research that is capable of disclosing the implications derived from the argument that ‘the world is a text’ (Der Derian & Shapiro, 1989). This evinces that both Critical Geopolitics and critical IR raise similar concerns about the positivistic impulse within the mainstream of their disciplines. In tune with this, they also develop similar interests in the power-knowledge nexus and the textuality of discourse (Ashley, 1989; Der Derian & Shapiro, 1989; Shapiro, 1988; Walker, 1993).

Against this backdrop, the chapter then reflects upon the emergence of approaches that set out to study identity/difference in IR and introduces Neumann’s (1999) dialogical understanding of the ‘Self/Other nexus’. (This resonates with Premise 2: “‘We’ imagine “‘Them” *different* from “‘Us””). General critical visions about the subject of identity and IR are that international relations should be investigated as Self/Other relations and that identity/difference are mutually constitutive practices articulated in and through discourse, hence the timeliness of considering ‘Self’ and ‘Other’ as ‘storied identities’. Hansen’s (2006) approach to the study of identity is introduced next. Defined as ‘relational’ and ‘contingent’, and analytically observable in the temporalities, spatialities and ethicalities by which discourse constitutes ‘Self’ and ‘Other’, Hansen’s (2006) study of identity has become in recent years a key reference for those interested in the exploration of identity discourses in foreign policy. The constitution of ‘radical’ Others and ‘less-than-radical’ Others by foreign policy discourse has also been an important part of the wider project of investigating Self/Other relations in discourse formations (Campbell, 1992/1998; Dalby, 1990; Hansen, 2006). (This resonates with Premise 3: “‘We-here’ can imagine “‘Them-there” *more or less different* from “‘Us””).

The last part of the chapter is devoted to the critique of the clash of civilisations' discourse (Huntington, 1993) and the cultural narrative of 'West' vs. 'Islam' conflict nourished by it. Appearing in the post-Cold War, Huntington's clash of civilisations pursued to fill in the discursive space liberated by the end of Cold War ideological discourse, thus trying to offer a comprehensive structure of signification that would render world politics intelligible. Arguably, it succeeded in popularising the idea of unavoidable conflict between the 'West' and 'Islam', but not in becoming hegemonic. Drawing on Adib-Moghaddam (2011), the chapter presents the argument that the discourse of the clash of civilisations is 'a structural giant' (p. 7) which, grounded in 'epistemic realism' (Campbell, 1993), produces narratives that suppress alternative visions of West/Islam relations. In this way, it is the very discourse which self-nourishes the prophecy of an unavoidable clash between 'Us' and 'Them'.

Premise 4 ('People's imagination is not directly observable; it needs to be investigated via its *representations*') and Premise 5 (Representations of 'Us' and 'Them' are embedded in *discourse*) anticipate the necessity of setting up a methodological framework that will serve to explore the representations of Iran in Spain in the light of the theoretical premises that sustain the thesis.

Chapter Four advocates for a qualitative methodology (Hay, 2010) that eases the inspection of an empirical material that is read as a collection of 'geopolitical texts' (Falah et al., 2006). What I have in mind is a methodology that generally identifies with Discourse Analysis (Waite, 2010). Drawing on developments from various fields such as Critical Discourse Analysis (CDR) and narrative studies, as well as on former experiences of applied discourse analysis (in IR and Geopolitics), the chapter introduces key concepts that form part of the discourse analyst's basic toolkit: 'narrative' and 'subject positioning'; 'discourse', 'text' and 'intertextuality'; and 'genre'. The chapter also reflects upon the two techniques used to collect data for the investigation: in-depth interviewing (Corbetta, 2007, pp. 352-353) and document selection (Hansen, 2006; Neumann, 2008), as well as upon the method of interpretation (Shapiro, 1988, 1999) used to approach to the productivity of discourse.

1.5.2 Part II: Analysis

The empirical part of this dissertation begins immediately after Chapter Four and develops from Chapters Five to Seven. Each chapter investigates the representation of post-revolutionary Iran in one specific site of representation related to two levels of geopolitical discourse: popular and practical. The making of practical geopolitical discourse is investigated in diplomatic representations of Iran; whereas the production of popular geopolitical discourse is examined in travel writing and satirical media (humour).

The thesis understands that diplomacy, travel writing and humour are social practices that produce and promote particular readings of global space. Put differently, diplomatic, literary and humour discourse spatialise the world ‘out there’; but they, importantly, do so under particular epistemic-political premises that reveal specific engagements with power and the political. Each of the empirical chapters in this work situates the empirical analysis against the backdrop of precise developments in the study of diplomacy and difference (Cornago, 2013, 2016; Kuus, 2014; Neumann, 2012); travel writing and difference (Martin-Marquez, 2008; Pratt, 1992, Said, 1978/2003); and humour and difference (Diamond, 2010; Hansen, 2011; Purcell, Brown, & Gokmen, 2010; Ridanpää, 2009, 2012, 2014a, 2014b). In the light of the empirical analyses, Chapter Eight reflects upon how Critical Geopolitics helps to illuminate the case, especially what concerns the assumption that practical geopolitical discourse establishes the discursive framework within which ‘We’ imagine/represent Iran. In this vein, the analysis of diplomatic, literary and satirical media practices of representation (of Iran in Spain) offers the opportunity to look at how popular discourse positions itself with respect to practical discourse. The chapter offers conclusions concerning the domination of practical over popular discourse. It also ponders over the continuation of the modern way of representing the world, and concludes that post-Cold War geopolitical discourse advances moral readings of global space.

Note: The original language of the citations attributed to diplomats, travel writers and humourists in Chapters Five, Six and Seven was Spanish. The author of this dissertation has taken care of the translation into English.

2. Geography, worlds and imagination

People's imagination is full of geography. It is laden with images of the world that enshrine geographical arguments and geopolitical assumptions of many kinds. For this reason, it is not uncommon to find in our daily comments on what goes on in the world representations of places and people that convey ideas about 'North' and 'South', 'West' and 'East', 'development' and 'underdevelopment', or 'modernity' and 'tradition'. In various ways, therefore, geography and geopolitics are woven to humans' everyday experience of the world. In fact, this dissertation grows out of my general interest in the mental images of the world that nurture people's imagination providing them with interpretive frameworks that orient their experience of social life, especially as refers to the constitution of identities and the negotiation of difference. With this in mind, the main argument in this chapter is that both as discourse and practice, geography (and geopolitics) is directly involved in the construction of meaning and difference on a global scale. For a successful development of this argument, a few important steps are taken.

In Section 2.1, this chapter revises the birth of modern political geography, thus paving the way for understanding where the 'tradition of geopolitics' comes from. This review follows in the footsteps of proponents of Critical Geopolitics, whom in the final 1980s initiated a critical revision of geography's stable 'home truths' (Agnew, 2006). Section 2.2 deals with the proposal of critical geopolitics at length. After this, the chapter deals with the notion of 'imagination' and how geography has addressed the relationship between the human capacity of imagining the world and its actual production (Section 2.3).

2.1 The order of the world and the birth of a mythical discipline

Defining geopolitics is a daunting challenge. For Dalby and Ó Tuathail (1996), most of the problem arises from the fact that:

The sign 'geopolitics' is a convenient fiction, a suggestive name for varying fusions of geography and politics, yet also an inconvenient fiction, an overloaded sign weighed down by the many different significations it has attracted, a sign naming not an essence but a constellation of geopolitical problematics (p. 451).

'Geopolitics' is a polysemous term that hosts an intricate conceptual history where past and present, but also general and specialised meanings overlap. One of the reasons why defining geopolitics is complicated is that the sign 'geopolitics' serves both to designate a field of study and a field of practice. Another important reason is that there is no consensus about the bigger field of study to which geopolitics belongs: while some accounts emphasise geopolitics' liaison with the science of geography, hence locating it in the subfield of political geography (Agnew & Livingstone, 2011; Agnew, 1998/2003); other accounts come closer to the vision that geopolitics is an orientation within International Relations (Dalby, 1991; Mamadouh & Dijkink, 2006; Ó Tuathail, 1996b). For Taylor (2000), the problem for naming geopolitics' exact place within the social sciences lies here:

In fact we can view Geopolitics as the periphery of a periphery of a periphery: it has always had an uneasy relation with political geography which in turn has been located at the edge of human geography, which in turn has never established itself within the core of social science (p. 375).

Against this backdrop, for the remainder of this chapter, I will deal with geopolitics' semantic evolution. This evolution can be summarised as the shift from essentialising visions of geopolitics which place the focus on the link between 'geography' and 'world politics/foreign policy' and the critical visions which have it that geopolitics is a discourse on the world. The first kind of orientations can be sensed in descriptions such that '[P]olitical geographers typically invoke the term [geopolitics] with reference to the geographical assumptions and understandings that influence world politics' (Murphy et al., 2004, p. 619) or that 'geopolitics refers to a fixed and objective geography constraining and directing the activities of states' (Agnew & Corbridge, 1995, p. 3). The second kind of orientation is captured in the following passage and will be tackled at length in what follows:

Geopolitics can be described as the production of "international relations" as theater. Geopolitics is production in an early modern sense of the word. As Jean Baudrillard has noted, the original sense of "production" is not to materially manufacture but to render visible and make appear (*producere*). To produce is to set everything up in clear view so it can be read, can become real and visible. Production is associated with completeness and totality. Theater, likewise, is associated with access to the order of the whole (Ó Tuathail, 1996a, p. 29).

2.1.1 The tradition of geopolitics: paternity, vision and empire.

Let us for now think about geopolitics as a subfield of political geography, different in turn from natural geography. The debates as to when geography came into view as a recognisable field of study vary from those accounts which hark back to Ancient Greece and the classic writings of Herodotus and Thales, and those which locate the emergence of the already ‘modern’ discipline of geography around 1750-1850, when *Staatsgeographen* (state geographers) like Ritter and Humboldt set out ‘to find scientific ways to divide the earth’s surface and then to describe it’ (Mayhew, 2011, p. 23). Classical or modern, geography is essentially bound to the very human interest in expanding the limits of knowledge about the world (Lowenthal, 1961; Wright, 1947) — this anthropological curiosity subtends, ultimately, the formation of geography as a structured body of thought:

The interest in landscape existed ‘long before the name [geography] was coined, was represented in Ancient Greece by numerous inquiries under various labels such as ‘periplus’ and ‘periegesis’, but was then crystallized under the name ‘geography’ ‘more than two thousand years [ago]’. If interest in landscape is a naïve and foundational curiosity we all share, geography has ‘priority of claim... to this field’, by virtue of being the first systemic enquiry that codified that curiosity (Mayhew, 2011, pp. 21-22).

The etymology of the term —‘*geos*’ and ‘*graphos*’— appeals literally to the act of describing or writing the earth (Withers, 2011, p. 39), meaning that geographers have mostly dealt with observing, ordering, coding and representing what belongs to the earth and all the things in it. This being a narrow interpretation of what geographers do, over time, historians of geography and geographers themselves have come to realise that ‘the *art* in doing geography [...] has always also been the *act* of doing geography’ (Withers, 2011, p. 40). For Ó Tuathail (2000), it becomes apparent that geography performs an important ‘declarative’ function by saying ‘this is how the world is’ but also an ‘imperative’ function as it states also that ‘this is what we must do’ (p. 166). Thus, as of today, the idea that geography not only describes, but also prescribes the world has been widely accepted.

Bound to the scientific evolution of (political) geography as something like a ‘state geography’ (Farinelli, 2000), the intellectual history of geopolitics has been attended to by foremost figures in this field of knowledge (Dodds & Atkinson, 2000; Dodds, 2007a; Flint, 2006; Ó Tuathail, 1996a; Ó Tuathail & Dalby, 1998; Ó Tuathail et al., 1998) who coincide in that geopolitics ‘[D]eveloped as an academic justification for

imperialism' (Kearns, 2011, p. 611). Geography entered European (and American) universities because the great European powers at the end of the 19th century (Britain, Germany and the United States) needed to provide their imperialist agendas with a patina of academic scientificism, hence the entwinement of 'geography *qua* geopolitics' (Ó Tuathail, 1996a) with the strategic and military concerns of the powers that competed for control of the globe. This is how Germany, Britain and the United States rose to prominence as centres of intellectual reflection on the relationship between geography and statecraft. In this long-term process, the role of 'organic intellectuals' (Ó Tuathail, 1996a, p. 21) proved essential.

The impact of Friedrich Ratzel (1844-1904) thinking on the development of German *Politische Geographie* (also the title of his first book) has long been widely accepted. One of Ratzel's major accomplishments was the formulation of an organic theory of the state based on the identification of seven spatial laws. Described by analogy with living organisms, Ratzel (1896/1970) is known for having defined states' boundaries as their 'peripheral organ, the bearer of its growth as well as its fortification' (p. 23). Under a strong influence from biology, Ratzel's theory tried to establish relations between the environment, the state and culture. Racist insights and environmental determinism too moulded his geographical insights at a historical context when Social Darwinism was broadly accepted in intellectual circles. Ratzel saw a direct and positive connection between sedentarism, the development of culture and strong statecraft. From this observation followed that nomadic peoples were essentially and culturally inferior to sedentary peoples —therefore potentially dispensable. It was also argued that a nation's culture needed nurture and this could only be gotten from the exploitation of cultivable lands, which justified territorial expansion and the establishment of a reasonable *Lebensraum* (living space) that would ensure the survival of the state:

The growth of the state over the surface of the earth can be compared to the downward growth which leads to the attachment to the soil. It is more than a metaphor, when one speaks of people as taking root. The nation is an organic entity which, in the course of history, becomes increasingly attached to the land on which it exists. Just as an individual struggles with virgin land until he has forced it into cultivable fields, so too does a nation struggle with its land making it, through blood and sweat, increasingly its own until it is impossible to think of the two separately (Ratzel, 1896/1970, p. 22).

The allure of Ratzel's theory lay in that it provided power politics with the intellectual architecture that, under the guise of science, justified the employment of force by states with ambitions to dominate others. Universal laws such as Ratzel's provided an irresistible pole of attraction for states practising territorial expansionism and the annexation of neighbouring territories under the premise that the state's survival was at stake. On how the science of geography came to perform a profitable service to the states which acted on this rationale, Gottman (1942) has suggestively noted that:

To conquer was no longer enough; there had to be discussion, and the scientists were called in to aid in solving the complex problems offered by a map from which all the unoccupied areas had disappeared. Geography came to be recognized as a formal science and was prepared to bring to the study of political problems all the material it had accumulated from the observation of nature and man (p. 201).

A direct disciple of Ratzel, the Swedish political scientist and nationalist politician, Rudolf Kjellén (1864-1922), is known first and foremost for actually coining the term 'geopolitics' in an 1899 article discussing Sweden's borders (Ó Tuathail, 1996a, p. 44). Kjellén's contribution to fastening up the relation between geographical knowledge and how states manage space is also remarkable. He proposed to study states' political geography by attending to five different features: their territory (*Geopolitik*) their population (*Demopolitik*), their economic structure (*Ökopolitik*), their social politics (*Soziopolitik*) and their government and constitutions (*Kratopolitik*). In retrospect, it is easy to see that, amongst these features, the state's *Geopolitik* was the one which aroused the most interest amongst scholars of geography. Substantially different from what critical currents in geopolitics have proposed in recent decades, Kjellén envisioned the study of geopolitics in relation to the state's *topopolitik* (the location of the state in relation to other states), its *morphopolitik* (the form of the territory of the state) and its *physiopolitik* (the surface and physical characteristics of the territory) (Mamadouh, 1998, p. 237).

Kjellén's general stance on international conflict rested on the belief that environmental factors and natural laws were more important than international law (Dodds, 2007a, p. 25). This explains why, in the context of mounting tension leading to the First World War, Kjellén took sides with the Germans against the Allies which pursued to build up an international order aimed to function according to international law. As has been noted, '[L]ike Ratzel, he believed that the future lay with large

autarkic continental imperialist states whose territory was compact and contiguous, with railways facilitating communications and the accumulation of power' (Ó Tuathail, 1996a, pp. 44-45). The global turn of events would reveal that the world was set out to be organised otherwise.

In Britain, the enlargement of academic geography benefitted immensely from the ideas of Sir Halford Mackinder (1861-1947), the British scholar and politician, who was also Reader of Geography at the University of Oxford, Principal of what later became the University of Reading and founder of the London School of Economics and the Geographical Association. In all these institutions, Mackinder worked for the promotion of geographical knowledge and learning. As a politician, he served as a conservative Unionist Member of Parliament between 1910 and 1922, but at the turn of the century and due to deep changes in the international political economy he withdrew his support for liberal imperialism and embraced economic protectionism. Mackinder advocated the modernisation and reform of the British Empire which then ought to function as a single economic unit ready to face up the geo-economic challenge posed by Germany and the U.S. (Taylor & Flint, 2002, p. 57; see also Agnew & Corbridge, 1995, pp. 56-65).

Mackinder's interpretation of Britain's historical moment was informed by his particular geographic-political reading of the world, summarised in his famous thesis: 'The Geographical Pivot of History' (Mackinder, 2010). Presented as a model in a lecture delivered at the Royal Geographical Society in London (25 January 1904), the Geographical Pivot of History has been considered 'the most influential geopolitical model in the 20th century' (Cairo Carou, 2010, p. 323). The model went through revisions in 1919 and 1943, with the last one not achieving as great an impact as the first two.

Defined as discourses on the world based on specific time-space interpretations about the global distribution of power, geopolitical models are *situated* products of their time. Deploying a British-centric viewpoint on history, with the Geographical Pivot of History, Mackinder undertook to explain the extant rivalry between great world powers and, in so doing, laid bare his anxieties about Britain's prospect at the start of the 20th century. Of great descriptive value, the Pivot of History was also a discourse on how the

world should look like and how geo-power should operate for the benefit of Britain, thus then the centre of the world.

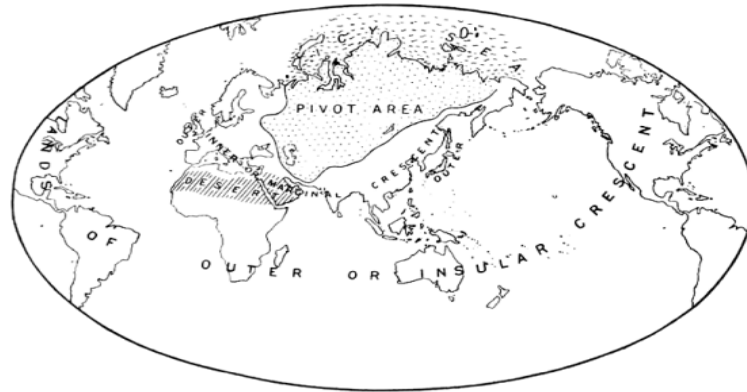
One of the most salient features in the Pivot of History was that it presented geopolitical rivalry as a contest between two powers: the 'sea' and the 'land' power. In the original formulation of the model, Britain was the sea power and Germany was the land power. The model owes its name to a region, the 'pivot area'—the planet's most sensitive area—, which Mackinder situated roughly in Central Asia. The significance of the 'pivot area' was major because, over history, the struggles for power taking place over there or around there had determined the evolution of the whole Eurasian continent.

Mackinder defined his time as a post-Columbian era when sea powers were losing strategic advantages in the face of the increasing domination from terrestrial powers. In the previous era (the Columbian age), maritime powers had been prevalent over a period of four hundred years, when the Spanish, the Portuguese, and later the French and the British carried out the exploration of the earth and rendered it cognisable to men. With the end of exploration came 'the end of geography' (Ó Tuathail, 1996a, p. 28), but the real source of concern for Mackinder was that the far-reaching transformations in the technologies of land mobility—with the expansion of railway networks throughout the Eurasian landmass— rendered the advanced British navy negligible. Mackinder feared that 'land powers [...] locked in the interior of huge continents' could 'no longer be approached and controlled by naval powers while they can, by obtaining access to the sea, attack the maritime powers and strike at their heart' (Gottman, 1942, p. 203). The British geographer feared, in sum, that the formation of an unrivalled land power through the alliance between the Germans and the Russians would relegate the UK to the dustbin of history.

The effectiveness of the sea/land power dual spatial structure which underpinned Mackinder's rationalisation of history lay in that, for the first time in the history of geographical thought, a geopolitical model managed to offer an integrated view of the globe and present a system of 'closed space' (Ó Tuathail, 1996a), where geographical limits had lost their haunting character. In this way, the Pivot of History propounded a feeling of closure which provided 'psychological security at a time of global change and

insecurity’, helping to calm the anxieties of statesmen and populations disoriented by the intensity of global political transformations (Taylor & Flint, 2002, p. 60).

Figure 2.1 *The Pivot of History model (Mackinder, 1904).*



As Mackinder’s model map shows (Figure 2.1), historically, for a naval power like Britain the natural area of influence had been *the lands of the outer or insular crescent*. Over there, Britain had set up an Empire that was to be preserved from the influence of land powers. Surrounding the ‘pivot area’, the *inner or marginal crescent* was appointed the region where the struggle for hegemony between land and naval powers would be staged. This seemed reasonable because all through the 19th century the ‘Great Game’ between Britain and Russia had been played in this scenario. With Germany arising as a direct threat to Britain’s hegemony, Mackinder’s point was that the ‘pivot area’ and the strategic *marginal crescent* ought to be preserved at all costs from the lever of land power.

The political spasm caused by the First World War fostered the first revision of ‘The Pivot of History’. In the year of the Peace Conference leading to the Treaty of Versailles (1919), Mackinder presented his *Democratic Ideals and Reality: A Study in the Politics of Reconstruction* —a work in which he drew forth a renewed version of his model. In this new version, the ‘pivot area’ was renamed as the ‘heartland’ and was now said to encompass a bigger portion of land. The reason for this enlargement was the belief that maritime powers had then achieved greater capacities of inward land penetration. The gist of the ‘heartland thesis’ was condensed in Mackinder’s célèbre dictum:

Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland;
Who rules the Heartland commands the world-island;
Who rules the World-Island controls the world.

In a context when European powers were deciding on the distribution of power and of colonies in Africa, it is not a coincidence that the 'World-Island' appealed to by Mackinder comprised the territory of Eurasia and Africa —two thirds of world territory which were, again, to be preserved from German influence (Kearns, 2003). The 1943 version of the model showed the same determinacy in putting Germany away from world domination, with the difference that the geopolitical alliances in the 1940s (between Russia, Great Britain and North America) differed greatly from those at the start of the 20th century (Taylor & Flint, 2002, p. 59). As of today, the logics embedded in 'The Geographical Pivot of History' or 'heartland thesis' continues to arouse inspiration amongst analysts of international politics and the imprint of Mackinder's philosophy on 20th-century geopolitical is unmistakable.

In the United States, Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan (1840-1914), whose work *The influence of Sea Power Upon History 1660-1783* gained international prominence, mulled over how to improve the strategic positioning of the U.S. in the world. The book explored the history of the naval rivalry between Great Britain and France throughout the 17th and 18th centuries. An avowed admirer of British imperial history, he tried to derive lessons from the British geo-historical experience that could be put in place to enhance the U.S.'s global strategic positioning. Mahan considered the U.S. a new great naval power surrounded by two of the vastest world oceans, and thus a great power which, in order to defend its territory efficiently and eventually dominate the globe, needed to improve its capacity to master the seas. Due to its historical inaccuracies and causal fallacies Mahan's work was severely criticised (Ó Tuathail, 1996a), but is still representative of the influence of organic intellectuals in the conduct of international politics since the end of the 19th century.

2.1.2 Interwar geopolitics: practice and proscription.

Back in Europe, the evolution of geopolitics was marked by the balance of power following the end of World War One. The German defeat and the reparations imposed by the Treaty of Versailles (1919) entailed important domestic and international consequences. Geopolitical and strategic reasonings did not come to a halt after the Great War. Indeed, they stretched with particular vigour through the end of the Second World War.

Developments in German *Geopolitik* in the period 1924-1941 could not be fully understood without taking into account the figure of Karl Haushofer (1869-1946). A Reader in Geography at the University of Munich (1921-1939), Haushofer founded the *Zeitschrift für Geopolitik* (1924): the journal on geopolitics with which he wanted to spread geopolitical research and analysis. In the popular imagination, he has remained too as the founder of the *Institut für Geopolitik* in Munich, but the fact of the matter is that the existence of such an institute has been dismissed altogether (Taylor & Flint, 2002, p. 60). Haushofer was the leading voice amongst intellectuals in Germany who frontally opposed the Treaty of Versailles and who consequently searched for a better accommodation of German interests in the world. Such accommodation included the retrieval of the German colonies lost by virtue of the Treaty and the gradual adoption of a geopolitical model based on a tripartite spatial structure of ‘panregions’. Meant to work as self-sufficient political and economic blocks, each panregion would pivot around a core territory —respectively: Germany, Japan and the U.S. And so, it has been argued that by providing a structure for the eventual implementation of autarky on a regional level (Taylor & Flint, 2002, pp. 61-62), Haushofer’s model of panregions lent legitimacy to the ratzelian concept of *Lebensraum*; thus presenting itself as an accomplished revision of Ratzel’s scientific materialism (Cairo Carou, 2012, pp. 340-341).

This said, the figure of this German scholar has been surrounded by controversy. Seen as the ultimate precursor of the kind of geopolitics practiced by the Nazi regime, the idea that Haushofer was ideologue of the Third Reich has for long been circulating in academic circles. In recent years, however, this accusation has been increasingly called into question with many (Dodds & Atkinson, 2000; Ó Tuathail, 1996a; Taylor & Flint, 2002) noticing that Haushofer’s alleged flirtations with Nazism have been a

product of distorted historiographical accounts. One needs, in all events, to understand why such distortion takes place.

In truth, the problem lay not with Haushofer's theory (Haushofer, 2012) but with how the Nazi regime retrieved ideas from a classical geopolitical model —firmly anchored in an organic understanding of the state and its necessity of living space— and put them to the service of its policy of territorial expansionism. What takes place, therefore, is the design of state foreign policy (in this case, the Third Reich's) according to the 'scientific' principles which underlie geopolitical models such as Haushofer's. The point which tends to be missed is that there is no causal relationship between academic reasoning and practical politics and that the Haushofer controversy represents an example of how political elites seize on the discourse of science to justify a certain power politics (Bowman, 1942; Gottman, 1942). Because of this, the whole tradition of geopolitics fell into disrepute; and geopolitics was proscribed in intellectual circles and from public discourse in Europe and America. With the end of the Second World War, a period began when 'geopolitics' would vanish from public discourse, albeit in truth 'geopolitical interpretation and analysis continued, but sailed under such other colours as strategic studies or even political geography' (Hepple, 1986, p. S23).

In spite of the ravages of World War Two, the principle that '[L]a politique de toutes les puissances est dans leur géographié' (Napoleon I to the King of Prussia, November 10, 1804, quoted in Spykman, 1938, p. 28) prevailed in strategy circles. And with the help of a number of 'translators', 'decoders' or 'deciphers' of European history (Crampton & Ó Tuathail, 1996, p. 552; Unwin, 2011) such as Nicholas J. Spykman (a Dutch émigré to America) and Robert Strausz-Hupé (b. Vienna, 1903), geopolitics 'migrated from Germany to America' (Bowman, 1942, p. 652).

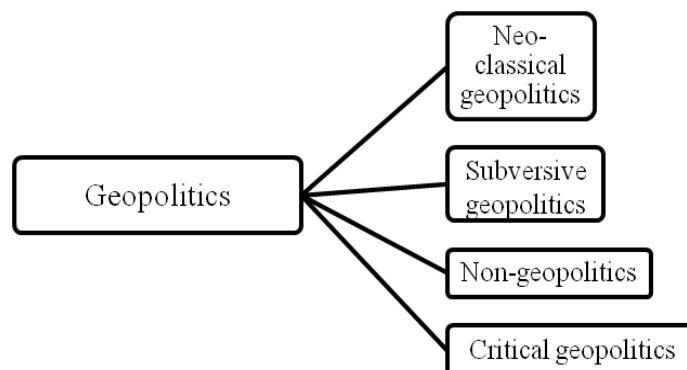
The work of Nicholas J. Spykman (1893-1943) was particularly influential. An instructor in political science and sociology at the University of California and later at Yale, Spykman (1942) held on to the belief that the facts of geography determined the foreign policy of states, hence his famous observation that '[G]eography is the most fundamental factor in the foreign policy of the states because it is the most permanent. Ministers come and go, even dictators die, but mountain ranges stand unperturbed' (p. 41). Spykman set forth a revision of Mackinder's heartland thesis, reworked as the 'heartland-rimland' model (Spykman, 1970). Spykman's review of the British model

was impelled by the important transformations in the world’s geopolitical reordering brought about by the Second World War —the most important being Europe’s geopolitical demise. And the heightened competition between the two victors of the Second World War —the U.S. and Russia— came to be interpreted as the emergence of the new sea and land powers. Spykman’s model still contemplated the existence of a heartland but it was now argued that the outer crescent or ‘rimland’ was the most sensitive world region: the eventual scenario of clashes between the terrestrial and maritime power. Spykman’s revision of Mackinder’s model worked as a compelling attempt to apply classical geopolitical tenets to the analysis of international politics in the 1930s and 1940s, albeit under the premise that a ‘democratic geopolitics’ (Mamadouh, 1999, p. 238) was then possible.

2.1.3 The 1970s and the return of geopolitics.

Despite the tainted history of German *Geopolitik*, it has been compellingly argued that geopolitical reasonings did not vanish entirely from public discourse in the aftermath of the Second World War (Hepple, 1986; see also Newman, 1998). But in the early 1970s, an explicitly geopolitical jargon had been readopted and the intellectual production in this field officially relaunched. In a review article on the matter, Mamadouh (1998) registered that geopolitics ‘revival’ took place simultaneously in Europe and in America, in practice and in the academia, with distinct lines of analysis coming into view (Figure 2.2).

Figure 2.2 *The pluralisation of geopolitics.*



Source: Author elaboration based on Mamadouh (1998).

In the U.S., the influence of thinkers such as Spykman or Strausz-Hupé indicated that discussions on foreign policy were largely framed as a matter of geopolitical and geostrategic concern, but as the Cold War geopolitical order unfolded, narrow understandings of geopolitics entered into a critical path. Technological advances, especially in the field of aviation and the military industry, and the prevalence of a grammar of ideological confrontation, challenged the classical belief that geography was the most important factor of power politics because it was the more stable (Mamadouh, 1998, p. 238) —thus suggesting that in order to understand the diverse allocation of power on a global scale, one needed to take into account many more factors than just ‘the facts of geography’.

With the beginning of decolonisation processes in Asia and Africa throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the two leading powers of the Cold War initiated a race for expanding their influence in the Third World. This backdrop determined the emergence of proponents of ‘neo-classical geopolitics’ in Europe and the U.S. seeking to give account of the new reality with which world powers needed to deal with. In the U.S., where the war against the spread of communism was high on the foreign policy agenda, Henry Kissinger —American Security Adviser and Secretary of State (1973-1977)—restored the use of the term ‘geopolitics’ in open public debate. The focus of neo-classical geopolitics lay in geostrategy and state performance (although by now the organic definition of the state had been abandoned). Thus, drawing on the sharp distinction between domestic and foreign policy, influential men such as Henry Kissinger and Zbigniew Brzezinski embraced a mode of reasoning premised on the indivisibility of geopolitics and foreign politics, of the national interest and national security (Mamadouh, 1998, p. 238).

At about the same time in France, concerns regarding the menace of nuclear geopolitics hastened the foundation of the *Institut International de Géopolitique* in 1982 (Mamadouh, 1998, p. 239). The case of France is interesting because the formation of a strong neo-classical geopolitics movement under the auspices of the *Institut* ran parallel to the emergence in the late 1970s of an alternative geopolitical school defined as ‘subversive’ or ‘radical’ (Mamadouh, 1998). Radical geographers envisioned geography as a theoretical and practical instrument essentially bound to political action.

In a France that was coming to terms with the new reality of anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggles, Yves Lacoste endorsed a radical geography which problematised the idea of ‘the’ national interest and helped to raise awareness on the connection between geography and political praxis. His famous 1976 essay, *La géographie ça sert d’abord à faire la guerre* concealed, in a nutshell, the gist of his perspective. Founded in 1976, the journal *Hérodote*, was and continues to be the flagship of this intellectual movement which opted for the study of *les géopoliques* in lieu of one single geopolitics (Mamadouh, 1998, pp. 239-241)². The subtitle —*Revue de géographie et géopolitique*— was added in 1982, after the public veto on the term ‘geopolitics’ had been lifted. And while in France the term reappeared in a 1979 article of *Le Monde* used ‘almost as an insult’ (Lacoste, 2011, p. 340), theretofore, geopolitics resurfaced as a public issue that could be debated without censure.

In Britain and in the 1980s, Peter J. Taylor and John O’Loughling among others pursued the advancement of a ‘non-geopolitics’ —a sort of neutral geopolitics that could work through the intersections between space and power without falling prey to state politics, because thus far ‘political geographers have not been at the forefront of querying the *status quo*, rather they have provided spatial recipes for the powerful’ (Taylor, 2003, p. 47). Owing to this, it was necessary to retrieve geopolitics from defenders of the national interest and military strategists and give it back to political geographers. The distinction between ‘formal’ and ‘practical’ geopolitics can be located in this intellectual context, when it became urgent to set scholarly meditations on the world apart from the geographical reasonings of state practitioners. The first issue of *Political Geography Quarterly* (later simply *Political Geography*) came out in 1982. The journal has served, over time, as a loudspeaker for a renewed political geography that includes reflections on geopolitics (here understood rather as a political geography of international relations) (Mamadouh, 1998, pp. 241-243).

² One of Lacoste’s most seminal texts ‘Enquête sur le bombardement des digues du fleuve Rouge (Vietnam, été, 1972)’ came out in *Hérodote*’s first issue. It has been argued that Lacoste’s study of the consequences of ecological war on the survival of the human species, ‘Enquête sur le bombardement...’ (1976) was a major contribution to peace studies and can be considered a direct antecedent of the school of critical geopolitics (Cairo Carou, 2011, p. 343).

2.1.4 Critique and representation since the 1990s.

As the 1980s (and the Cold War order) drew to a close, a new school of geopolitical thought was just emerging in the U.S. academia. Critical Geopolitics' originated out of the general need to revise the ways and means by which geopolitical knowledge had gained such status, and the necessity to deconstruct geopolitical discourses of current and past epochs. The phrase 'critical geopolitics' was first used by Gearóid Ó Tuathail (1989) in his PhD thesis: *Critical Geopolitics: the social construction of state and place in the practice of statecraft* (Syracuse University, New York), and although the origins of this new niche of knowledge were firmly located in the American academia (Ó Tuathail, 1996a, 1996b; Dalby, 1988, 1990, 1991, 1996; Agnew, 1994, 2003), it is no less true that conventional geopolitics was put under revision in other places too. In the British academia, around the same years, a fruitful debate about the necessity to carry out a 'critical history' of geopolitics 'sensitive to the various ways in which geographical knowledge has been implicated in the relationships of power' (Driver, 1992, p. 23) gained prominence, and with it, the necessity to disentangle the 'paternity-vision-empire' nexus enshrined in traditional geopolitics (Driver, 1992; Livingstone, 1990, 1995; Rose, 1995).

Starting off from the recognition that international politics in the 'age of empire' (1870-1914) unfurled in 'a world of contracting space and expanding ambitions' (Driver, 1992, p. 26) and that the connection between the 'science of geography' and imperial politics was strong, authors such as Felix Driver called for an examination of the prevailing instrumentalist view on geopolitics. The rationale behind this plea was that were we to construe imperial geopolitics in purely instrumental terms—as if geography offered solely a spatial basis to empire and capitalism—, we would not be able to grasp that geographical ideas and arguments underlie the scripting of the world and, thereby, help to establish a narrative about all things in it—the world's 'peoples, places and dramas' (Ó Tuathail, 1996a, p. 59).

In this vein, the primary goal of critical geographers was to recognise the prevalence of the 'tradition of geopolitics'—compounded by the models of the founding fathers of modern Political Geography (Ratzel, Kjellén, Mackinder, Haushofer)—, and then to inspect how this geopolitical tradition shapes the thinking of scholars all through the 20th century. But in the final 1980s and early 1990s the

‘postmodern pluralization imperative’ (Livingstone, 1995) enabled the possibility of speaking of alternative geographical traditions (post-colonial, feminist...) in opposition to the *one* geographical tradition that by then owned a sole ‘narrative history’ (Livingstone, 1995, p. 420). Critical human geography (Gregory, 1994) initiated, by these means, a fruitful path of self-reflection which tackled in the first place the sustainability of geopolitics’ official narrative and, in more particular terms, the scientific discourse of the founding fathers. Writing from a feminist standpoint, Gillian Rose (1995) pondered over the paternity question in pretty ‘familiar’ terms:

On the one hand, this paternal tradition can be used as a kind of legitimation process, in which would-be great men cite men already-established-as-great in order to assert their own maturity: what might be described as the ‘dutiful son’ model of academic masculinity. On the other hand, though, there are also the rebellious sons who prefer to construct a paternal line only to revolt against it (pp. 414-415).

Two decades into this critical path, it would be hard to deny that critical geopolitics has made a significant accomplishment: giving coherence to the debate on geography’s tradition through the identification of the epistemological and ontological troubles that subtend(ed) geography’s scientific queries. In this endeavour, critical theory has proven pivotal providing an intellectual architecture, from which also dissident currents in neighbouring disciplines —especially critical International Relations— have benefitted. Journals such as *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* (with special issues in 1994 and 1996), *Political Geography* (with special issues in 2000 and 2010) and *Geopolitics* —the journal of critical geopolitics *par excellence*— have been particularly helpful in disseminating the developments in critical geopolitics.

2.2 Critical Geopolitics: Exploring the limits of geographical knowledge, geopolitical discourse and representation

What follows is a revision of how critical geopolitics has operated, how it has managed to unearth traditional geopolitics’ modes of knowing and scripting the world and how, at last, it has managed to enact fundamental displacements in the discipline’s hard-core.

2.2.1 Geopolitics: What kind of science?

Epistemology is the doctrine of the bases and methods of scientific knowledge, the region of philosophy concerned with the ways in which knowledge is constructed and how such constructions structure our access to the world. Ontology, in turn, looks at

what is in the world: its essence. Insofar as human understanding of the world entails the definition of what the world *is* essentially, it is difficult to think of geography's ontological and epistemological assumptions separately. A non-exclusive feature of geography, any effort to explain or inspect 'reality' rests on specific ontological-epistemological foundations which determine the outcome of scientific inquiries.

As in any field of knowledge, within geography, epistemological foundations function as straitjackets which orient, funnel and restrain the possible accounts of the world. And while we might be tempted to think that in traditional approaches to geopolitics these sort of constraints are stronger than in non-traditional approaches, one should not fail to realise that also critical approaches to geography and geopolitics are 'situated in academe, in the political values of its practitioners, and in their linguistic and cultural world' (Hepple quoted in Dalby et al., 2001, p. 429). This being so, it is no less true that critical geography/geopolitics is distinct for how it struggles to raise awareness on the identification of geography as 'situated knowledge' deploying a 'standpoint epistemology' (Haraway, 1988). This means that anytime and anywhere geographical knowledges are instantiations of embodied discourse and practice produced within particular frameworks of power relations. As aptly put by Kuus (2010):

Approaching geographical knowledge as a technology of power —both the result and a constitutive element of power relations— it pushed geography out of the illusion of political neutrality and fueled a critical examination of the discipline itself. Whereas traditional geopolitics treats geography as a nondiscursive terrain that preexists geopolitical claims, critical geopolitics approaches geographical knowledge as an essential part of the modern discourses of power (p. 685).

With Foucault, but also with Derrida or Butler, critical geopoliticians have been prominent in their examination of geography's genealogy, and thus, in disentangling the specific political, intellectual and cultural moment in which the institutionalisation of geopolitics was secured (Crampton & Elden, 2007). For this reason, geography's early liaison with empire is widely accepted.

And so, critics argue that beyond the classical understanding of geopolitics as the science that deals with the distribution of power on a global scale (*geopower*) and the interaction between states on the international level, geopolitics is a discourse about the world (Ó Tuathail & Agnew, 1992; Ó Tuathail, 1996a) that rests upon several overlapping taxonomies —of territories, races, genders, etc. The production of

difference on a global scale is directly connected to these taxonomies. Geography thus is not an aseptic scientific endeavour that deals with world space by inspecting the geometry of its surface, but through providing a spatial anchor to the production of meaning about the world and, therefore, the production of social, political and cultural difference. And since geopolitics is an intervention in the world that generates its own ordered accounts, we can safely accept that geopolitical knowledge:

reflects and maintains power relations, that is partial, contextual, situated in particular times, places, and circumstances. Representations of these partial truths are produced by authors who are ‘raced’, gendered and classed beings with a particular way of seeing the world (McDowell, 2002, p. 282).

Insofar as geopolitical discourse conjures up spatial notions such as ‘East’ and ‘West’, ‘North’ and ‘South’, it offers a ‘taxonomy of territories’ through which the world is catalogued. Spatial and ideological notions overlap in the territorialities of metropolises and colonies, *terrae cognitae* and *terrae incognitae*, civilised and barbaric lands, the First, Second and Third Worlds (Lewis & Wigen, 1997). These *binary* (or triple) *geographies* denote territories but connote ontologies —for they reflect the value system and the power relations that fuel essential asymmetries between territories, and hence the ordering of places along a scale of ‘good’ and ‘bad’.

Geopolitical discourses too intervene in the production of social difference by offering a ‘taxonomy of races’. Racial categorisation has conventionally operated on the assumption of white race superiority over the non-white races (Césaire, 1955/1972; Fanon, 1952/1986, 1961/2005) and has served to legitimise colonial and imperialist projects in the past, as well as different forms of neoimperialism at present. Mackinder’s geopolitical and historical analyses, for instance, were underlain by the assumption of Anglo-Saxon superiority over an essentially inferior Slavic race; in the same manner that Las Casas and Cortés’ discussion on the nature of the Indians was imbued in assumptions about the natural difference between the racially superior Europeans and the inferior colonial subjects (Todorov, 1984).

Lastly, traditional geographical knowledge rests upon a ‘taxonomy of gender’ that has established the male superiority over females in at least two particular ways. First, by conferring prominence on the male gaze (the male geographer/the male explorer) over the world: traditionally, it has been the male subjects (‘the figures of empire’ Driver, 1992) who have offered their vision of the world and established a

narrative about it. Secondly, by accepting that History is the history of male performance (of invaders, discoverers, soldiers, statesmen, travellers...) and that female figures shall remain invisible, silenced, excluded from the active side of History — relegated to secondary positions in the roles of the ruled, the subjugated, the disempowered and the ornament. This explains why, in Ó Tuathail's (1996a) view, '[I]n the nineteenth century, geography was a regime of truth spoken by privileged white European men who conceived of themselves as heroic explorers of a feminized nature' (p. 82).

The tradition just described defines a geography that lends itself to the dictum of positivist epistemology: universalism, objectivity, neutrality and, ultimately, truth. This geography denies the embodiment of knowledge; it naturalises difference; and it tries to render invisible the effects of political agendas over world-writing. It is a geography that intends to perpetuate the fiction that 'eyes [...] see but are not seen' (quoted in Dodds & Sidaway, 1994, p. 519). This geography, in sum, consecrates the status of observation and vision as paradigmatic senses of Modernity.

The connection between observation and positivism becomes visible when we understand that a positivist epistemology relies on the premise that knowledge is what can be accessed through sensorial experience (above all, the eye), without the mediation of abstract structures (theory), as posited in the philosophical tradition initiated by Comte. When we deal with geography, however, the premise of knowledge without theory remains contentious, because after all, geographical reasoning depends on conceptual abstractions and grand generalisations on matters that are not easily observable, such as the very idea of 'the world'. But it is nonetheless true that the scientific development of geography has been fundamentally tied up to modes of inquiry such as observation, visualisation, exhibition (Mitchell, 1989) and ultimately surveillance, and that geography's dependence on vision-based practices of representation such as image and cartography (Cairo Carou, 2006; Crampton, 2001; Culcasi, 2006; Downs, 1981; Krishna, 1994) is strong. Seen as practices related to the capacity/authority to represent what the eye has seen (Gregory et al., 2009, pp. 557-559), scholars have long underscored the non-neutral perspectives enshrined in cartographic representations of the world; because maps —any sort of visual

representations of ‘reality’, for that matter— ‘have their foci, their zooms, their highlights, their blinkers and their blindnesses’ (Rose, 2003, p. 213).

Stating that geography is genealogically linked to vision entails the recognition of its pervasive ocular-centrism (Ó Tuathail, 1996a); or, put differently, the acknowledgement that conventional geographical analysis reproduce an acute ‘Cartesian perspectivalism’ (Jay, 1992): a perspective on the world in which the geographer situates himself outside the globe, as if *he* could envision the earth’s surface from an extra-terrestrial location, as if *he* could address the world from a depoliticised standpoint—an aseptic place untouched by systems of belief, race, gender and power relations (Ó Tuathail, 1996a).

But when critical geopolitics replaces the essentialist definition of geopolitics by a discursive one, the positivist basis of traditional geopolitics is called into question in three important respects. First, the geographer’s vantage point is relocated from outside to inside the world, thus pinpointing that geographers produce embodied geographical knowledge by setting forth subjective visions and discourses about the world. Dodds and Sidaway (1994) suggestively describe this postmodern geography’s achievement in terms of a ‘collapse’ affecting ‘the distance between the narrator (graphing) and the narrated (geo)’ (p. 519). Secondly, critical observers are ready to highlight geography’s potency for the representation and not the simple description of the world. Thirdly, unlike conventional analyses, critical investigations are also determined to accentuate *the political* in geopolitical discourses and practices produced by the state and other less conventional sites of representation (Natter, 2000, p. 357).

Many of the epistemological transformations addressed thus far are closely connected with the understanding of the Cold War as an ‘event’ whose narrative construction has been thoroughly investigated (Campbell, 1992/1998, 1993; Dalby, 1988, 1990; Ó Tuathail, 1996a). Where positivist epistemology pointed to objectivity, post-positivist epistemologies focus on subjectivity; where spurious causalities were seen as evidence for solid explanations of international events, critical thinkers have underscored the potency of interpretation; the quest for order has been replaced by the admittance of complexity, the general by the particular and the rational by the emotional (Gregory et al. 2009, pp. 206-208). In sum, post-positivist approaches in geography do not lose sight of the strained relation between power and knowledge, and try to practice

an anti-essentialist outlook towards all things in the world. In consequence, geographical knowledge can only be seen as discourse-in-the-making; accounts enmeshed in complex webs of political, social, cultural, racial, and religious and gender relations.

2.2.2 Knowing and producing the world.

Accepting that geopolitics is an ensemble of discourses that can be located in the domains of practical, formal or popular geopolitics (Ó Tuathail & Dalby, 1998, pp. 1-15) ushers in the recognition that, in the same way that geopolitics is not a unitary single-voiced discourse about the world, variegated social subjects participate in the production of geopolitical discourses. This amounts to saying that for critical geopolitical analysis the state's geopolitical discourses and practices, despite retaining their paramount importance, lose their central position. A brief description of each of the domains of geopolitical analysis shall help clarify why the production of geopolitical discourse(s) is here considered a collective and non-necessarily-state-centred enterprise.

Practical geopolitics is the area of geopolitics bound to the discourses and practices of the state —or, as has been more accurately formulated, to the discourses and practices of 'intellectuals of statecraft' —'[T]he notion of 'intellectuals of statecraft' refers to a whole community of state bureaucrats, leaders, foreign policy experts and advisors throughout the world who comment upon, influence and conduct the activities of statecraft' (Ó Tuathail & Agnew, 1992, p. 193). Such discourses are deemed 'practical' because it is assumed that the ultimate goal of foreign policy-makers or defence and security officials is to orient the practice of politics towards particular ends —thus, to act upon the world in a way that fits the interests of the state they represent. Insights into states' practical geopolitics are usually drawn from the examination of foreign policy documents such as presidential addresses or military strategies. U.S.' foreign policy texts are a case in point. In recent years, for instance, interesting analyses have been done on the geopolitical visions encoded in the State of the Union Speeches. One purpose in this genre of analyses was to draw conclusions on the (dis)continuities in U.S. official geopolitical reasoning (Flint et al., 2009).

For its part, formal geopolitics is the domain of academic production of knowledge about the world. It is less coupled with practice than with the intellectual meditations of scholars and intellectuals. In this way, formal geopolitics is located squarely in academia and in institutions (i.e. think tanks) providing analyses of international relations. But, as suggested earlier in this chapter, the boundary between practical and formal geopolitics blurs when we think on the transference of ideas from the academia to the sites of foreign policy practice, and of the actual involvement of ‘organic intellectuals’ in that cross-fertilising dynamics. Representatives of this are Mackinder in Britain in the early 20th century, and Brzezinski or Kissinger in the U.S. in the aftermath of World War Two.

Popular geopolitics, finally, is the domain where we can locate the geographical knowledges that inform popular representations of the world. This area of geopolitics looks at the production of geopolitical discourse in realms of cultural representation such film, literature or humour, but also NGOs, international organisations and the mass media at large. These can be loosely catalogued as ‘non-traditional’ sites of geopolitical representation, by contrast to the two former ones, generally considered in relation to the formation of the ‘tradition of geopolitics’.

From the point of view of geopolitics-as-discourse, however, what should be noted is that practical, formal and popular geopolitics do not function as sealed-off discursive domains. On the contrary, the transference of knowledge is pervasive across domains, with images and geopolitical representations travelling from one level of discourse to the others. The current investigation, in fact, pursues to show how this operates across representations of Iran in practical and popular geopolitical texts (more on this in Chapters Five, Six and Seven).

In any case, the significant argument is that the study of geopolitics by reference to this threefold distinction is premised on the idea that geopolitical discourse is produced by many ‘makers’, and that the position of the ‘geographer-scientist’ is no longer hegemonic. At the turn of the 19th century, the status of the geographer was kept to explorers whose geographical knowledge was deemed authoritative on the grounds of their direct experience of the world —say, members of expeditions who sought to unveil the yet secret corners of the earth (Conrad, 1926). But once the entirety of the globe had been rendered visible to the eye of men, the authority over geography could

no longer be retrieved from exploration or discovery; and the mystery coming out from *terrae incognitae* faded ‘as the white spaces succumbed to the domination of science’ (Driver, 1992, p. 23). Geographical reasoning then took a leap forward and entered formal institutions (universities and geographical societies), equalling in status other scientific disciplines (biology, philosophy or history).

The figure of the geographer became ever more associated with institutionalised knowledge. This helped tighten the connection between authoritative knowledge and academic institutions. But in epistemological terms no major changes occurred: the position of geographers before the objects of enquiry continued to indicate the persistence of a ‘divide between an inner self and an outer reality, between an internal mind and an external world of objects’ (Ó Tuathail, 1996a, pp. 21-22). By approaching the world from a Cartesian perspective, geographers assured the promotion of geography’s scientific status based on its assumed objectivism, neutralism and universalism. In this way, a profound displacement occurred when the objective approach to geopolitics mutated into ‘geopolitics as discourse’. Now, the recognition of a multiplicity of *loci of enunciation* was coupled with the acknowledgement that a wider spectrum of social and political subjects intervene *de facto* in the (re)production of geopolitical discourse. Arguably, this enlarged intervention signalled geography’s democratisation.

2.2.3 Alternatives in geopolitics’ research agenda.

From the 1960s onwards the impulse of post-structuralist philosophies —popularised in the social sciences through the works of Foucault, Derrida, Kristeva, Butler or Hayden— urged the revision of the realist-materialist approaches to world politics that had dominated IR and Geopolitics thus far. This new perspective was based on the commitment with deconstruction and genealogy, generally understood as the necessity to challenge factual histories as they had become crystallised in dominant narratives about the world (deconstruction) and the engagement with a politics/sociology of knowledge which looked at how geographical truths had been politically, socially and culturally engineered (genealogy).

Discourse then became a pivotal research concept in the disciplines (sociology, anthropology, political science and International Relations) that tried to disentangle how language and representation produce ‘social reality’ (Austin, 1955/1962; Searle, 1979). A central premise in this genre of analysis was that ‘reality’ is a social construction (Berger & Luckmann, 1966/1991) and that, accordingly, no material realities exist independently from the discursive formations in which they are embedded. Drawing largely on Mamadouh & Dijkink’s review article (2006), Table 2.1 aims to capture how Geopolitics’ research agenda was transformed (or enlarged) by influence of the discursive approaches to the analysis of social reality.

Table 2.1 Geopolitics’ research agenda

CURRENTS	DOMAINS	SCALES	STUDY OBJECTS	FORMATS	METHODOLOGY	FOCUS
Traditional geopolitics³	Formal geopolitics Practical geopolitics	National International	Foreign policy of the state, including defence and security	Documents, reports and analyses issued by state and academic institutions, plus think tanks	Grand narratives, national identities and broad orientations based on a general history of ideas	The geographical reasonings of geopolitical or foreign policy analysis
Critical Geopolitics	Formal geopolitics Practical geopolitics Popular geopolitics	Macro/Meso/Micro Global/Local	Statecraft and geopolitical practices Narratives and discourses Images, representations and imagination Codes and visions	Official accounts (governmental statements, parliamentary debates, press releases, reports, defence and security strategies, etc.). Media products (press, TV, radio, internet) Cultural and artistic products (cinema, literature, music, school textbooks, humour, etc.)	Discourse Analysis Visual analysis Ethnography	Discourse Production Discourse Reception

³ It includes the ‘tradition of geopolitics’ and the intellectual currents directly linked to this tradition (i.e. neo-classical geopolitics).

<i>Feminist and post-colonial geopolitics</i>		<i>Body</i> <i>Home</i> <i>Locality</i> <i>Urban</i> <i>National</i> <i>Regional</i> <i>Global</i>				
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Source: Author's elaboration based on Mamadouh & Dijkink (2006).

The aperture of geopolitical analysis to its formal, practical and popular domains is one of the most suggestive steps taken by critical geopolitics. In recent decades, the exploration of subjects pertaining to formal geopolitics and popular geopolitics has pursued to give account of the necessity to review the bedrock truths of the discipline, thus putting the works of the ‘founding fathers’ on the spotlight of critical analyses (Agnew et al., 2003 and Dodds & Atkinson, 2000) and of the ever growing influence of popular images and representations of local and global events on an increasingly globalised society (Campbell, 2007; Dalby, 2007; Dittmer, 2010; Dittmer & Dodds, 2008; Sharp, 1996, 2000, 2005). For its part, practical geopolitics too has continued to awaken the interest of analysts who continue to inspect classical subjects such as states’ geopolitical codes, but now from a vantage point that underlines the ‘situatedness’ of geographical knowledge and the interplay between discursive practices and specific representations of global politics (Flint et al., 2009; and Bialasiewicz et al. 2007).

While we cannot do justice here to one of geography’s chief subjects of reflection —*scale*—, let me draw attention to one major transformation in the significance of scale in studies of geopolitics. Broadly speaking, what we can say is that while conventional analyses deal with scales (mostly the national and the international) in terms of the geographical levels on which events take place, critical analyses problematise, just to start with, the very ontological basis of scales and argue, instead, that scales too are social constructions. In this way, also the idea of scale can be scrutinised in relation to the analysis of geopolitical discourse.

Ó Tuathail (2004), for instance, proposes to ‘differentiate approaches to geopolitical discourse’ in relation to the ‘scale level they address’ (Mamadouh & Dijkink, 2006, p. 355). Three scales deserve mentioning: macro, meso and micro. The macro level of representation becomes visible in, for instance, practices that enthuse the geopolitical imagination linked to Modernity (Agnew & Corbridge, 1995; and Agnew 2003/1998). The meso level is linked to what Ó Tuathail calls ‘geopolitical culture’. This entails the study of ‘geopolitical traditions’ —‘competing traditions of interpreting a state’s position in world affairs’ (Atkinson, 2000; Dodds, 2000; Sidaway, 2000a)— and of ‘geopolitical visions’ —‘normative visions of world politics contrasting racial imperialism (Mackinder), liberal capitalism (Wilson) and class struggle (Lenin)’ (Mamadouh & Dijkink, 2006, p. 355). But as Mamadouh & Dijkink (2006) aptly note,

the scale of geopolitical discourse par excellence is the micro level at which the production of geopolitical scripts and storylines attached to the process of policy-making can be situated. States are the principal producers of such practices of representation (p. 355).

Other critical geographers have chosen to pay greater attention to the scale of locality, and to underscore the mutual incidence of the local and the global—a point of view which can nonetheless be problematic since ‘[C]onflating the global/economic/general and contrasting it with the local/cultural/specific obscures important dimensions that an alternative approach to scale might bring to critical geopolitical analysis’ (Howitt, 2003, p. 139). Taylor and Flint’s (2002) geographical exploration of the international political economy pays attention to three scales of analysis: the world-economy, the nation-state, and locality.

But one could perhaps say that the furthest-reaching revisions of the issue of scale takes place in the field of feminist and post-colonial geography, with growing attention being paid to the body and the home. The feminist research agenda is particularly concerned with the production and performance of gender, racial, sexual, religious and cultural difference, hence the necessity to explore the body as a critical signpost of these social markers and the home as an everyday life space where gender (*qua* political) relations are deployed all over (Sharp, 2005; Staeheli et al. 2004). More traditional scales of geographical analysis—the local, the urban, the national, the regional and the global—are also relevant for scholars adopting these perspectives and critical geopolitics generally insofar as they are produced in practices of representation and inform the production of geopolitical discourse.

Critical geopolitics differs from traditional geopolitics as regards the *objects of study* that are deemed relevant for inspection. As seen, traditional geopolitics has focused greatly on the analysis of states’ foreign, security and defence policy, whereas for critical geopolitics ‘[T]he principal object [...] is not the state as an object but statecraft as a multitude of practices’ (Kuus, 2010, p. 687). In this way, critical geopolitics challenges the definition of ‘the state as a producer, administrator and ruler of space’ (Dalby & Ó Tuathail, 1996, p. 452)—analyses that construe the state as a flat platform where social and political processes unfold tend to be replaced by visions underscoring that the state is in fact produced in discourse and representation (Staeheli,

2003). Insights into such representations usually reveal the identification of Others by states, as in the analyses of U.S. foreign policy during the Cold War and the construction of the Soviet Other (Campbell, 1992/1998; Dalby, 1988, 1990; Ó Tuathail, 1996a; Agnew, 2005). These works exemplify critical geopolitics' increasing interest in the study of narrative and discourse, images, representation and imagination, codes and visions, and practices; and the exploration of Self/Other relations:

The struggle over geography is also a conflict between competing images and imaginings, a contest of power and resistance that involves not only struggles to represent the materiality of physical geographic objects and boundaries but also the equally powerful and, in different manners, the equally material force of discursive borders between an idealized Self and a demonized Other, between 'us' and 'them' (Ó Tuathail, 1996a, p. 14).

New objects of study demand new formats and new methodologies. The idea of *formats* conveys the materials for analysis in geopolitical investigations. If classical studies looked primarily at the accounts and analysis delivered by state institutions, critical studies set out to investigate media and cultural products (usually considered in relation to the domain of popular geopolitics). On the issue of *methodologies*, it should be noted that the arrival of new objects of study forces the development of research techniques and methods not used in conventional geopolitical analysis thus far: discourse analysis, visual analysis (Rose, 2001) and ethnography (Kuus, 2014).

In short, we observe a far-reaching change in *focus* from the geographical reasonings of geopolitical and foreign policy analysis towards the production of discourse. This new perspective pays special attention to the context, the subjects and the objects of representation, but has not yet paid sufficient attention to how audiences react to discourse and representation and how they, ultimately, participate in the process of making meaning about the world. This shows why critical geopolitics has still a long way to go as far as the study of discourse reception is concerned.

2.2.4 Critical geopolitics under scrutiny.

Critical geopolitics' strong commitment with discursivity and anti-essentialism is not without fail. While credit should be given to critical geopolitics for its compelling revision of geopolitics' tradition and for destabilising the certainties ingrained in geography's scientist illusion, it should be noted that the task of international critical

enquiry —and this includes the critical investigation of geopolitical discourse— would be misconstrued ‘if it is regarded as an attempt to penetrate superficial and distorted understandings’ (Ashley, 1989, p. 407) of the world and to replace them with allegedly more insightful and more acute interpretations of international reality. In this way, critical geopolitics shall not be regarded as a better alternative for the production of knowledge, or as an instrument for generating ‘greater theoretical certitude’ (Agnew, 2006, p. 2) —if anything, critical geopolitics helps us to enlarge our ‘critical faculties’ and shall not seek to pile up ‘more and more home truths’ (Agnew, 2006, p. 2).

The truth, therefore, is that not everybody working in the field of critical human geography has been so enthusiastic about critical geopolitics’ achievements. Because of the extraordinary emphasis placed on representation and the discursive construction of reality, critical geopolitics glosses over those ‘little things’ (Thrift, 2000) —such as the real workings of geo-power—, those little moments, when power is truly at work: in the practices of everyday state politics, when police or custom officers follow administrative procedures to rule, order and control the life of populations at checkpoints, immigration desks or airport security controls (Bigo, 2011; Buzan, Wæver, & de Wilde, 1998).

In a similar vein, it has been contended that critical geopolitics fails to offer an alternative political project capable of transcending the ‘deconstructive moment’ bolstered in the post-structuralist critique. For this reason, it is generally considered that critical geographers have not (yet) been able to counteract the ‘disciplining visions of global political space’ (Ó Tuathail & Dalby, 1998, p. 453) which are so powerfully anchored in the global imagination, and which hamper alternative modes of reasoning about the world. As has been noted in a collective editorial, ‘[C]ritical geopolitics [...] rarely engages in transformative or embodied ways of knowing and seeing’ (Jones & Sage, 2010, p. 317). And thus, this anti-essentialist perspective on geography does not set out to tell us how we ought to see the world. Simon Dalby (1996), one of the leading voices in the field, summarises the gist of the problem as follows:

The ‘critical’ in ‘critical geopolitics’ then usually refers to the meaning of the term that invokes problematization of the discourses of geopolitics. It does not necessarily imply the presence of a worked-out alternative political project, not necessarily the support of a particular counter-hegemonic political movement (pp. 655-656).

Another contentious point as regards critical geopolitics is that while critical analysts have rightly identified that traditional geopolitics propounds a gaze onto the world that is, in fact, raced and gendered, they have remained silent as regards ‘other forms of social oppression and exploitation’ (Smith, 2000, p. 367) such as class; as if the awareness of difference based on social class did not as well underlie the writing of the world by white male geographers at the end of the 19th and through the 20th centuries.

Still, the approximation to race and gender undertaken by critical geopolitics is limited in scope. Unpacking the masculinist standpoint of traditional geopolitics (Driver, 1992; Ó Tuathail, 1996a)⁴ is a significant step, but more needs to be done in analytical and practical terms if we want to practice a truly committed feminist geography. For Gregory (1991), it is ‘incontrovertible’ that sexism percolates social theory ‘and so it is perhaps not surprising that human geography should have smuggled in so many of its patriarchal assumptions’ (p. 19). As in feminist critiques to IR (Sylvester, 2002), feminist geographers (Sharp, 2005; Rose 1995, 1993/2013; Staeheli et al. 2004) have claimed the necessity to supersede masculinist and men-centred geographies by advancing renewed theoretical perspectives that might enlighten gendered accounts of subjects like war and conflict, migration, mobility, nationalism, territoriality, citizenship, resistance movements or environmental risks.

Racial difference has been largely investigated in relation to post-colonial geographies (Sidaway, 2000b; Slater, 2004) but probably more committed engagements with race could be pushed forward in critical geopolitics. Post-colonial (Spivak, 1988) and decolonial studies (Grosfoguel, Quijano, Castro-Gómez, Mignolo) have a long history from which lessons can be drawn and applied in future research in geography.

Lastly, I would like to address how the ‘vision thing’ (Smith, 2000) can be seen as a contentious matter for contemporary and critical geopolitical analysis. In a thought-provoking article, Smith (2000) wonders why critical geographers have taken that many pains at working through Cartesian perspectivalism and the prevalence of the I/eye in positivist approaches to geography if, at the end of the day, critical geopolitics too

⁴ Driver (1992) had already suggestively noted that ‘[T]he heroes of the colonial landscape —the explorer, the hunter, the soldier, the missionary, the administrator, the gentleman— were all gendered in particular ways, providing moral models for a generation of empire builders [...]. Geographical knowledge, in the broadest sense, was inevitably shaped by and through such figures’ (p. 27).

deploys its own mode of perspectivalism —‘a Cartesian perspectivalism displaced toward text rather than landscape or globe’ (p. 368); a new Cartesian perspectivalism that might fail to give account of ‘the possible variations in vision’, as Smith (2000) explains:

While the study of geopolitical representations and ideas has been introduced to liberate geopolitics from its alleged geographical determinism, the field of geopolitical representations and ideas might elicit a new kind of determinism [...] this approach assigns great importance to political-geographical constellations and it does not seem to be sensitive to possible variations in vision (p. 356).

A probably undesired effect of the critical standpoint is that, in its quest for self-reflective geographical knowledge, post-structuralist geographies have rendered discourses ‘fetishes’ of critical investigation —‘objects’ of scientific discussion risking reifying facts and features of the world —the one thing that critical theorists seek precisely to avoid (Smith, 2000, p. 368).

The ‘vision thing’ can be surpassed by opting for radically different methodologies, less dependent on the eye and which might best suit the intellectual and historical moment we live in. Sui (2000) advocates the depletion of ocular-centrism under the assumption that while the eye, observation and visual experiencing were decisive instruments in the expansion of modern consciousness and modern science, post-modernity might become the moment when the ear and aurality take precedence:

In a very fundamental sense, geography in the late twentieth century marks the end of an illusion of the optical, ocularcentric illusion. The siren calls of postpositivist thinking has awoken us to a brave new world, which is so obviously not for arrogant gazing, but for humble listening (p. 328).

In an epoch when global audiences are saturated with images at the cost of disinformation and distortion, the alternative to approaching the world with open ears and through dialogue, rather than monologue and unreflective gazing, seems suggestive. Yet, whether it is by unpacking the power of the eye or of the ear, let us for now come to terms with the idea that even the most committed attempts to undertake critical analyses of geopolitics might fall prey to some sort of dogmatism.

2.3 Geographical imaginations and the modern geopolitical imagination

The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) defines the term ‘imagination’ as follows:

1. The action of imagining, of forming a mental concept of what is not actually present to the senses; the result of this process, a mental image or idea (often with implication that the conception does not correspond to the reality of things, hence frequently *vain* (false, etc.) *imagination*).
2. The mental consideration of actions or events not yet in existence. **a.** Scheming or devising; a device, contrivance, plan, scheme, plot; a fanciful project. **b.** Impression as to what is likely, expectation, anticipation.
3. The faculty of the mind by which are formed images or concepts of external objects not present to the senses, and of their relations (to each other or to the subject); hence frequently including memory. (Sometimes called the ‘reproductive imagination’).
4. The power which the mind has of forming concepts beyond those derived from external objects (the ‘productive imagination’). **a.** The operation of fantastic thought; fancy. **b.** The creative faculty of the mind in its highest aspect; the power of framing new and striking intellectual conceptions; poetic genius.
5. The mind, or a department of the mind, when engaged in imagining; hence, the operation of the mind generally; thinking; thought; opinion.
6. *Attrib.* and *Comb.*, as **imagination- consciousness, -game, -image, -mill, -monger, -process, -world; imagination-liberating, -manufactured, -stirring, -stunning** adjs.

Of the non-specialised meanings offered by the OED, some elements resonate powerfully with the arguments that will be made in the course of this work, especially as regards the recognition that the ‘imagination’ is a double-faced concept. It refers both to the process of imagining and the outcomes resulting from imaginative processes. Two of the senses featured by the OED are of particular relevance for us: i) the *faculty of the mind* that eases the formation of mental images or ideas about objects not present to the senses, the relations to each other or to the subject; ii) the *result of the process of imagining* that is directly involved in the manufacturing of the world.

2.3.1 Geographical imagination and imaginative geographies.

Critical geopolitics has placed the analysis of the imagination squarely at the centre of its research agenda, on a par with the study of discourse and narrative, and of identity formations in space. Newmann (1998), for instance, has argued compellingly that two of the five key themes which critical geography should take care of are, on the one

hand, geopolitical texts, narratives and traditions; and, on the other hand, the geopolitical imagination (pp. 4-5). But the imagination has always been a matter of concern for human and political geographers, as well as for scholars working in neighbouring disciplines (sociology and IR) —the most likely reason being, as Harvey (1995) suggestively notes, that the geographical imagination is ‘too persuasive and important a fact of intellectual life to be left alone to geographers’ (p. 161).

The ‘imagination’ has been just recently defined as the faculty of the mind that helps us in the fabrication of mental images about objects that are usually *not present to the senses*. This definition is suggestive for the current study for, as I seek to explore how ‘we’ imagine Iran, it will become increasingly apparent that ‘Iran’ is constructed as a discourse referent (and a tangible reality), even when the ideas attached to it do not stem from the direct observation of the object. But since this discussion will come at a much later stage in this work, let me for now look at how several investigations on the social relevance of space deal with this faculty of the mind used to order the things that are in the world (including ourselves), establish relations amongst them and render them politically, socially or culturally meaningful. Insofar as geographical knowledge is largely dependent on the imaginative capacity of geographers and anyone who engages in spatial reasoning, this enquiry into the imagination refers us directly to the discussion on the scientific status of geography.

In a classical piece, Wright (1947) explored the winding limits between subjective and objective geographical knowledge, ultimately revealing qualms about geography’s scientific status. The gist of Wright’s argument was that, as historical experience shows, the power to imagine the world beyond known lands proved a decisive driver for explorers, adventurers and geographers, all of them seeking to reach out for unknown lands (*terrae incognitae*) and make sense of the new places within extant structures of signification. In this way, the imagination was conceptualised as the cognitive mechanism for completing mental maps of the world. Wright was nonetheless cautious about the extent to which the workings of the imagination were reliable.

He was also generally concerned with the status of geographical knowledge. Such concern became visible in the attempt at categorising the ways in which the imagination can be used (intuitively, promotionally, aesthetically). The problem lies, apparently, in the fact that geographical knowledge could only be built with the aid of

the imagination and, thus, assessing how the imagination operates and for which purposes becomes a requisite to assess the consistency of resultant knowledges. By establishing differences between objective/subjective knowledge, core/periphery knowledge, and formal/informal geography, Wright (1947) tried to establish a compelling systematisation of the matter:

The core comprises formal studies in geography as such; the periphery includes all the informal geography contained in non-scientific works—in books of travel, in magazines and newspapers, in many a page of fiction and poetry, and on many a canvas. Although much of this informal geography offers little of value to us, some of it shows an insight deep into the heart of the matters with which are most closely concerned [...] The peripheral zone also includes another even more informal type of geography; that of the subjective geographical conceptions of the world about them which exist in the minds of countless ordinary folks (p. 10).

Wright's reasoning is largely at odds with the general discursive epistemology upheld by critical perspectives on geopolitics. For these, the division between objective and subjective, and core and peripheral knowledge, collapses into simply 'geographical knowledge'. Such perspectives do not seek to establish a hierarchy of knowledge, but rather to raise awareness on the formation of geopolitical discourse, as well as on their attachment to the different domains of discourse production (practical, formal and popular). But in Wright's formulation, the evaluation of 'formal studies in geography' as 'objective' and 'informal studies in geography' as 'subjective' misses the point, by now widely admitted in critical circles, that any study in geography is undertaken from a situated vantage point and, in this sense, is subjective. Instead, the aperture to consider almost anyone with a sensitivity towards space as some kind of geographer—following the premise that 'anyone who inspects the world around him is in some measure a geographer' (Lowenthal, 1961, p. 242)—is much closer to the spirit of critical theorists.

My analysis of the geographical imagination of diplomats, travel writers and humourists in the second part of this dissertation sets out precisely to investigate how this premise plays out in practice and to show that the individual imagination is imbued in structures of signification (discourses) that are, by definition, a matter of collective construction. Because of this, we shall grasp the act of imagining as an essentially communal event. On the question of collective imagining, Appadurai (2000) has argued, for instance, that it would be unfeasible to explain processes of globalisation such as South-North migrations or resistance movements against global capitalism without

exploring the incidence of broadened and shared horizons in the collective imagination of global space:

The imagination is no longer a matter of individual genius, escapism from ordinary life, or just a dimension of aesthetics. It is a faculty that informs the daily lives of ordinary people in myriad ways: It allows people to consider migration, resist state violence, seek social redress, and design new forms of civic association and collaboration, often across national boundaries. This view of the role of the imagination as a popular, social, collective fact in the era of globalization recognizes its split character. On the one hand, it is in and through the imagination that modern citizens are disciplined and controlled —by states, markets, and other powerful interests. But it is also the faculty through which collective patterns of dissent and new designs for collective life emerge (p. 6).

For the author of *Geographical Imaginations* (1994), Derek Gregory, what needs to be disentangled is how more or less explicit spatial consciousnesses percolate social theory. Adopting a ‘postdisciplinary approach to geography’ (Deutsche, 1995, p. 165) Gregory (1991) wants to show that social theory is not ‘a commentary on social life but an intervention in social life’ (p. 18). For this reason, it is urgent to realise that, since social theorists are positioned in a complex system of social, cultural and spatial relations, there is no reason to think that their theories will not be affected by such subjectivities. Gregory’s own life experience attests to this fact. In the Preface to *Geographical Imaginations*, he admits that his own ‘transplantation’ from the University of Cambridge (UK) to the University of British Columbia (Canada) in the late 1980s forced him to come to terms with his own ‘otherness’ and to adjust to the new cultural context in which he would live the tropes of his geographical imagination, including the ‘continuing importance of a European horizon of meaning in my own work’ (pp. ix-x).

Gregory’s direct intellectual debt is with David Harvey. From Harvey’s Marxist manifesto, *Social Justice and the City* (1973), he borrows the term ‘geographical imaginations’, which in turn echoes the influence of C. Wright Mills’ ‘sociological imagination’ (*The Sociological Imagination*, 1959). For Harvey (1973), examining the ‘geographical imagination’ entails coming at close quarters with the ‘spatial consciousness’ that binds together social processes and spatial forms:

This imagination enables the individual to recognize the role of space and place in his own biography, to relate to the spaces he sees around him, and to recognize how transactions between individuals and between organizations are affected by the space that separates them. It allows him to recognize the relationship which exists between him and his neighbourhood, his territory, or to use the language of the street gangs, his

‘turf’. It allows him to judge the relevance of events in other places (or in other people’s ‘turf’) (p. 24).

Before the publication of *Geographical Imaginations* in 1994, Gregory (1991) had already set the purpose ‘to tease out some of the more intricate relations between social theory, spatiality and the politics of representation’ (p. 18), by investigating the historical geography of Modernity in the works of scholars such as David Harvey, Timothy Mitchell, Anthony Giddens, Allan Pred, Walter Benjamin, Edward W. Said, Donna Haraway, Edward Soja and Frederic Jameson. In the words of a reviewer, Gregory ‘wanders through and investigates the texts of social theorists in and outside of geography to offer a sustained and critical mediation on the spatialities of social life’ (Katz, 1995, pp. 164-165); and he does so, without losing sight that a critical enquiry into the formation of social theory is a requisite to accomplishing social change: ‘[M]y particular concern is with the multiple discourses of critical theory: discourses that seek not only to make social life intelligible but also to make it *better*’ (Gregory, 1994, p. 10).

In sum, my point is that the geographical imagination is relevant for Gregory in at least two senses: i) as regards how different spatial consciousnesses underlie the theories of critical scientists and concomitantly their interventions in the social world; and, ii) as regards the power of the (geographical) imagination to orient the way in which everyday people see the world, establish relations with it and with ‘Others’:

Most of us have not been very good at listening to others and learning from them, but the present challenge is surely to find ways of comprehending those other worlds — including our relations with them and our responsibilities towards them— without being invasive, colonizing or violent. If we are to free ourselves from universalizing our own parochialisms, we need to learn how to reach beyond particularities, to speak to larger questions without diminishing the significance of the places and the peoples to which they are accountable. In doing so, in enlarging and examining our geographical imaginations, we might come to realize not only that our lives are “radically entwined with the lives of distant strangers”, but also that we bear a continuing and unavoidable responsibility for their needs in times of distress (Gregory, 1994, p. 205).

The current discussion ends with a note on the significance of geography in the work of Edward W. Said. For Gregory (1995), it is notably evident that ‘[G]eography is a recurrent motif in Said’s writings’ (p. 447) and that there exist powerful reasons in Said’s biography that explicate why the awareness on the pervasive influence of space in social life features so prominently in his scholarship. Born a Christian Palestinian in the mid-1930s, Said witnessed the gradual evanescence of the sovereign Palestinian

subject, lived during his childhood years in colonially administered territories — Palestine, Lebanon and Egypt—and finally spent his adult life in the West. These multiple displacements nurtured in him the consciousness of being constantly *out of place*⁵, fostering ‘a sensitivity towards space and place’ (Gregory et al. 2009, p. 282) that he imported to his intellectual production.

We can therefore say that Said’s interest in space and spatiality arose almost as a vital necessity of coming to terms with his own identity, his own place in the world, but also out of his commitment with making sense of his own historical moment and the enduring prevalence of ‘the facts of empire’ in contemporary global life. The thrust of Said’s work has been summarised as an attempt to chart ‘the changing constellations of power, knowledge and geography [...] inscribed within British, French and American imperialisms’ (Gregory, 1995, p. 447) —an enterprise overtly palpable in seminal books such as *Orientalism* (1978/2003), *Culture and Imperialism* (1994) and the analysis of how media narrate stories of ‘Islam’ in *Covering Islam* (1997).

In particular, *Orientalism* (Said, 1978/2003) has come to be seen as the study of Europe’s ‘imaginative geography’ of the modern Orient (Gregory, 1995) —that is: of the ‘[R]epresentations of other places —of peoples and landscapes, cultures and ‘natures’— that articulate the desires, fantasies and fears of their authors and the grids of power between them and their “Others”’ (Gregory et al. 2009, pp. 369-370). Forged in the course of the 18th and 19th centuries, this imaginative geography arose from the accumulation of universal practices ‘of designating in one’s mind a familiar space which is “ours” and an unfamiliar space beyond “ours” which is “theirs”’ (*Orientalism*, p. 54, quoted in Gregory, 1995, p. 455) enacted in literary works, media stories or works of art. For Gregory (1995), the similarities between Foucault’s carceral system and Said’s orientalism are ‘striking’ insofar as both ‘discursive regimes of power-knowledge’ (p. 456) are based on division (the naturalisation of a discourse of ‘exclusionary geographies’), detail and visibility —constructed in the attention to the objects and people of the Oriental world, orientalism is ‘a discipline of detail’ which depends chiefly ‘on spaces of constructed visibility’ (p. 458).

⁵ *Out of Place* (1999) is the title of his autobiography.

2.3.2 The modern geopolitical imagination.

If the title of Gregory's landmark book read *Geographical Imaginations* is because Daniel Cosgrove suggested that the plural form would convey more adequately the multiplicity of spatial consciousnesses that compose social life (Gregory, 1994, p. xi). This section brings into focus the dominant spatial consciousness that has informed the representation and practice of world politics for over two centuries. It originated with Europe's 'discovery' of the New World. The U.S. geographer John Agnew called this consciousness the 'modern geopolitical imagination' and devoted one whole book — *Geopolitics: Re-visioning world politics*— to conceptualise and expound its influence in crafting modern men's experience of the global world. Originally published in 1998, the book's second edition (2003) enlarged the argument to incorporate the analysis of the 9/11 events and their repercussions on the discourse and practice of world politics. In truth, however, the discussion presented by Agnew (1998) in *Geopolitics: Re-visioning world politics* was initiated in at least one earlier book: *Mastering Space: Hegemony, territory and international political economy*, co-authored with Stuart Corbridge (1995). Drawing on both, this section aims to show the idea of the modern geopolitical imagination is so central for the current discussion.

Due to its serious consideration of geopolitical discourse's relevance in the constitution of a consciousness about the world, Agnew's work is nowadays considered a pivotal contribution to the remit of Critical Geopolitics and critical political geography more broadly; yet, it is important to understand that, for Agnew, the analysis of (geopolitical) discourse goes hand in hand with the analysis of the international political economy, hence the observation that works such as *Mastering Space* and *Geopolitics* offer 'a general theory of geopolitics that treats it both as practices and ideas, as a materialist world order and a discursive set of understanding and enframing rules' (Ó Tuathail, 1998b, p. 18). Such general theory comes out of the confluence of Marxian political economy, Gramsci's concept of hegemony and Lefebvre's mediations on space; and it results in the formulation of a 'geopolitical economy' theory (Agnew and Corbridge 1989; quoted in Ó Tuathail, 1998b, p. 18).

Lefebvre's distinction between 'spatial practices' and 'representations of space' inspires yet another distinction, crucial within Agnew & Corbridge's (1995) reasoning: the distinction between 'geopolitical orders' and 'geopolitical discourses'. With 'spatial

practices’, Lefebvre refers to ‘the material and physical flows, interactions and movements that occur in and across space as fundamental features of economic production and social reproduction’ (Agnew & Corbridge, 1995, p. 7), whereas ‘representations of space’ ‘involve all of the concepts, learning practices, and geographical codes used to talk about and understand spatial practices’ (Agnew & Corbridge, 1995, p. 7). With this in mind, the thrust of *Mastering Space* is to argue that, in each given epoch, the dominant (practical) features of the world’s political economy (‘spatial practices’) are underpinned by dominant ways of representing global space (‘representations of space’) —or, as Agnew & Corbridge (1995) put it, that there exists a contingent correspondence between particular ‘geopolitical orders’ and dominant ‘geopolitical discourses’. A third key concept taken from Lefebvre is that of ‘representational spaces’, by which it is meant ‘the scenarios for future spatial practices or ‘imagined geographies’ that inspire changes in the representations of space with an eye to the transformation of spatial practices’ (Agnew & Corbridge, 1995, p. 7). The relationship between these three is dialectical, meaning that ‘no one concept can be given causal primacy over others’ (Agnew & Corbridge, 1995, p. 7).

The notion of ‘geopolitical order’ is applied to name the ‘sets of routinized rules, institutions, activities and strategies through which the international political economy operates in different historical periods’ (Agnew & Corbridge, 1995, p. 15), but also the ‘intersubjective assumptions and behavioural orientations shared by leading actors’ (p. 16) of world politics. For its part, the notion of ‘geopolitical discourse’ is used to convey:

how the geography of the international political economy has been ‘written and read’ in the practices of foreign and economic policies during the different periods of geopolitical order. By written is meant the way geographical representations are incorporated into the practices of political élites. By read is meant the way in which these representations are communicated (Agnew & Corbridge, pp. 46-47).

In sum, as has also been defined, geopolitical discourse is ‘the discourse by which intellectuals of statecraft, both formal theorists and practitioners, spatialize world politics’ (Ó Tuathail, 1998b, pp. 19-20).

Against this conceptual background, Agnew & Corbridge (1995) then give empirical substance to their ‘geopolitical economy’. Their study covers the period of two centuries (between 1815 and 1990), within which they establish a sequence of three

‘geopolitical eras’. Each one of these eras takes the name of one dominant geopolitical discourse (‘civilisational’, ‘naturalised’ and ‘ideological’) and is matched to one particular geopolitical order. Correspondences are shown in the table below:

Table 2.2 The three eras of geopolitics (after Agnew & Corbridge, 1995 and Agnew, 1998/2003).

<i>Spatial practices</i>	<i>Representations of space</i>
Geopolitical order	Geopolitical discourse
British Geopolitical Order, 1815-75	Civilisational Geopolitics
Inter-Imperial Rivalry, 1875-1945	Naturalised Geopolitics
Cold War Geopolitical Order, 1945-90	Ideological Geopolitics

Agnew & Corbridge (1995) call the period between 1815 and 1875 the ‘British Geopolitical Order’ because it was then when the British Empire’s economic expansion overseas reached the highest peaks, meaning also that Britain was the first European state that practised a new kind of international political economy —of global dimensions. In the meantime, European continental powers had established the Concert of Europe and, for this reason, this period is also known as the Concert of Europe’s. Agnew & Corbridge (1995) have seen in this span of time the unfolding of an era of ‘Civilisational Geopolitics’ when geopolitical reasoning and representations of the world were premised on Europe’s civilisational superiority over non-European peoples and places. In tune with this, Europe conceived itself as an extraordinary civilisation with a history that certified its uniqueness and distinction from other (lesser) civilisations. The ideological-political artefact of the nation-state with which European territories started to identify helped to reassert Europe’s difference.

This period was followed by an era of ‘naturalised geopolitics’ that, in practical terms, was defined by a visible pattern of ‘Inter-Imperial Rivalry’ (1875-1945). With the demise of Europe’s Concert and the success of the British imperial-colonial experience, other prominent powers joined the competition for economic leadership. And so, the period was marked by the clash between two economic-political models: the already established British model organised around free market and liberalism (also followed by France and the U.S.) and the revisionist model of Germany (Italy and Japan), which sought to build up their own empires, adopt autarky-oriented economic

policies and, in sum, challenge the British order's hegemony. The spectacular growth of the German economy during these decades rendered Germany a real threat to the liberal-imperialist model upheld by Britain thus far. Of interest for us is to note that the ideological architecture enframing the period's material contest was based on several naturalisations —hence the label 'Naturalised Geopolitics'—, of which one of the most important was that the 'nation-state' (by then in the process of securing its hegemonic ideologico-political status) resembled a living organism fighting for survival in a highly competitive world. As seen, the early stirrings of political geography are closely intertwined with this genre of practical orientations to inter-state relations based on organic theories of the state. But what could be more generally said is that the whole period was infused by an ideal of scientifism and objectivity towards 'reality' that affected the practice and theory of (domestic/international) politics. Resulting from this, difference across the globe was treated as if it was a matter of scientific discernment, about which one could draw objective conclusions. This would, in turn, justify the intervention of the great powers in the weaker areas of the world.

Spanning from 1945 until 1990, the geopolitical order of the Cold War relied heavily on 'ideological' representations of global space. Following the end of the Second World War, the label 'Cold War' has been used to refer to the systemic-ideological framework of geopolitical relations formed around the rivalry between the U.S. and the Soviet Union until the latter's disintegration. Despite their alliance throughout the war, since the final 1940s, the ideological and economic aspirations of both the U.S. and the Soviet Union —each of which found itself in the leading position of a 'capitalist' *versus* a 'communist' world— started to clash. This being a global contest where each of the contestants fought for maintaining important areas of influence, the imagination of a total Cold War between two major rivals impregnated the majority of world politics accounts constituting itself as the dominant geopolitical discourse. Naturally then, the end of the U.S.-USSR geopolitical rivalry brought about the termination of representations of space anchored in the imagination that such war continued.

The concept of the 'modern geopolitical imagination' allows Agnew (1998/2003) to demonstrate that the geopolitical eras, orders and discourses discussed thus far are part of a bigger and older structure of thought and practice:

The modern geopolitical imagination is a *system* of visualizing the world with deep historic roots in the European encounter with the world as a whole. It is a constructed view of the world, not a simple spontaneous vision that arises from simply looking out at the world with ‘common sense’. As a system of thought and practice, the modern geopolitical imagination has not existed and does not exist in a material vacuum. It first developed in a Europe coming to terms with both a new global role and the disintegration of the religious-based image of universal order formerly dominant amongst its intellectuals and leaders. An insistence on taking charge of the world is a key feature of European modernity (p. 6).

In sum, the definition of the geopolitical imagination as ‘modern’ shall be understood in the right terms, meaning that ‘what is important about modernity is that it is not a temporal era, but rather a series of dispositions and orientations’ (Campbell, 1992/1998, p. 43)⁶. The ‘modern geopolitical imagination’ is a way of looking at the world.

It developed first in Europe which, embarked on the discovery of unknown lands since the 15th century, started to form a new awareness of world space. This new awareness departed from the medieval conceptions of space dominant so far and was gradually projected from Europe to the rest of the world. In this process, the European experience of the world took centre stage and a new grammar for representing global space (Agnew, 1998/2003, p. 9) came out after the encounter of the European subject with the Others in faraway lands. With roots in the 15th century, according to Agnew (1998/2003), this new grammar would not crystallise until the 19th century. It then prevailed in the form of a dominant mode of representation for the practice and analysis of world politics until the end of the Cold War. For this reason, Agnew (1998/2003) ultimately defines the modern geopolitical imagination as ‘the predominant ways world politics has been represented, talked about and acted on geographically by both major actors and commentators over the past two hundred years’ (p. 15).

But in addition to this general definition, *Geopolitics: Re-visioning world politics* offers a detailed description of the four fundamentals that substantiate the modern way of looking at the world: i) the visualisation of global space, ii) the turning of time into space, iii) modern state territoriality, and iv) the pursuit of primacy. All four fundamentals are identifiable during the three ‘eras of geopolitics’ introduced

⁶ It is relevant to mention in this regard that, in recent years, the idea of ‘Modernity’ itself has been severely called into question, with scholars now paying attention to the uneven experience of Modernity by different societies and in different places across the world (Gutiérrez Rodríguez, Boatca, & Costa, 2010; Cairo & Grosfoguel, 2010).

previously, albeit with varying intensities depending on the historical period under review.

The first reason why this new imagination of the world was distinct from previous ones is that it was based on the *visualisation of global space* as a ‘structured whole’. This trend began in the 15th- and 16th-centuries, but was not until the mid-17th century when ‘European scholars and political leaders already knew that they lived in a world that had a definite shape, even if actual knowledge of all of it was still incomplete by twenty-first century standards’ (Agnew, 1998/2003, p. 19). So, what we have is that for the first time in history, modern men could entertain the idea that the world was one single thing, despite this unique thing being also recognised as having different parts. Significantly, to contemplate this new single world, men situated themselves outside it in a position of exteriority. This fostered the impression of a total separation between the viewing subject (man) and the object of observation (the world). Agnew (1998/2003) has seen in this operation of the modern geopolitical imagination the installation of an illusion with major repercussions in the practical and theoretical experience of the world: the illusion of deploying ‘a view from nowhere’ and of being capable of styling a neutral and objective image of the world.

The possibility of now figuring the world as global had one major repercussion on men’s relationship to cosmos and the divine. The pre-modern imagination had situated outside the known world (in the *terrae incognitae*) the sources of chaos and danger (paganism, darkness and evil) that haunted the minds of medieval men, but now that the world had gained a new dimension, ‘evil’ could and was effectively integrated within global space. The different visions of space registered in medieval *versus* modern cartographic representations of the world attest to this. In medieval maps, the prevalence of fragmentary notions of space became evident, as it was also evident that such representations of space were infused by religious eschatology. In this way, medieval maps indicated where the place of ‘ordinary mortal Europeans’ was within ‘the universal scheme of things’ (Agnew, 1998/2003, p. 17) —i.e. within the Great Chain of Being that connected lay Europeans with the divine above them. But importantly, with the explorations to the edges of the earth, world space enlarged, and it became increasingly possible to shift from vertical to horizontal conceptions of global space. Drawing inspiration from Ptolemy’s cartography, modern maps of the globe managed to

convey the sense that the world was in the process of being discovered and uncharted spaces waiting to be filled up (Agnew, 1998/2003, p. 17).

The process of filling up empty spaces operated peculiarly, for the spaces once unknown did not become simply known. By contrast, they were situated within 'a hierarchy of places, from known to unknown, from most friendly to most dangerous' (Agnew, 1998/2003, pp. 15-16). Explorers and map-makers conferred the newly discovered lands meanings in consonance with Europe's particular cultural and historical experience. For this reason, the modern geopolitical imagination was born profoundly Euro-centric (Agnew, 1998/2003, p. 19) and has become predominantly Western-centric over time. Implicitly, what this means is that the modern geopolitical imagination inaugurated a mode of reasoning based on the binary conceptualisation of global space, originating initially in the division between 'Europe' and 'the rest' and, with it, in the dichotomy between 'Christian' and 'pagan'. In the age of empires, the ordering of space by reference to the Christian experience of the world served to lend legitimacy to colonial ventures (Agnew & Corbridge, 1995, p. 49). Over time, the reference to Christianity was debunked by the emergent identification of 'Europe' as a distinct cultural entity territorially bound to the Mediterranean and gradually displaced from the East to the West of Europe (Pocock, 1997). Agnew's (1999/2003) formulation of this compound process is illuminating:

Christianity played a continuing role in the self-image of Europeans but by the eighteenth century it was no longer the dominant force it once had been. By then the growing perception of Europe as a center of artistic and intellectual invention had combined with the palpable sense of material progress to produce an awareness of Europe as a new civilization. This did not lead simply to a growing feeling of European superiority. It also engendered the idea of 'levels' of civilization within Europe at the top but with the possibility that other regions might achieve greatness by following in Europe's footsteps. Other places and people could be understood satisfactorily only in relation to this global cultural hierarchy. The one big division between East and West, led to smaller ones, particularly as local differences were discovered in the course of exploration, trade, and conquest. A whole fund of taxonomic lore developed, separating races, regions, and nations from one another in terms of their relations to the most abstract global distinction. Even within Europe, the distinction between Eastern and Western Europe was important in delimiting where Europe 'ended' and Asia 'began' (p. 25).

Thereupon, an ‘epistemology of difference’ (Adib-Moghaddam, 2011) with global scale repercussions took root as a normalised mode of representing the world. This genre of epistemology was further secured when *time was turned into space*.

The second fundamental of the modern geopolitical imagination speaks of the tendency to style representations of global space by reference to opposing temporal features. The roots of this tendency are also located in Europe’s ‘discovery’ of the New World, and in particular in the colonisers’ disregard for recognising that native peoples had a history which was as dense and important as theirs. And thus, the impulse at looking at native peoples in terms of ‘primitive’ men secured another pivotal binary dichotomy within the modern imagination: the division between ‘backward’ and ‘modern’ places and peoples. By arguing that time was turned into space, Agnew means that it became *natural* to think of space in familiar temporal terms. Finally, the absorption of time by space was rendered visible by how representations of space have tended ever since to *essentialise* places (by shrinking the representation places to one social or cultural feature), *exoticise* peoples (by focusing on the features that accentuate differences across ‘Us’ and ‘Them’) and *totalise* differences (by presenting relative differences as if they were absolute ones) (Agnew, 1998/2003, p. 36).

One major effect of the attribution of temporal qualities to space was that it subdued non-European peoples to a linear conception of time and progress established by the Old World —by Europe first and by Europe’s colonial offsprings. Next, this allowed Christian-Europeans to relate to the primitive Others in the faraway lands in terms of a past identity reminiscent of their own by-gone primordial and pagan identity. As a result, modern men construed the Indians as the pagan and backward communities they had once been. Yet, as Agnew (1998/2003) importantly notes ‘by the eighteenth century the idea of a permanent opposition between advanced and primitive started to give way to the idea that the primitive could advance in status’ (p. 36). Accordingly, despite their location at the lower echelons of Europe’s imagined ‘levels of civilisation’, backward peoples were granted the possibility to become a little bit more like ‘Us’. As of today, this mode of reasoning influences the practice and analysis of world politics and, in particular, representations of the non-West (the Middle East, Asia and Africa).

The third pillar of the modern geopolitical imagination is the principle of a *world of territorial states*. It refers to the long-term assumption that the modern form of spatial

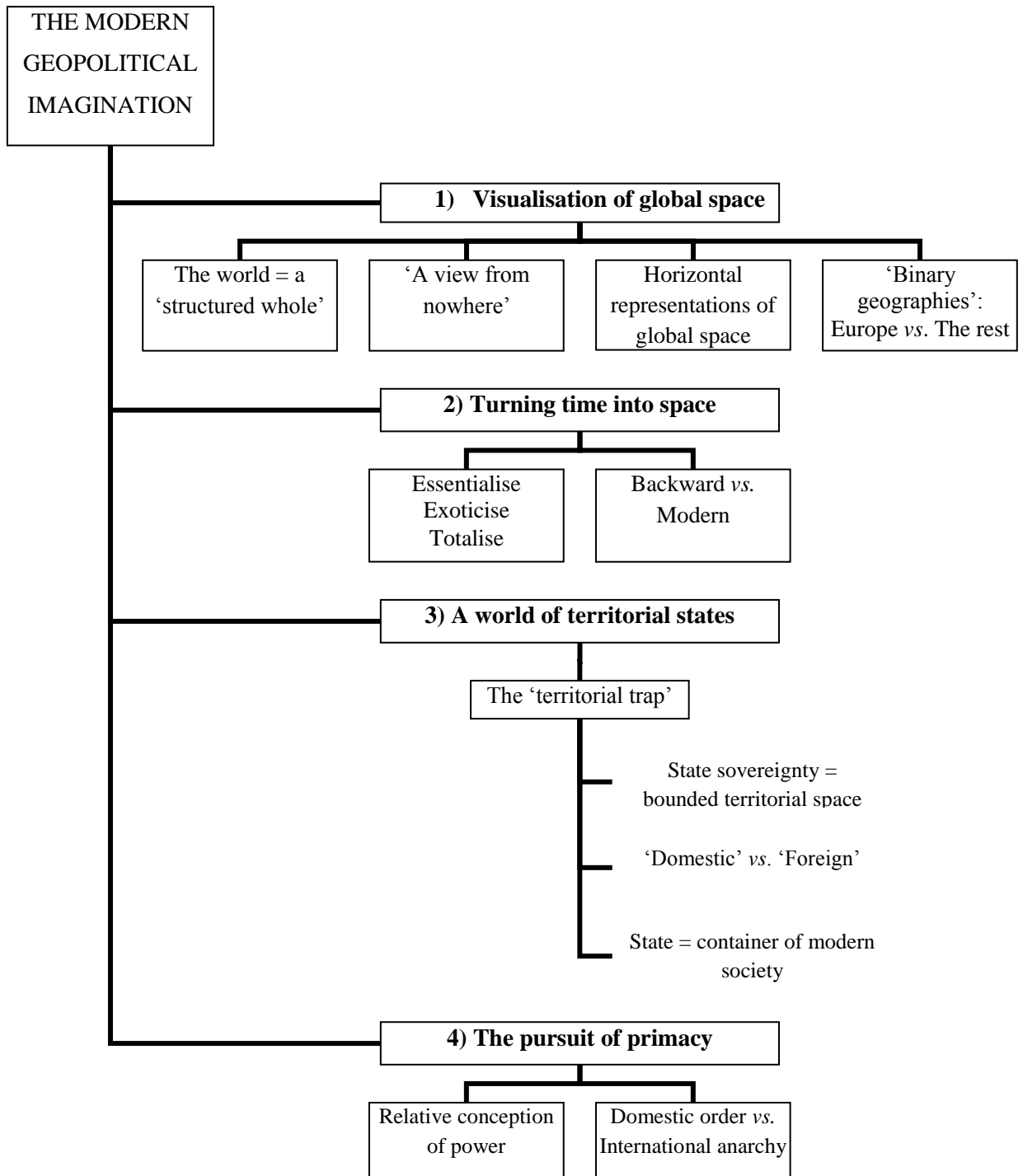
organisation *par excellence* is state territoriality. The Treaty of Westphalia (1648) is often cited as marking the birth of the modern system of states. Such system, however, was not generalised overnight and, if anything, became hegemonic two centuries later. Far from natural, the vision of a world of territorial states was forged in parallel to a complex process of historical production (never exempt from tension arising from alternative forms of territoriality in Europe and beyond). In spite of this, Agnew (1994) considers that the modern imagination fosters the illusion of the state territoriality ‘trap’ relying on three premises: i) states have exclusive sovereign power over stretches of land that are territorially bound; ii) political affairs can be divided into ‘domestic’ and ‘foreign’; and iii) the boundaries of the state define the boundaries of modern society (Agnew, 1998/2003, p. 51). In sum, the modern geopolitical imagination is state-centric and fosters further state-centric representations of global space by taking the state as the unit of spatial organisation *par excellence* and the basic source of political power.

What has importantly followed from this is that ‘[M]odern statehood’ became ‘one of Europe’s most popular exports’ (Agnew, 1998/2003, p. 52). And while more recent governance modes such as the European Union or UN agencies seem to suggest that the state is in practice no longer the central locus of power, statehood continues to exert an alluring power on the mindset of elites and world politics analysts (Agnew, 1998/2003, pp. 52-53), on non-state actors struggling for setting up their own state institutions, and on people, generally. But the most relevant thing is that, over decades, the dominant practice and theory of world politics has created the illusion that modern statehood is ‘beyond history’ (Agnew, 1998/2003, p. 54) —a timeless feature of humanity—, while the fact of the matter is that only in Europe the transfer of sovereignty ‘from the person of the monarch to the state and its citizens’ (Agnew, 1998/2003, p. 54) stretched over a period of four hundred years (from the 15th to the 19th century). A similar argument can be made about the nowadays naturalised tendency to conceive of ‘domestic’ and ‘foreign’ space/politics as a fact of nature, while the truth is that such practice is over one century old and has roots in 17th century economic mercantilist doctrines (Agnew, 1998/2003, p. 54).

The fourth fundamental of the modern geopolitical imagination refers to the idea that, despite their formal and theoretical equality, individual states compete for hegemonic positions within the system of states. In this regard, it should be noted that

the picture of world politics' competitive nature seems to be at odds with the normative (legal) declaration that all states are equal (an essential assumption in the paradigm of state territoriality). Still, the principle that states *pursue global primacy* impregnates the modern visualisation of the globe and is based on two basic premises. The first premise is that the pursuit of primacy is possible because power is relative, and can be gained or lost depending on how good or bad states perform in the international political economy. In this vein, power is believed to be a limited good (of which states can have a greater or a smaller share), but cannot be taken hold of absolutely (Agnew, 1998/2003, p. 70). The second premise, following from the basic 'domestic'/'foreign' divide in modern state territoriality, is that whereas at home civic order prevails, the foreign (international) space is essentially conflictual and competitive. In consequence, was it not because power is relative, states could not take any action to minimise the chances of being dumped to positions of subordination to other more powerful states (Agnew, 1998/2003, p. 72). Relative power thus ensures the possibility of change within the system. The combination of these two premises explains why world politics tends to be envisioned as a space of competition (rather than as a space of cooperation) in which situations of eventual power vacuum are assessed as opportunities for great powers to stage in. A visual representation of Agnew's schema of the 'modern geopolitical imagination' is offered in Figure 2.3.

Figure 2.3. The four fundamentals of the modern geopolitical imagination (after Agnew, 1998/2003).



The thrust of *Geopolitics: Re-visioning world politics* is to show that while these four fundamentals have shaped and oriented the modern practice and representation of world politics, one cannot assume that such dominant ‘system of visualising the world’ (Agnew, 1998/2003, p. 6) has historically gone uncontested. The book, in fact, offers substantial evidence that world politics’ practices are usually at odds with the normative

basis embedded in the modern geopolitical imagination. This has become acutely visible in recent decades when the modern geopolitical imagination finds itself challenged by phenomena such as global migratory movements or transnational liberalism. In particular, it has been argued that transnational liberalism's essential logic defies the basic architecture of at least two principles of the modern geopolitical imagination: the world of territorial states and the pursuit of primacy. It is, in fact, at odds with the modernist argument that the state is the ultimate source of power because the attempt at establishing identifications between corporations (responsible for the massive movement of capital and finance across the globe) and particular states (bounded territories) seems to be pointless nowadays. The increasingly visible non-statist nature of the international political economy has long indicated that analysts would rather give account of how different territories (global cities or booming economic areas, but not states in a traditional sense) compete for the lion's share of transnational economy.

A legitimate question now is what do these authors (Agnew & Corbridge, 1995 and Agnew, 1998) say about the dominant mode of representation and practical orientation to world politics from 1990 onwards? Well, precisely, their point is that, as of today, it is not possible to identify one single hegemonic pattern of discourse and practice that brings unity to the current (fourth) geopolitical era. On the contrary, what they see is that, since the end of the Cold War, the scripting of world politics alternates various stories and visions: i) the vision of transnational global economic processes, ii) the story of cultural conflicts between civilisations (which Samuel Huntington systematises in the famous *The Clash of Civilisations*, 1993, 1996), and iii) the vision of a world still dominated by the U.S.

As Ó Tuathail (1998b) notes in a piece mostly devoted to dialoguing with (and reviewing) the work done by Agnew & Corbridge (1995) and Agnew (1998/2003), these scholars are not unaware that 'the modes of representation and conditions of practice of geopolitics are changing on the eve of the twenty-first century' (p. 17). On this issue, it needs to be mentioned that one of the most important analytical premises in *Mastering Space* and *Geopolitics* is that there is both continuity and change in the modern geopolitical imagination and that, in this vein, one should not, for instance, conceive of the three 'eras of geopolitics' as sealed-off practical/discursive

compartments, but rather as constellations of practices and discourses that give coherence to a period of time, are likely to be recognised in other eras as well. With this in mind, Ó Tuathail (1998b) then suggests that the dramatic transformations in the post-Cold War era might be giving way to a ‘postmodern’ geopolitical imagination that co-exists with ‘modern’ visions of the world. Ó Tuathail (1998b) find reasons to speculate about ‘the end of the modern’ (p. 23) in the observation of late 20th century processes such as i) the long relative decline of American hegemony, ii) the intensification of deterritorialised global economic trends, iii) the booming of new information technologies, and iv) the novel experience of ‘global life’ (after Appadurai’s formulation) pulled by the collapse of traditional conceptions of time and space (Ó Tuathail, 1998b, pp. 23-24). Ó Tuathail’s (1998b) speculations are also based on the argument that, in these (postmodern?) days, the principle of the world of territorial states no longer orders the imagination with as much force as it did in previous geopolitical eras, and also on the observation that major technocultural transformations have revolutionised the charting and representation of global space (pp. 27-29).

These things considered, Ó Tuathail (1998b) points out that, from the point of view of the rules and institutions of the international political economy, the post-Cold War is the order of ‘Transnational Liberalism’ whose geography is read through the prism of the ‘market democracy’ norm. And thus, it can be reasonably said that ‘the dominant representations of space in the contemporary period could be termed after the Clinton administration’s strategy of enlarging the community of so-called “market democracies” [...] *enlargement geopolitics* (Ó Tuathail and Luke 1994)’ (Ó Tuathail, 1998b, p. 20).

In the Introduction to *The Geopolitics Reader* (Ó Tuathail, Dalby, & Routledge, 1998)— Ó Tuathail (1998a) formulates the argument in different yet complementary terms. In this work the argument is that representations of space in the post-Cold War era are organised by two dominant discourses: the ‘new world order geopolitics’ discourse and the ‘environmental geopolitics’ discourse (p. 7). It is significant for us that, as Table 2.2 next shows, within the New World Order geopolitical discourse, Ó Tuathail (1998a) situates narratives such as the ‘end of history’ (Francis Fukuyama); the ‘new world order’ (after George Bush’s doctrine); the stories of ‘rogue states’, ‘nuclear

outlaws’ and ‘terrorists’ produced by strategists in the Pentagon and NATO; and, the ‘clash of civilisations’ (theorised by Samuel Huntington).

Table 2.2 *The New World Order geopolitical discourse*

Discourse	Key intellectuals	Dominant lexicon
New World Order geopolitics	Mikhail Gorbachev Francis Fukuyama Edward Luttwak George Bush Leaders of G7, IMF, WTO Strategic planners in the Pentagon and NATO Samuel Huntington	New political thinking The end of history Statist geo-economics US led new world order Transnational liberalism/neoliberalism Rogue states, nuclear outlaws and terrorists Clash of civilizations

Source: Ó Tuathail (1998a, p. 5).

The framework for analysis reviewed in this section —Agnew & Corbridge’s plus Ó Tuathail’s arguments— orients the empirical part of this work (Chapters Five to Seven). This is so because, for the investigation of modern Iran’s meaning, one needs to be aware of the change in practices and discourses operating in the transition from the Cold War to the post-Cold War geopolitical era; if anything because revolutionary Iran was born under the Cold War order and consolidated beyond the Cold War.

3. Narrating Self and Other in the post-Cold War world: Identity as practice

The previous chapter has looked at how, in theory and in practice, geopolitics is involved in the production of global space. Accordingly, it has been contended that geopolitics spatialises the world—it is a discourse and practice that inscribes difference on the world by fostering representations that speak of ‘modern’ and ‘backward’, ‘civilised’ and ‘barbarian’, or ‘developed’ and ‘underdeveloped’ Selves and Others. But, other than Critical Geopolitics, the analysis of world politics (and international relations) in parallel to the analysis of identity/difference constitution has been widely attended to by so-called ‘critical International Relations’. A post-Cold War intellectual trend flourishing in the margins of mainstream IR, like Critical Geopolitics, critical IR set out to critically investigate the ontological and epistemological bases in mainstream IR theory and, by extension, the dominant principles that orient the analysis (and practice) of world politics. In response to the mainstream, critical IR adopted a perspective of analysis based on the premise that the ‘world is a text’ produced and reproduced in myriad textual practices of representation; hence the growing tendency to read international relations not as a sequence of historical facts, but as a palimpsest of ‘events’, in which the dominant understanding is that ‘[T]he event is not what happens. The event is that which can be narrated’ (Campbell, 1993, p. 7).

This chapter has several purposes. First, my aim is to look at IR’s critical developments in the final years of the Cold War and their understanding of ‘the world as text’ (Section 3.1). It will be argued that this major shift of paradigm stands at the backdrop of IR’s growing interest in the study of identity and international relations, and that it enables the application of a dialogical perspective to the study of Self/Other relations and, ultimately, the conceptualisation of Self and Other identities as ‘storied’. In section 3.2, the chapter looks at several dimensions of identity/difference (space, time and ethics; and degrees of difference). My aim is to show that breaking down the concept of identity/difference in three dimensions eases the analysis of Self/Other relations. To finish, the chapter focuses on the significance of cultural identities in geopolitical discourse in the post-Cold War world (Section 3.3). The discussion places the discourse of the ‘clash of civilisations’ under scrutiny. It will be argued that, produced from an epistemic realist point of view (Campbell, 1993), the ‘clash of civilisations’ functions as a ‘regime of truth’ (Adib-Moghaddam, 2011) that

essentialises the ‘West’ and ‘Islam’, thus hampering non-conflictual readings of the relations between the ‘Western’ and the ‘Muslim’ worlds.

3.1 International Relations and ‘the world as text’

To regard the world of ‘international relations’ as a text, therefore, is to inquire into the style of its scripting, to reveal the way it has been mediated by historically specific scripts governing the interpretations through which it has emerged (Shapiro, 1989b, p. 11).

This statement echoes issues that are already familiar to us once geopolitics has been presented as a discursive practice and discipline. Pervasive expressions in our jargon — ‘geopolitics as discourse’ and ‘the world as text’— stem from a concern shared by critical geopoliticians and IR scholars regarding the premise that ‘objective reality is displaced by textuality’ (Der Derian & Shapiro, 1989, p. x). Some of the reasons why critical IR can be grasped as a distinct niche of analysis within IR and a region of knowledge that speaks directly to my research concerns will now be tackled. My understanding of identity bears directly on critical IR (mainly poststructuralism) anti-traditional gaze onto the world. This perspective takes notice of the tension mediating between the entrenched categories ‘through which we understand and act in the world’ (Walker, 1989, p. 26) and the awareness that such categories are artefacts of our imagination:

Contemporary claims about intellectual traditions in general are caught between an awareness that our dominant myths of origin —all those stories about a move from backward to advanced, from passionate to rational, from barbarism to enlightenment— harbor an embarrassment of subtexts (ethnocentrism, racism, the arrogance of empire, the butchery of wars and extermination camps) and the realization that these stories still inform the most basic categories through which we understand and act in the world (Walker, 1989, p. 26).

In an early 1990s book, *Discourses of Global Politics* —a pivotal reference for critical IR analyses— Jim George (1994) asserted that ‘the space beyond the Cold War’ provided an ‘opportunity to confront the narrowness and closure of traditional perspectives and redirect our energies to more tolerant, inclusive and sophisticated thought and behaviour’ (p. ix). George’s (1994) major purpose was to review the different traditions, schools and debates that over time had contributed to the making of International Relations as a distinct field of study, but from a perspective that called into question the divide between theory and the world of fact ‘out there’ (p. 4). To that end,

George undertook to unearth the solid positivist anchor and the modern orthodoxies of major IR currents such as realism and neorealism and entered into a critical dialogue with the ‘grand/great texts’ present in IR’s early stirrings. Implicit in this critical revision was the plea ‘[T]o textualize a domain of analysis’ —that is: ‘to recognize, first of all, that any “reality” is mediated by a mode of representation and, second, that representations are not descriptions of a world of facticity, but are ways of making facticity’ (Shapiro, 1989b, p. 13).

At the turn of the 20th century, IR analytical closures and the normativity of its world vision were seen as in dire need of critical revision. Critical social theory (including developments linked to the Frankfurt School and postmodernism) came to be a useful tool in, first, discarding the belief in any foundational truth as ‘a realm of purer understanding that, once discovered, can help us unlock the essential nature of the relationship between the subjects and objects of the world’ (George, 1994, p. 31) and, secondly, in reassuring the premise that ‘the objects and subjects of reality are sociolinguistically constructed, and their meanings are not given but made and remade by people in different times and places, representing themselves and their world as part of discursive practices’ (George, 1994, p. 156). The shift in focus from objective facticity to textual ‘reality’ informed the daunting challenge faced by critical intellectuals located on the margins, the periphery, and the dissident space of critical international theory (Ashley & Walker, 1990; Darby & Paolini, 1994; George & Campbell, 1990).

The most explicit poststructuralist insights that some of the critical IR scholars were ready to embrace are presented in depth in the book edited by James Der Derian and Michael Shapiro (1989): *International/Intertextual Relations: Postmodern Readings of World Politics*. This path-breaking publication was the result of critical mass convergence around some of the issues we have been introducing in this chapter. At the heart of these investigations was a concern with the closures imposed by the ‘regime of Modernity’ (Ashley, 1989). *International/Intertextual Relations* earned a programmatic character due to its insistence on, first, interrogating intellectual traditions (Walker, 1989, p. 26) and denaturalising IR debates through the engagement with semiotics, textuality and performativity, archeology, genealogy and the constitution of the subject (Der Derian & Shapiro, 1989, Foreword); but also, secondly, the insistence on coming

to terms with Modernity in its ‘historicity’, thereby unveiling the ‘logocentric procedures’ that intervene in the making of modern narratives of the world —In Ashley’s (1989) view ‘a modern discourse, disciplined by a logocentric disposition, is inclined to comprehend history, or any aspect of history according to the interpretive model of a monologue’ (p. 263).

Drawing on Derrida’s philosophy, the so-called ‘logocentric procedure’ has been grasped as ‘a process of textual/social representation’:

which creates identity, unity, and universalized meaning by excluding from the “meaningful” that which does not correspond to the logo (original, singular, authentic) conception of the real. In this way, at the core of Western history and philosophy is a textual “past” framed in terms of a whole series of dichotomies that demarcate that which is real and that which, by its definitional relationship with prescribed reality, cannot be. This story, aggregated and institutionalized via its articulations across the contemporary social theory disciplines, is the modernist *metanarrative* —the discourse of self/other, identity/difference, realism/idealism, illusory certitude, and Realist knowledge as International Relations (George, 1994, p. 30).

In the normative horizon of poststructuralism, the search for true knowledge cannot possibly bear fruit. Instead, poststructuralism seeks to interrogate political processes through a standpoint which underscores the prevalence of representational and interpretive practices (Shapiro, 1989b, pp. 11-12) that take issue with the modern belief in the ‘sovereign voice of “Man” [...] who is himself the sovereign voice of language, the maker of history, and the source of the source of meaning in the world’ (Ashley, 1989, p. 264). Thus, when the possibility of a disembodied gaze onto the world is discarded as an epistemological starting point, a radically new light illuminates the interpretation of state action and politics at large. And on the particular issue of foreign policy, it becomes increasingly apparent that ‘[T]he “foreign policies” of nation states are based on what have been shown to be interpretive practices through which various forms of global otherness have been created’ (Shapiro, 1989b, p. 15).

If an anti-essentialist attitude overbears critical theory, and the search for pure knowledge is displaced from the research agenda, it shall be then accepted that what matters to us is the exploration of ‘reality’ (the social world) as it appears in representations, and hence the operations that give substance to the politics of representation: textuality, discursivity and performativity. In fact, with Shapiro (1988), this dissertation contends that:

we lose something when we think of representation as mimetic. What we lose, in general, is insight into the institutions, actions, and episodes through which the real has been fashioned, a fashioning that has not been so much a matter of immediate acts of consciousness by persons in everyday life as it has been a historically developing kind of implication now largely institutionalized in the prevailing kinds of meaning deeply inscribed on things, persons, and structures (p. xii).

The linguistic turn which critical theory has so enthusiastically embraced does not prescribe the reduction ‘of social phenomena to various manifestations of language’. In its stead, ‘to employ a textualizing approach [...] seeks to discern the representational practices that construct the “world” of persons, places and modes of conduct and to inquire into the network of social practices that give particular modes of representation their reading’ (Shapiro, 1989a, p. 71). In other words, representation is a fundamentally social process whereby meaning is built through language and in the textuality of discourse — ‘to see the textuality of discourse is, in part, to recognize that a given text contains, or catalyzes, a surfeit of meanings beyond what its author wanted to say’ (Derian & Shapiro, 1989, p. xviii). Representation is also a culturally embedded practice through which discourses are spoken and through which ‘reality’ is actively shaped in text and discourse. Through the notion of performativity the constitutive dimension of language —the potency to constitute the reality it speaks of— is underlined.

And so, ‘[I]n a world always saturated with operative relations of identity and difference’ (Connolly, 1991, p. 15) accurate understandings of how processes of identification and differentiation unfold in practices of representation need to be accomplished. For the last two decades, the exploration of international relations and foreign policy —and geopolitics, for that matter— through the ‘enigma of Otherness’ (Connolly, 1989, p. 338) has been an irresistible pole of attraction for critical scholars (Campbell, 1992; Neumann, 1999; Hansen, 2006). This dissertation dialogues with this niche of dissent scholarship and, on that basis, aims to illuminate the intertwinements between texts and discourses by which ‘We’ make/imagine Iran.

3.1.1 Identity and IR: general parameters for an analytical framework.

Thus far, a general perusal of poststructuralism’s broad principles has been attempted without, in fact, having located the poststructuralist approaches within the broader canvas of IR. We now undertake a more direct engagement with what Connolly called the

‘enigma of Otherness’. By these means, this chapter offers insights into how IR has addressed the study of identity and difference in international relations.

International Relations’ growing interest in the study of identity began in the late 1980s and the early 1990s (Lapid & Kratochwil, 1996) as part of a research programme that aimed to challenge the ‘epistemic realism’ (Campbell, 1993) typical of IR ‘rationalist’ approaches (realism, neorealism and/or neoliberal institutionalism). These approaches had guided the early unfoldings of the discipline since the First World War. With time, however, so-called ‘reflectivist’ scholars —also known as ‘interpretive scholars’ (Keohane, 1988)— set out to unpack the importance of regimes, culture, identity, norms and ideas in the evolution of international relations, thus offering an alternative path for investigating/understanding the realm of the international different from the prevailing power/interest-oriented path in which rationalist analyses had flourished. Reflectivism, thus, began as a critical response to the overall ‘modern’ standpoint informing conventional approaches to IR. It can therefore be defined as a decided reaction against the anarchy ontology underlying the dominant rationalist accounts of the international, and also against the widespread tendency to locate analyses of international relations in a framework of pervasive conflict between ‘sovereign Selves’ and ‘threatening Others’ (George, 1994, p. 207). This urges the consideration that classical IR theory ‘is thoroughly modern in its engagements with the unfamiliar’ (Connolly, 1991, p. 49), meaning that it is firmly anchored in the premise that ‘domestic’ and ‘international’ are two separate realms of political life and that the domestic space is ‘safe’ whereas the international space is ‘anarchic’ and ‘chaotic’. The articulation of these (‘rationalism’ *versus* ‘reflectivism’) as two distinct analytical positions has come to be known as the Third Debate in IR (Price & Reus-Smit, 1998).

For the purposes of this dissertation, we shall say that ‘reflectivism’ is the broad framework in which one should locate the interest in identity in IR. This said, in the remainder of this chapter, my aim is to put on display the resources needed to understand what it means to investigate ‘identity as practice’. By analogy with Hansen’s (2006) study of ‘security as practice’, ‘identity as practice’ starts out from the supposition that identities become visible and legible in their everyday practical enactments.

To develop this argument, insights are drawn from two well-established fields of investigation in IR: the analysis of the identity-foreign policy nexus (Campbell, 1993, 1992/1998; Guillaume, 2002; Hansen, 2006; Shapiro, 1988); and the investigation of identity discourses and practices of representation in relation to Europe's constitution as a geo-cultural entity—a prevalent question in the broader debate on Europe's political integration (Diez, 2004; Neumann, 1999; Rumelili, 2004). Within both fields of research, the identification of Islam and the Muslim 'Other' as the epitome of non-Western identity has been extensively attended to. This is a shared interest with my own investigation.

3.1.2 Identity/ difference: the 'Self/Other nexus'.

The current dissertation is premised on an ontology of international relations which posits that identity formation cannot be observed without attending to its 'opposite'—difference formation. In other words, this means that we see Self and Other as being linked by relations of mutual constitution. True, a prevalent tendency in practice is that Self and Other are represented as two unrelated entities, thus to see difference expelled onto Others as a means to securing the alleged internal coherence of Selves. The analytical proposals more suitable for the purposes of this dissertation, however, hold on to the vision that identities are relational and negotiated across the Self/Other binary (Connolly, 1991, p. ix). Further, as I would like to show, in the study of identity/difference, the dialogical approach is the one by which one can attain a better understanding of the Self/Other constitutiveness.

In *Uses of the Other: "The East" in European Identity Formation* (1999) Iver B. Neumann offers insights into why the study of identity in IR has become the analysis of Self/Other relations or, put differently, the study of the 'Self/Other nexus'. Throughout the book, therefore, Neumann expounds gradually how that major question can be tackled. In what follows, my aim is to present gist of Neumann's proposal, considered to be pioneering for its original use of Bakhtinian dialogism in the inspection of identity/difference formation in IR.

The book begins with an introduction in Chapter One to the four scientific 'paths' that have inspired—ultimately shaped—the study of identity in IR. This serves

as a theoretical framework from which undertake the analysis of a specific Self/Other relation: that of Europe with her several ‘Easts’: the Turkish Other, the Russian Other, the Northern Other, Central Europe, Russia and Bashkorostan. Therefore, from Chapter Two to Chapter Seven, the focus is on the study of Europe’s constitution of identity and the practices by which Europe establishes itself as *different* from this range of Eastern ‘Others’. In Chapter Eight, the author resumes the theoretical effort initiated in Chapter One. He then looks at the perspectives of analysis which have been more carefully involved in the analysis of the Self/Other nexus. Both perspectives are related to the development of constitutivist (reflectivist) approaches in IR. To finish, Neumann (1999) discloses his own particular interpretation of the Self/Other nexus which he admits to be ‘precariously sandwiched’ between poststructuralist and constructivist approaches to IR (p. 208). For the purposes of this dissertation, we now look at the opening and ending chapters of *Uses of the Other* where a thorough conceptualisation of the Self/Other nexus is expounded.

In Chapter One, Neumann (1999) offers a general overview of how social theory has tackled identity formation and concedes that Hegel’s *The Phenomenology of the Spirit* (1977) inaugurates the tradition of analysis that deals with identity in terms of the Self/Other binary. At the basis of the four different paths from which different scholars have undertaken the theorisation of the Self/Other relation —the ‘ethnographic’ path, the ‘psychological’ path, the ‘Continental philosophical’ path and the ‘Eastern excursion’— one thus finds Hegel and Marx’s interpretation of Hegelian dialectics. The first three paths, Neumann (1999) readily admits, are ‘institutionalized forms of knowledge production’, whereas the fourth path ‘has unfolded on the margins of academia’ (p. 3)⁷. (It pays homage to Mikhail Bakhtin and other scholars of Eastern European origin who continue to enlarge Bakhtinian analysis: chiefly, Julia Kristeva — whose notion of ‘intertextuality’ will be taken up in the next chapter— and Emmanuel Lévinas).

⁷ Neumann’s (1999) understanding of ‘the marginal’ is captured in this beautiful passage: ‘[m]arginal because excluded from the center of academic disciplines and so thriving in those spaces where those disciplines overlap one another; marginal because characterized by the double-voicedness to be found in milieus of exile; marginal, also, because it has questioned the very possibility of centers and unequivocal production of knowledge; marginal, that is, to the academic, national, and political archives of Modernity. But perhaps exactly for this reason, the, as it were, subterranean theorizing that has taken place along this path has over the last thirty years descended on the other three paths and proved to be the main catalyst for change’ (p. 4).

Neumann's preference for the 'Eastern excursion' is openly admitted since it is the path on which one can read 'the story of the arrival of "poststructuralism" to International Relations' (Neumann, 1999, p. 15). It has therefore nourished critical theorists of IR, helping them sharpen their premises for the analysis of identity and tightening the knot between poststructuralism and the discipline. Sympathisers of the 'Eastern excursion' tend to consider *The Conquest of America* (Todorov, 1984) as the first work that set forth a framework of Self/Other relations. With the 'discovery' of the New World as historical background, the book gives account of the legal-clerical debate between Bartolomé de Las Casas and Hernán Cortés regarding the ontological status of the Indians. It reads, all in all, as an inspection of the constitution of difference between the colonial subject and the colonised (Connolly, 1989, 1991; Hansen, 2006, p. 43; Neumann, 1999, p. 21)⁸.

After this, the book addresses the difference between dialectics and dialogism, and the question of whether it is more fruitful to look at the Self/Other nexus in identity formations in dialectical or dialogical terms. Having defined Hegel as the father of dialectics and Marx as his interpreter, Neumann (1999) is now ready to recognise that Georg Simmel, Carl Schmitt and Friedrich Nietzsche represented a turning point in the dialectical understanding of the Self/Other relation (p. 11). But it was truly Mikhail Bakhtin, via his notion of 'dialogism', who articulated a solid alternative to Hegelian dialectics. In this alternative perspective 'the other has the status of an epistemological as well as an ontological necessity' (Neumann, 1999, p. 13). The Other is part of the Self; and the Self's identity cannot be articulated without the implicit or explicit reference to the Other.

The key difference between Hegelian dialectics and Bakhtinian dialogism resides in their distinct ontologies. On this issue, the argument that has been made is that, while Hegelian dialectics was based on the distinction between thesis, antithesis and synthesis, and the assumption that these elements are bound to each other through a movement of transcendence,

⁸ From the field of literary critique, Todorov inaugurated a line of investigation which expanded in the study of international relations. Todorov's views informed works crucial to this investigation: Der Derian (1987), Shapiro (1988), Campbell (1992/1998), Ashley (1989), Walker (1989), and Ashley & Walker (1990).

Bakhtin's dialogism replaces those concepts by absorbing them within the concept of relation. It does not strive towards transcendence but rather towards harmony, all the while implying an idea of rupture (of opposition and analogy) as a modality of transformation (Kristeva [1966] 1986: 39, 58-59, quoted in Neumann, 1999, p. 14).

Guillaume's (2002) interesting point is that, in *Uses of the Other*, Neumann formulates an ambitious proposal for the study of otherness in international relations without having in fact 'endeavoured to formalise a Bakhtinian approach' (p. 5), something that he wants to achieve instead. In exploring foreign policy (*qua* the politics of alterity) in terms of identity/alterity relations, Guillaume makes a decisive case for a dialogical understanding of identity. Drawing on Bakhtinian dialogism and the attending notion of 'transgression', he puts forward a conceptualisation of identity as 'utterance':

An utterance is the reflection of an existential and structural situation to which the author of the utterance belongs [...] Any utterance can only be articulated as a function of other utterances, and hence, an identity can be understood ontologically and epistemologically in terms of its transgressive relation to one or more others, that is, other identities. An identity participates in dialogical interaction with other identities, the latter being 'co-opted' by the former in either a conscious or unconscious manner to define itself (Guillaume, 2002, p. 11).

In Guillaume's (2002) view, rather than transcendence, it is transgression that can enable the attainment of harmony between Selves and Others. This is due to the fact that 'according to the idea of transgression (constitutive of dialogism), a person truly is herself only to the extent that she can integrate the regard of the other' (p. 8).

3.1.3 Contingency and the 'storied Self'.

Contingency is a fashionable word among poststructuralists. Assumptions such that identities flow, have no fixed position, shall be grasped in their historical, cultural, social context—in sum, assumptions leading to the conclusion that identities are 'contingent'—, prevail over poststructuralist writings. My aim, therefore, is to present what contingency means in this investigation and to argue that the notion of 'storied' Selves and Others might show us a way of strategically 'containing' the fluidity of identities and differences. To that end, we still need to engage some of the questions that constitutivist approaches to IR tackle in relation to Self/Other relations: i) the ontology of the Self/Other nexus, ii) the behavioural dimension of identity/difference relations, iii) how the discussion over identity/difference relates with a discussion of the

political, and iv) the intentionality of the Self (the subject) in the construction of difference.

Thus far we have looked at the ontology of the Self/Other nexus and we have done so by assuming that there exists a constitutive link between Self and Other — identity consolidates itself through the constitution of difference (Connolly, 1991, p. 9). So far so good, but there is more we need to look at. For Rumelili (2004), the IR literature which deals with the relationship between Self and Other ‘forces us into an artificial choice between the liberal constructivist approach of disregarding the constitutive role of difference in identity formation and the critical constructivist approach of assuming a behavioural relationship between self and other’ (p. 27). Thereby, Rumelili points at the differences of perspective in adherents to ‘liberal constructivism’ and adherents to ‘critical constructivism’; in the same way that Hansen (2006) set ‘thin’ constructivists apart from ‘thick’ constructivists (pp. 3-4). What follows from this is that liberal and critical constructivism work on different assumptions about the identity/difference nexus. Drawing on an analysis of EU relations with various states on its periphery (Morocco, Turkey, and Central Eastern European states), the point which Rumelili wants to make is that, beyond the analytical space of liberal and critical constructivism, hybrid and eclectic patterns of identity/difference relations unfold.

Rumelili’s argumentation begins by establishing a crucial analytical distinction: between the ontological basis of liberal/critical constructivist approaches to identity and the behavioural assumptions enshrined in each of these approaches. With this in mind, the aim of Rumelili’s (2004) article is to determine, first, how liberal and critical constructivist approaches position themselves before the premise on the constitutive relation between identity and difference; and, secondly, to look at how liberal and critical constructivism deal with the argument that ‘constitutive difference between self and other necessarily produce a relationship of Othering’ (p. 29).

In this discussion, the first key issue that needs to be underlined is that liberal constructivism is at odds with the ‘constitutive premise’ —it shirks away from the idea that identity/difference live on a constitutive relation. As is well known, liberal constructivism (outstandingly Alexander Wendt) has made major accomplishments as regards the theorisation of states’ international socialisation and the study of the

importance of norms, ideas, institutions and collective meanings in the formation of international relations (Rumelili, 2004, p. 31). Yet, liberal constructivism undertakes the analysis of interstate relations under the assumption that each individual state is an independent entity; and thus, in the process of constituting oneself as a distinct entity, one (the Self) does not necessarily enter a framework of difference relations from others (the 'Others'). According to Rumelili (2004), liberal constructivism uses three kind of arguments to reject the assumption that identity and difference constitute each other: i) states deploy pre-social (corporate) and social identities; ii) while some identities are relational ('role' identities such as enemy, friend, rival), other identities involve minimum interaction (e.g. democracy); and iii) states might share collective identities which are, by their own internal logic, not dependent on difference (Rumelili, 2004, pp. 32-33).

By contrast with this, critical constructivism is fully comfortable with the idea that Self and Other need and make each other. And, in this vein, it rejects the possibility of discussing 'pre-social' identities, for identities come into view when Selves and Others establish relationships with one another. Secondly, critical constructivism rejects the possibility that identities might be constituted in the —so to say— self-referential void that liberal constructivists point at. Even those identities (identifications) which liberal constructivism defines as 'non-relational' constitute themselves by reference to a reverse identity. The 'democratic'/'non-democratic' identity is a case in point. While liberal constructivism has it that a state can be defined as 'democratic' without one necessarily establishing an (at least) implicit reference to the quality of 'non-democracy', critical constructivism holds the vision that, precisely because all identities are relational, the idea of 'democracy' is ontologically tied up to the idea of 'non-democracy', and vice versa. Lastly, proponents of critical constructivism argue that even if the definition of a state is accomplished by reference to the characteristics that define its identity 'internally', 'external' difference is still what marks them off from other states.

With this mind, we can now look at what the behavioural dimension of identity/difference relations stands for. For Rumelili (2004), if liberal constructivists obstinately fail to recognise the 'constitutivist premise' is because they assume that, as far as states' behaviour is concerned, difference entails 'othering' (p. 34) —and othering

in turn resonates with radical Otherness, antagonism and open conflict. Rumelili's (2004) particular vision is closer to the postulates of critical constructivism, whereby:

The constitution of identities in relation to difference does not necessitate a behavioural relationship between self (the bearer of identity) and other (the bearer of difference) that is characterized by mutual exclusion and the perception and representation of the other as a threat to one's identity (p. 29).

Along with other critical constructivists or poststructuralist authors (Campbell, 1992/1998; 1993; Hansen, 2006; Milliken, 1999) Rumelili (2004) concedes that the Other might be conceptualised simply as 'less Self' (and not forcedly as 'anti-Self'), thereby adopting a flexible perspective on how identity/difference relations inform the constitution of the Self and the Other (p. 36). (Closely related to this, the question of 'degrees of difference' will be further elaborated in the next section).

With these insights in mind, this chapter can now resume the discussion of *Uses of the Other* initiated a few pages ago. In Chapter Eight, Neumann (1999) discloses what he construes as 'failures' in the way certain poststructuralist proposals bring together the study of identity/difference, the political and the role of the subject in processes of identification/differentiation. Indeed, Neumann observes that often constructivism offers better 'solutions' than poststructuralism on a number of issues Neumann's critique of poststructuralism coalesces around three threads.

Neumann's (1999) first critical stance is with how poststructuralism 'reads intentionality out of its analyses' (p. 208), meaning that poststructuralism exempts the Self from a responsible involvement in the making of the Other. Secondly, Neumann (1999) takes issue with poststructuralism's disregard for the 'analysis of the social process of identification' (p. 208). This perspective, one can note, plays down the significance of intersubjective readings of the Self/Other relation. And in the third place, Neumann is skeptical about how poststructuralism engages with the political—seen rather as disengagement. Mainly, this critique is addressed at Chantal Mouffe's 'poststructuralist instantiationism' for offering a poststructuralist theory of identity formation that fails to ground the Self/Other nexus politically.

As argued by Neumann (1999), the problem stems from Mouffe's rendition of identities as 'context-bound instantiations' that are, above all, non-stable—a view that is largely consistent with Mouffe's takes on *the political* (and the premise that human

interactions are dominated by antagonism and hostility), *politics* (understood as the set of practices that seek to establish order and organise human coexistence) and *democracy*, defined as a struggle over identities ‘centered on certain traditional identity nexuses in order to foreclose the possibility that other identities may be inscribed with paramount political meaning and thus may be made the defining loci of essentialist identity politics’ (Neumann, 1999, p. 211). For Mouffe, politics is constituted by its outside: the outside is politics’ *extérieur constitutif*.

The fact of the matter is that somehow Neumann (1999) shares with poststructuralists the temptation to deny the ontological possibility of identity, but nonetheless believes that ‘political discourse consists, among other things, of essentializing representations of identity’ (p. 212). And therefore, an effective identity politics, Neumann continues to argue, shall take the form of a drama in which Self and Other are featured as two uncontested realities. In this way, political discourse shall be able to mobilise Self against (or in spite of) the Other.

Now, in analytical terms, Neumann (1999) continues to assert, if some form of discourse analysis is put to work, it is to demonstrate that identities ‘cannot remain consistent across different contexts’, and that the critical examination of identity/difference formation is ‘an effective way to show their contingency, but is not a way to kill them off’ (p. 212). The implicit assumption in Neumann’s argument is that ‘context-traversing identities’ are impossible from an ontological point of view (in this regard, he is close to Mouffe’s idea of ‘context-bound instantiations’). Yet, in practice, the only sound political strategy —the only strategy that can render the struggle between Selves and Others a viable political project— consists in presenting identities as stable ‘contingencies’. Connolly (1991) is compelling when he notes that ‘a contingency’ is not ‘something that can be changed through will or decision’; there are contingencies which are ‘obdurate’ and, therefore, ‘it is a mistake to assume that the constructed character of a self-identity automatically implies its susceptible reconstruction’ (p. 176).

Lastly, Neumann (1999) argues that constructivism is able to offer a better understanding of intersubjective processes of identification that operate at the level of the Self/Other relation —something that is accomplished via ‘recognition’ (p. 209). In addition to this, constructivism is able to integrate the subject’s (the Self’s)

intentionality in its theoretical proposal —something which, nonetheless, remains paradoxical, for it works as an acknowledgement that ‘sovereignty remains foundational to this allegedly anti-foundational perspective’ (Neumann, 1999, p. 209). In view of this, it is Ringmar’s theory of action that offers Neumann a timely opportunity to match the need for an epistemology that supersedes poststructuralism’s instantiatism with an ontology that negates the possibility of a ‘context-traversing’ Self. Ringmar posits — and Neumann endorses— a theorisation of identity that relies on a ‘storied Self’ —a narrative theory of self; that is, a theory that does not seek the essence of *who* we are but *how* we come to be in narrations (Neumann, 1999, pp. 225-226).

3.2 Researching identity

3.2.1 Identity and relationality: space, time and ethics.

Accepting that the Self and Other mutually constitute each other engenders the acceptance that identities and differences are relational. A rendition of relationality in its precise terms —by looking at the interplay between space, time and ethics— takes us back to logocentrism —‘the dominant operation for constructing meaning in Western thought’ (Der Derian & Shapiro, 1989, p. xvi):

This operation (which at once differentiates one term from another, prefers one to the other, and arranges them hierarchically, displacing the subordinate term beyond the boundary of what is significant and desirable in context) typifies the logocentric procedure [...] Derrida explains that the deconstructive operation requires essentially two moves: to reverse the hierarchy and to undo the pairing. The reversal is one part of the deconstructive move. The other part is to displace the entire logocentric system for that particular text or context (Der Derian & Shapiro, 1989, p. xvi).

Previously we have talked about the ‘modern geopolitical imagination’ (Agnew, 1998/2003) and have defined it as a system of logocentric discourse and practice of international relations —initially, this modern imagination was essentially bound Europe’s vision and experience of the world since the 15th century. Thus, according to Agnew (1998/2003) what happens with the ‘Discovery of America’ is that for the colonial European subjects the world moved up to a new scale of experience which set the colonised subjects in opposition to ‘Us’ —hence the establishment of binary geographies around the categories of ‘civilisation’/‘barbarism’, ‘humanity’/‘inhumanity’, ‘Christianity’/‘paganism’, etc. The logocentric procedure

establishes that the first term in each pair always takes ontological preference over the second.

In addition to this, by *turning time into space*, the modern geopolitical imagination consecrated a mode of thinking in which the world was spatialised according to temporal criteria ('development'/'underdevelopment', 'progress'/'backwardness', 'Modernity'/'tradition'). This mode of thinking relied as well on an ethical scale that referred us to a taxonomy of 'good'/'evil', 'morality'/'immorality', or 'virtue'/'vice'. The complex interaction between spatial, temporal and ethical dimensions of identity is, therefore, a most relevant subject in explorations of Self/Other relations.

On this issue, the viewpoint of analysts vary from those who accept the overlapping nature of space, time and ethics dimensions in the making of identities; and those who argue that any one of these dimensions is more relevant in the constitution of a given identity/difference relation. Wæver's (1998) analysis of European identity construction after World War Two represents this second option. Largely discussed, Wæver (1998) adopts the thesis of 'temporal Othering' whereby it is argued that Europe constructed itself against its past identity (an identity associated with its violent past and the long history of war and violence that precedes the end of WWII). Several scholars (Diez, 2004; Hansen, 2006) see problems in Wæver's thesis, especially because the argument that, after the traumatic experience of World War Two, Europe set out to refashion itself by opposition to its own temporal Other, belittles the role which spatial alterity has played historically in the formation of current European identity, and thus the role of geopolitical Others such as Russia, the East, the Orient, etc.

More generally, Prozorov (2011) contends that 'any historical action is necessarily spatiotemporal, combining the abstraction of temporal negation with the concrete actuality of negated spatial being' (p. 1273). Therefore, it is assumed that the interplay of temporal and spatial identity features in processes of differentiation/Othering is not 'a mere empirical contingency' (p. 1279). Instead,

Just as any spatial othering necessarily involves the temporal aspect in either transforming the present being of the Other or, in the extreme case, annihilating the Other physically, any process of temporal othering requires a concrete spatial locus (p. 1283).

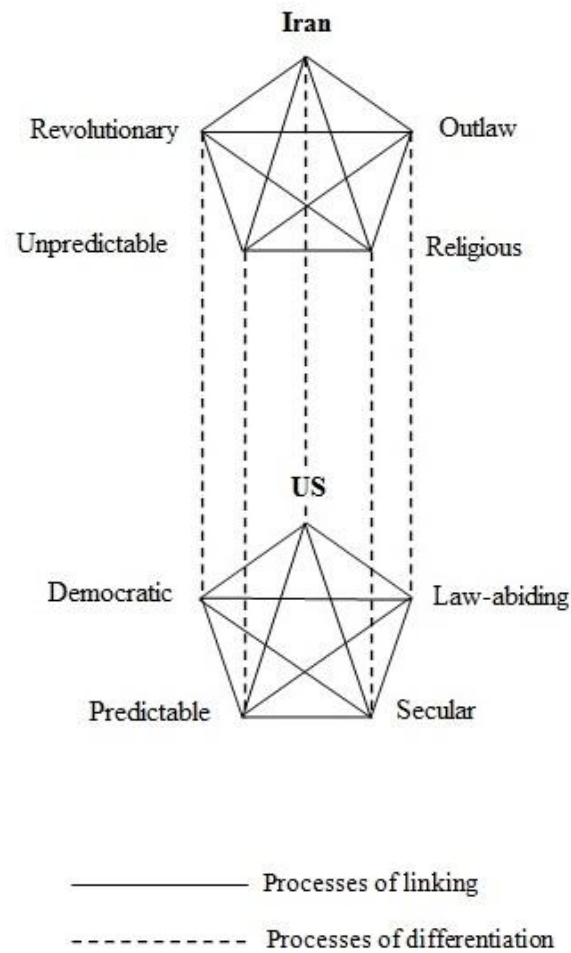
For her part, Hansen (2006) fully assumes that that the notions of space, time and ethics are essentially embedded in the constitution of Self/Other relations. In the author's formulation:

Spatiality, temporality, and ethicality are analytical lenses that bring out the important political substance of identity construction, not explicitly articulated signs [...] Methodologically, spatial, temporal, and ethical constructions are investigated through analysis of linking and differentiation, but one should not expect foreign policy discourse to explicitly use the concepts of space, time, and responsibility in [their] formulations (Hansen, 2006, p. 46).

The book in which Hansen (2006) registers this proposal for analysis, *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*, is a pivotal reference for the current investigation due to, at least, two reasons. One is the potent theoretical-conceptual apparatus used to construct the book's general and specific arguments; the second has to do with the suggestive means used by Hansen to pursue her analytical purposes. I will deal with this at greater length in Chapter Four, where the investigation's methodology is presented. The important question now is to take notice of the two sorts of operations singled out by Hansen (2006) in her inspection of how identity discourses become embedded in foreign policy formulations. The first operation consists in the disaggregation of identity in its spatial, temporal and ethical dimensions; while the second operation focuses on the exploration of how identity signs relate to each other via 'processes of linking' and 'processes of differentiation' (Figure 3.1) (p. 45). 'Linking' refers to the processes by which discourse accentuates the internal stability of identities; and so, 'differentiation' refers to the processes by which discourse establishes differences between subjects.

Hansen's proposal of analysis can be figured out by thinking of a practical example related to this dissertation's discussion —the constitution of alterity in U.S.-Iran relations after 1979 (Adib-Moghaddam, 2012; Beeman, 2005, 2013) And so, it is probably right to say that Figure 3.1 (below) is valid representation of U.S. *versus* Iran identity as has been popularised in post Cold-War narratives of the U.S.-Iran conflictual relationship, mainly in the West.

Figure 3.1 'Processes of linking' and 'processes of differentiation'



Source: Author elaboration based on Hansen (2006, p. 42).

This example shall serve to illustrate Hansen's (2006) argument that foreign policy discourses understand the constitution of identity/difference in relational terms, but also to render visible the internal/external logic that governs 'processes of linking' and 'processes of differentiation'. In more precise terms, Hansen's argument is that practices of representation (the discursive practices that render Self and Other distinct and legible) tend to emphasise the internal stability of identities via 'processes of linking' at the same time that they constitute the Self in opposition to the Other via 'processes of differentiation'.

3.2.2 Degrees of difference.

The question of scale —of how ‘big’ or ‘small’ differences between Self and Other are— has been on the back burner for much of the current discussion. And, in fact, when we deal with specific practices of representation in the second part of this dissertation, more empirically-based insights on this matter will be presented. For the time being though, we can say that in regards to the theoretical debate on ‘degrees of difference’, two are the most salient positions.

There are, on the one hand, analyses that construe difference in terms of ‘radical Otherness’. This is mainly David Campbell’s (1992/1998) standpoint in his thorough study on how the U.S. manufactured the Soviet Other during the Cold War. Most surveys on identity, however, reject the inevitability of radical Otherness, therefore allowing the theoretical as well as empirical possibility of ‘degrees of difference’. Hansen (2006), for instance, pursues the conviction that the identification of ‘less-than-radical-Others’ is common currency in foreign policy discourses. This position suggests that the kind of relationships established between Self and Other are more complex than what accounts of total Otherness propound. And actually, Hansen’s (2006) more precise argument on the matter is that Selves are usually positioned within a web of relations with Others in which multiple degrees of difference apply (p. 36). This question has also been addressed by Connolly (1991):

Identity stands in complex, political relation to the differences it seeks to fix. This complexity is intimated by variations in the degree to which differences from self-identity are treated as complementary identities, contending identities, negative identities, or nonidentities (p. 64).

Still, radical Otherness remains a theoretical possibility, which Connolly (1991) envisions as a strong temptation: ‘[T]he definition of difference is a requirement built into the logic of identity, and the construction of otherness is a temptation that readily insinuates itself into that logic’ (p. 9).

For Rumelili (2004), the issue of ‘degrees of difference’ is less important than mulling over i) the nature of identity/difference, ii) the response of the Other, and iii) social distance (pp. 36-39). These variables are in turn itemised in several heuristic devices. Rumelili (2004), therefore, argues that identities can be ‘exclusive’ or ‘inclusive’. Exclusive identities ‘are defined around some inherent characteristics’, whereas inclusive identities appeal to features that can be attained. Take, for instance,

geographical identities (European, North African, Middle Eastern); they are in principle not attainable and therefore 'exclusive' (Papua New Guineans cannot change their practices in order to become European). By contrast, inclusive identities are within the reach of individuals, states or political organisations that could potentially operate changes in their practices and discourses in order to become, say, democratic or more democratic (Rumelili, 2004, p. 37).

The effectiveness of difference configurations is dependent on how the Other responds to the identification proposed by Self. On this issue, Rumelili (2004) points out that Others might react against Self's identification in various manners that range from 'recognition' to 'resistance': the Other might accept and embrace the Self's vision, or else, revolt against it (pp. 37-38). Finally, Rumelili (2004) argues that social distance between Self and Other varies according to patterns of 'association' or 'dissociation'. Indeed, this dimension is strongly related to the two other dimensions since it will be easier for Self to associate with an Other if, first of all, a framework of inclusive identities exists and, secondly, if the Other recognises the Self's identification (pp. 38-39).

3.3 Cultural identities in the post-Cold War world

Chapter Two of this dissertation defined the period following the end of the Cold War as an era where different narratives competed for establishing the dominant script of world politics. It also anticipated that, amidst the post-Cold War narratives, some are particularly relevant for the investigation of Western contributions to the meaning of modern Iran (mainly, the security narrative of rogue states, outlaws and nuclear threats, and the cultural narrative of clashing civilisations). In what follows, the chapter looks at the model of the 'clash of civilisations' presented by Samuel Huntington first in an article (1993) and then in a book (1996). For the purposes of our discussion, it is assumed that the 'clash of civilisations' contains a cultural narrative that reproduces the epistemological architecture of the modern geopolitical imagination. From this standpoint, the remainder of the chapter offers a critical reading of the model's central tenets and presents, finally, the critique that in my view disentangles best the modern

imperative that traverses the story about clashing civilisations (Adib-Moghaddam, 2011).

3.3.1 The epistemic realism of the ‘clash of civilisations’.

In *Politics Without Principle. Sovereignty, Ethics, and the Narratives of the Gulf War*, Campbell (1993) shed light on the narrative mechanisms through which the U.S. establishment (with the media playing a critical role) wove together the story that legitimised American intervention in the Second Gulf War (1990-1991). This story established the following sequence: the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait violated the principle of territorial sovereignty that governs relations amongst modern states; the Gulf oil supplies were in consequence in danger; and so, the U.S.’ moral duty was to intervene and bring to an end this severe violation of international law. In Campbell’s (1993), view, the story was effective because it was imbued in ‘epistemic realism’. Epistemic realism works to suppress alternative accounts of international politics, to reduce the complexity of political events and to make them appear as self-evident (objective, real and unquestioned):

Because the narrative disposition of epistemic realism characterizing most accounts of the conflict (critical or otherwise) effaces the indispensability of interpretation, it occludes the manifestly political production of the dominant narrative. In contrast the notion of performance highlights the way in which events and subjects have no ontological status apart from the countless acts that constitute their reality; it therefore calls attention to the way in which the supposedly stable, prediscursive grounds appealed to by categorical judgments, definitive conclusions, and triumphalist narratives are themselves constituted through that appeal (Campbell, 1993, p. 14).

In what follows, I offer a reading of the ‘clash of civilisations’ that discloses the means by which epistemic realism is put to the service of readings of the world which ease the emergency of a clash of civilisations.

With Agnew, we have conceptualised the period since the end of the Second World War through the end of the Cold War as the era of ‘ideological geopolitics’. As seen in Chapter Two, Agnew envisions the period 1815-1989 as a sequence of three geopolitical eras (‘civilisational geopolitics’, ‘naturalised geopolitics’ and ‘ideological geopolitics’), each of which is defined by the distinct organisation of global space around prevailing political practices and different power distributions. Notably, more than two decades after the end of the Cold War, observers have not yet reached an agreement concerning the general definition of the current era of geopolitics. The view

of an author (Pamment, 2014) on this matter is notably clear: the United States has been ‘unable to produce a compelling story of geopolitical space for the 21st century’ (p. 49). And thus, different discourses compete for filling up the ‘discursive space’ (Adib-Moghaddam, 2012) without there being an overarching narrative by which we are able to read global politics in a comprehensive manner. The ‘clash of civilisations’ is one such discourses; a discourse that tells the irreconcilable relationship between the ‘West’ and ‘Islam’.

Critical analyses of the Cold War —especially those which look at how the event was recounted in the U.S. and by the U.S.— underscore that the narrative of the Cold War was firmly anchored in the ontological division of the bipolar world —a binary geography set up around two politico-ideological pivots: ‘East’ and ‘West’. Analyses of the foreign policy of the United States at the time reveal its enduring dependence on identity/difference relations based on the identification of a radical Other (the Soviet Union) representing a direct threat to U.S. national identity. But, as has been noted, the imagination of the enemy was then less bound to ‘objective threats’ than to the Self’s psychological disposition to signposting a formidable enemy:

We are left to conclude that the characteristic features of the Cold War foreign policy — a sense of endangerment ascribed to the activities of the Other, a fear of internal challenge and subversion, a tendency to criminalize or militarize responses, a willingness to tightly draw the lines of superiority/inferiority between ‘us’ and ‘them’, and the representation of danger in the external realm such that sovereignty can be sustained —were related more to the logic of U.S. (and Western) identity than to the specific threat of the Soviet Union (or other Others) (Campbell, 1993, p. 94).

Many observers agree that the end of the Cold War brought along the virtual substitution of the Soviet by an Islamic Other. True, however, this replacement did not take place overnight. Already in the late 1970s, the regions of the Muslim world bordering the Soviet Union (including Iran) were considered vulnerable to the penetration of communism (Halliday, 1995/2003). The Soviet occupation of Afghanistan came about in 1979 and, on the same year, Iran’s ‘Islamic’ revolution triumphed (Abrahamian, 1983, 2008; Adib-Moghaddam, 2006, 2008; Axworthy, 2008; Halliday, 2005; Keddie, 2007; Keddie & Matthee, 2002). While not precisely a victory of communism, the ‘Islamic’ revolution represented instead a major victory of political Islam. And this, on its own, meant a major rupture with how world politics had been scripted over since the end of the Second World War. Many have contended that

political Islam (and by extension the ‘Muslim world’ and the ‘Islamic civilisation’) rose to replace the communist/Soviet Other in condensing the ‘Western’ experience of alterity.

Therefore, in the post-Cold War, the idea that cultural difference between the Muslim and the Western worlds would be the most important source of international conflict started to gain salience. A few famous works made a major contribution to this tendency. For instance, articles such as “The Muslims are Coming! The Muslims are Coming!” by Daniel Pipes (1990) and “The Roots of Muslim Rage” by Bernard Lewis (1990) put forward the argument that, given the distinct historical developments of the ‘Western’ and the ‘Muslim’ worlds —by which it was meant ‘parallel’ developments—, we now have two antagonistic geo-cultural entities doomed to clash. Evidence of this could be found in the history of conflict relations between Islam and the West, and in events as disparate as the siege of the Ottomans at the gates of Vienna (1683), the Rushdie affair (1989) and terrorist attacks against Western embassies in several Muslim countries in recent decades. This argument was grounded on the premise that the ideological conflict of the Cold War had occluded the threat of cultural conflict, but now that the Cold War had come to an end, there was no reason to believe that cultural conflict would not impose a new pattern of relation between nations.

Pipes and Lewis’ line of argument was rooted in the belief that Muslim ‘rage’ against the West had originated from the realisation that the Islamic civilisation had been in decline since the 12th century, whereas the Western civilisation had only been on the rise. And while over the centuries many Muslims had been seduced by the allure of the West and really wanted to become like ‘Us’, there was still a minority of fundamentalists spearheading the resistance against Western secularism and modernity both in their home countries and abroad.

In particular, Pipes (1990) offered details on the two ways in which Islam challenged the stability of the West: i) through *jihad* (holy war), and ii) through the presence of Muslim communities in Western countries, for Muslims have demonstrated their incapacity of adaptation to Western ways of life. For Lewis (1990), at the base of the clash of civilisations were the divergent interpretations as to how politics and religion should interact. While in the West, he contended, advocates for the separation

of religion from politics outnumber the pro-religious camp; in Muslim countries the reverse situation prevailed (Lewis, 1990, p. 56).

In retrospect, Huntington's civilisational model can be read as a worked-out version of Pipes' and Lewis' proposal. In fact, Huntington borrowed the title for his article (1993) and later book (1996/2011) from Lewis (1990) whom, in a telling passage on the inevitability of clashing civilisations and the irrational Muslim Other, had put it that:

It should by now be clear that we are facing a mood and a movement far transcending the level of issues and policies and the governments that pursue them. This is no less than a clash of civilizations —the perhaps irrational but surely historical reaction of an ancient rival against our Judeo-Christian heritage, our secular present, and the worldwide expression of both. It is crucially important that we on our side should not be provoked into an equally historic but also equally irrational reaction against that rival (p. 60).

The clash of civilisations' model held the thesis that conflicts over identity (cultural identity for that matter) would be the most influential factor in world politics in the aftermath of the Cold War. In turn, this argument was based on the premise that '[F]or peoples seeking identity are reinventing ethnicity, enemies are essential, and the potentially most dangerous enmities occur across the fault lines between the world major's civilizations' (Huntington, 1996, p. 20). Huntington regarded civilisation as the most important level of cultural identification for people; and this was at the basis of his model's division of world space into seven or eight civilisations —Sinic or Confucian, Japanese, Hindu, Islamic Orthodox, Western, Latin American and (possibly) African.

In this setting, it was assumed that the world did no longer fit in the tripartite geopolitical structure of the Cold War: First, Second and Third worlds. And the struggle for supremacy taking place before 1989 had given way to a multipolar world whose stability would henceforth be at the expense of clashes on the edges of civilisational blocks. Huntington's model pursued the improvement of alternative discourses on the world (the discourse on the 'end of history', the Cold War discourse of the two-bloc world, the UN discourse of a world of 184 states, and the discourse that equalled the world to sheer chaos) which, in his view, failed to offer compelling accounts on the workings of current international politics. Still, Huntington's model retained elements from each of these discourses for, in his proposal, it was assumed that i) integrationist forces promoted cultural intersections; ii) the world owned a dual structure, which in the

post-Cold War was organised around the West/the Rest divide; iii) nation-states were still the most important political units of the international system, and iv) anarchy was a driving force in world politics.

As said before, anarchy and the domestic/international divide are two of the most important premises in realist readings of international relations. Huntington drew on this to explain inter- and intra-civilisational interactions. On this issue, the gist of his argument was that the dominant pattern of relations between civilisations is conquest or subjugation, whereas if we look at the interactions taking place within civilisations, we will see how commercial, cultural and military exchange and cooperation dominate (Huntington, 1996, p. 50). The grim picture of inter-civilisational relations emanates essentially from the fact that the contact zone between civilisations is traversed by fault lines where conflict is most likely to occur. This rationale subtended the widely circulated formulation that ‘Islam has bloody borders’ (Huntington, 1993, p. 35) with the later addition that ‘so have its innards’, thus making it easy for Huntington to feature the Islamic world as inherently unstable and chaotic, in contradistinction with the West which, since the end of World War II, has left behind a ‘warring state’ to foster its project as a ‘universal state’ (Huntington, 1996, p. 53).

Further, Huntington (1996) based the premise of the West/Islam conflict on three arguments: geographical continuity, the assumption that ‘the West’ and ‘Islam’ were culturally incompatible, and the observation that there existed a strategic alliance between the Islamic and Confucian civilisations which deepened the West’s estrangement of the Muslim world.

The irony is that Huntington was aware that his model was based on a reductionist reading of the world, which we can construe as an implicit avowal that the model was nurtured by epistemic realism: ‘[I]f we are to think seriously about the world, and act effectively in it, *some sort of simplified map of reality* [emphasis mine], some theory, concept, model, paradigm is necessary’ (Huntington, 1996, p. 29). Said (2000a) was much less indulgent in his consideration of Huntington’s work which he described as ‘a couple of catchy, easy-to-quote-and-remember ideas, [...] passed off as pragmatic, practical, sensible, and clear’ (p. 573), and whose popularity originated in its fortunate ‘timing’, rather than in its actual formulation (p. 569).

All in all, it is not difficult to come to the conclusion that the success of Huntington's model lay in its provision of ontological refuge to many in the West (not least in the Muslim world) who, consciously or not, opted for inward-looking and one-dimensional readings of cultural and political identities. Throughout more than two decades, the clash of civilisations has played out as a self-fulfilling prophecy whose shadow looms large in the discourse and practice of relations with the Muslim world. From a discursive point of view, it can be concluded that, by relying on the productive force of the logocentric procedure, the clash of civilisations recites a monologue which, by definition, eschews the possibility of offering impure and dialogical readings of cultural identities.

3.3.2 Critical engagements with the 'West' and 'Islam'.

A Metahistory of the Clash of Civilizations (Adib-Moghaddam, 2011) comes at close quarters with the theoretical assumptions that underlie the discourse of clashing civilisations, and it does so in a radical and comprehensive manner. On the one hand, it looks at the roots of the theoretical problems embedded in the 'clash' model. On the other hand, it scrutinises the whole self-referential logics to which the clash of civilisations resorts. By doing this, the conclusion is drawn that Huntington's theory cannot help clarify the nature of civilisational interactions (namely, relations across civilisations) because the framework for interpretation on which the model relies does not allow any deviation from the central logic of confrontation.

In recent years, a number of scholars (Achcar, 2006; Ali, 2002; Esposito, 1999; Halliday, 1995/2003; Qureshi & Sells, 2003; Salter, 2002; Todorov, 2010) have convincingly tackled the weaknesses in Huntington's proposal. These share with Adib-Moghaddam's proposal (2011) both the rejection of the culturalist paradigm (Martín Muñoz & Grosfoguel, 2012) that informs the theory of the 'clash of civilisations', and the necessity that *Orientalism's* (Said, 1978/2003) main tenets be refined, so that a cogent response to the clash theory can be elaborated. The latter purpose is a particularly important one for, despite the immensity of Said's work, over the years scholars have rightly indicated that the intellectual project of 'Orientalism' can be enlarged beyond *Orientalism* (1978/2003) —as Said (2000b) himself recognised years

after the book's publication. To aptly appreciate the point, one needs to understand in which way 'Orientalism' and the 'clash of civilisations' relate.

It is known that, in accord with Said (1978/2003), 'Orientalism' encompasses multiple things ranging from the colonial language, the system of classification, the artistic movement and the academic discipline to the attitude about the world in which the European/Western subjects actively script over (Oriental) places, peoples and their histories; whilst the East, the Orient or the Muslim world stand as passive recipient of Western projections. What can be inferred from Said's insights into the discourse and practice of Orientalism is not that, by necessity, conflict will determine the nature of relationships between Europe/the West and the Orient/the Muslim world whereas, in fact, the theory of the clash of civilisations takes conflict between civilisations for granted. That is a major difference. However, the epistemological foundations in Orientalism and the clash of civilisations are similar, as both naturalise the asymmetrical pattern of relations between Europe/the Orient (the West/Islam) and the prevalence of an anti-Muslim discourse —Islamophobia— which conceals 'a generalized anxiety about Islam and the Muslims' (Arjana, 2015, p. 9).

Unlike Huntington and his co-religionists, critical scholars are able to recognise that the Western and Muslim worlds have a long history of political, cultural and economic interaction, as well as a shared religious matrix to which the historical formation of the three grand monotheistic religions relates (Gibb, 1970; Goody, 2004; Hodgson, 1970). On this issue, the argument is not that the discourse of the clash of civilisations is alien to the historically dense interaction between 'Christianity/Europe/the West' and 'Islam/the Muslim world', but that its attitude towards this interaction reveals a greater disposition towards emphasising conflict and disengagement.

Let me now address Adib-Moghaddam's (2011) argument. Crucially, for this author, the clash of civilisations owns a status which supersedes that of a simple theory that tries to establish causal nexuses between cultural difference and international conflict in a post-ideological world. Rather, drawing on Foucault, the clash of civilisations can be defined as a *regime of truth* —i.e. the 'clash regime'— with deep roots in the dialectical configuration of East and West, Europe and the Orient, Islam and the West through the accumulation of textual practices that substantiate an enduring

narrative of difference, if not Otherness. The clash of civilisations can then be read as an all-encompassing ideational grid (a ‘regime’) permeating public discourse on ‘Us’ and ‘Them’. And so, the gist of Adib-Moghaddam’s (2011) approach is that:

The ‘clash regime’ is a cultural artefact of a very special and pervasive kind. I deem it ‘cultural’ because it is posited in different strata of society and institutions, because it claims historical depths and normative salience, because it is constituted by a range of interdependent discourses that disperse into society, at this very moment, an overwhelmingly powerful ‘clash mentality’. To understand and battle with the structural power we are compelled to find out where the clash regime has been located, in what ways it has established its archives, and why today, it commands such immense ideological authority (p. 5).

Alternatively, the clash of civilisations can be pictured as a ‘structural giant’ (Adib-Moghaddam, 2011, p. 7). Its scope is structural because, through the accommodation of familiar tropes of our imagination of the West and Islam to changing realities, it has been able to permeate contemporary representations of global politics, discourses of ‘Us’ and ‘Them’ (‘Westerners’ and ‘Muslims’), as well as the foreign policy of states in the West and beyond.

The clash of civilisations is not a post-Cold War invention, although it is the post-Cold expression of the historical process of cultural differentiation whose genealogy needs to be traced back well beyond the 1990s. For this reason, Adib-Moghaddam (2011) explores the clash regime by employing a genealogical methodology in which special attention is paid to three binaries: ‘barbarian’ vs. ‘civilised’ in Antiquity, ‘Islam’ vs. ‘Christianity’ in the Middle Ages, ‘the West’ vs. ‘Islam’ in the 18th-19th centuries (pp. 30-31).

Crucial in this regard is the fact that Modernity engineered the turning of the West into an ‘ideational marker’ that ‘pushed the ‘other’ back in time rewinding the clock of history in favour of Europe’ (Adib-Moghaddam, 2011, pp. 57-58) —a strategy that concomitantly enabled Europe’s unhinging from its Eastern origins (Arjana, 2015; Hobson, 2004). For Adib-Moghaddam (2011), it is obvious that the Muslim Other made possible the West’s advanced positioning in the unrelenting development of history: ‘[I]t was the Muslim other, in short, who ordered the syntax of Europe and its Western derivative. It was some imagined Islam that made the makings of “the West” possible’ (p. 61). With this in mind, *A Metahistory* proposes to take a few steps to eschew dogmatic readings of cultural identities.

The first step entails the inspection of the philosophical bases underpinning the idea of Europe and the West, for which Adib-Moghaddam (2011) looks at seminal works of modern thinking such as Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Marx's *The Communist Manifesto* and Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. This allows him to assert that it was in these works (and the works of many other architects of modern thinking, such as Toynbee or Fukuyama) that the idea of the West was 'epistemologically solidified' and 'professionally imagined' (Adib-Moghaddam, 2011, p. 64). Placed at the forefront of progress, Europe raised up to name Self's and the Others' place in the world, henceforth organised around binaries such as 'modern'/'traditional', 'white'/'non-white', 'European'/'non-European', 'male'/'female', etc. In this way, modern European philosophy worked to secure the ontological difference between Europe and the Rest (Hall, 1992). Such movement was effective because it established (rather unproblematically) a line of continuity from Antiquity through to nowadays, and because, methodologically, it hampered the possibility of reversing the terms of Europe's logocentric enterprise: the distribution of asymmetrical identities between Europe and the Orient, the West and Islam.

Adib-Moghaddam's (2011) point is, however, that 'there have existed throughout history alternative forms of experience and ideas which have stressed inclusiveness, and which have divorced themselves from Manichean categories such as East vs. West, Orient or Islam vs. Christianity' (Adib-Moghaddam, 2011, p. 22). In this way, one can see that Adib-Moghaddam is ready to bring under scrutiny the monological artefact of Modernity, at the same that it is recognised that, largely, a dominant tendency towards accentuating difference and Otherness in detriment of convergence and intersection has prevailed in the dominant stories of the world and of the 'East-West' encounter. The place of *Orientalism* (Said, 1978/2003) in disentangling the story of such encounter is precisely something which Adib-Moghaddam's (2011) sets out to look.

In the author's view, the one fundamental problem in Said's (1978/2003) *Orientalism* is the non-recognition that Europe's discourse of the Orient was porous, contested and resisted by Orientals. Adib-Moghaddam (2011; see also 2013) takes issue with Said's premise that the Orient was powerless in the face of an all-powerful

European narrator of world political dramas, allegedly never subjected to the Others' alternative practices of representation:

The merit of Said's analysis lies in the way he brings out the dense structural vigour of this period that lent legitimacy to the dispersal and subjugation of millions of people. But the disparity of power does not imply that the East was silent, intellectually muted before, during and after the institutionalization of Orientalism (p. 91).

The author of *A Metahistory* negates the possibility of hegemonic discursivity that Said attributes to Europe/the West and concedes, instead, that the discourse of Orientalism has been dominant (but not hegemonic) in Western accounts of the Orient. Disclaiming the West's hegemony of representation thus opens the door to forms of subaltern resistance (Spivak, 1988) coming from the Rest (Hall, 1992):

When Said argues that through 'Orientalism as discourse' European culture not only 'manages' the Orient but 'produces' it, he overemphasises the productive force of power at the expense of the creative force of resistance [...] The object (the Orient) is ostracised from the discourse of Orientalism; it does not speak, it is not present within this articulation. Without the power to speak, the '(sub)altern' remains trapped in a self-fulfilling prophecy (Adib-Moghaddam, 2013, p. 33).

To shun the risk of paralysis that readings of the West as 'an all-powerful maker of history' (p. 88) might engender, Adib-Moghaddam (2011) is ready to demonstrate that the Orient has not remained muted, incapable of articulating a response to Western visions and imaginations. Practices of resistance are to be found in the works of classical Muslim philosophers (Farabi, Ibn Sina, Ibn Arabi, Ibn Rushd, etc.) whose contributions to the making of Modernity 'have been largely chopped off in the "West"' (Moghaddam, 2011, p. 74). And it is not only Westerners that have reflected upon the Orient, but also indigenous intellectuals such as Ibn Sina and Ferdowsi (the author of *Shahnameh*) and Ibn Khaldun (the author of *Muqqadimah*) who have subjected the Orient to their situated historical and literary revision. Significantly, these authors and their works are overlooked in Said's book on Orientalism, but it is precisely these indigenous accounts that can be turned into a site for the production of a post-Western account of the Islam-West relation. This renders *A Metahistory* a referential work on which one can pick up the trail for breaking up the discursive polarity upon which *Orientalism* is built.

These observations lead Adib-Moghaddam (2011) to conclude that the problem with the 'clash of civilisations' is primarily epistemological and methodological. At the

heart of the clash regime lays a myth nurtured by ‘epistemologies of difference’ wherein ‘Otherness cannot be mitigated’ and ‘turns out dialectic with the “other” from a natural contest to a violent rivalry’ (Adib-Moghaddam, 2011, p. 109). The ‘clash of civilisations’ adopts a perspective on the West-Islam relations which negates the mutual constitution of identity and difference, and thus precludes the theoretical and practical encounter of Self and Other on a level of mutual recognition. Contrarily, Adib-Moghaddam (2011) advocates a dialogical understanding of identity:

That Muslim subject that we think other to our self, is in actual fact within our self, she is a sibling not a double. So engaging with her constitution becomes an act of anthropological necessity; it is literally essential in order to comprehend the constitution of our own self in the first place (p. 88).

As seen, within the clash regime, the causal connection between cultural difference and conflict is taken for granted, uncontested. Conflict is presented as a fact of nature that derives from the anarchical/conflictual articulation of a world made of different cultural blocs. It has already been argued why Adib-Moghaddam (2011) and critical scholars are at odds with this premise. What needs to be understood now is why the ‘clash of civilisations’ has managed to pass on its message in such an effective way; thus, why it has managed to impose a picture of the world which analysts and practitioners of international relations in the West and beyond find compelling. The answer lies in its ‘totalitarian methodology’ —in how the ‘clash of civilisations’ draws on a mode of knowledge built upon simplicity, upon familiar tropes of safe and threatening worlds, and upon culturally ingrained perceptions of certainty and insecurity:

The object of a totalitarian methodology, in short, is a decrease in complexity. It is a retractile device suggesting hermetic consolidation through reduction: the shrinkage of the self and the other into neatly defined epistemological territories. This is the ultimate node of persuasion underlying the us-versus-them logic and it is essential to understanding the spatial compartmentalization of the clash regime (Moghaddam, 2011, p. 110).

Thus, what can be said about Adib-Moghaddam’s examination of the ‘clash of civilisations’ under the light of the critical developments in IR theory explored at the beginning of this chapter is that the ‘clash of civilisations’ is a post-Cold War discourse that informs stories that make up the texture of the world. It follows from the foregoing discussion that the ‘clash of civilisations’ is not a hegemonic discourse, thus not the only single ‘structure of signification’ (Milliken, 1999) by which the post-Cold War world is made sense of, yet one that has had broad resonance among popular and expert

publics; hence the necessity to understand the standpoint by which it interprets the world and narrates the 'Western' Self vs. the 'Muslim' Other.

4. Methodology: Discourse Analysis and the investigation of narrative

4.1 Introduction

The name Discourse Analysis (DA) refers to a constellation of methodological proposals that share an interest in the relationship between discourse and the construction of social reality. DA is related to functionalist developments in the field of Linguistics and to the shift of paradigm from the understanding of ‘language as structure’ to the view of ‘language as communication’. Adherents of functionalist theories aim to show that what allows speakers to perform adequate language functions is linguistic competence (the knowledge of the formal structures of the language) plus the awareness of the conventions that rule over different social situations; for instance, over a job interview, an informal chat among friends, an academic lecture, or a letter of resignation.

In the social sciences, the work of pragmaticians such as John L. Austin —*How to Do Things with Words* (1962)— and John Searle —the father of the ‘speech act’ theory (Searle, 1979; Smith, 2003; Sadock, 2006)— encouraged long ago the formation of a rich cross-disciplinary dynamics which, over time, has fuelled the emergence of original experiences such as the application of speech act theory to the critical study of security (Buzan et al., 1998). Representing the ‘language in action’ approach, Austin first and Searle pursued the study of language performativity by drawing attention to the rules that enable the successful performance of utterances (hence Austin’s distinction between the ‘constitutive’ and the ‘performative’ rules of the language and the formulation of the ‘doctrine of infelicities’); to the difference between the locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary force of speech acts; to the workings of pragmatic inferencing; or to the Gricean conversational implicatures (Cruse, 2004; Scollon & Scollon, 1995; Yule, 1996). The impact of this approach has been strong on different areas of linguistics’ studies: ethnopragsmatics (Goddard, 2006; Wierzbicka, 2003), conversational analysis (Cora García, 2013; Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998; Tannen, 1996) or discourse analysis (Brown & Yule, 1983; Cook, 1989; Schiffrin, Tannen, & Hamilton, 2011; Van Dijk, 1997).

As the understanding of language use became ever more tangled with the regard for how social, cultural, ethnic or gender difference affects linguistic performance, we locate ourselves firmly in the field of sociolinguistics. At this point, the boundaries between neighbouring disciplines in the humanities and the social sciences become harder to discern. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) attests to this. Not representing a closed theoretico-methodological body, CDA has been defined as a ‘mode’ or ‘perspective’ (Van Dijk, 2001, p. 352) which investigates the influence of language and discourse in the (re)production of asymmetrical relations of power. CDA proponents look at how society’s privileged social groups and institutions exert dominance over the less privileged through the control of public agendas and the social, racial or gender discourses that sustain them. This explains why, traditionally, CDA has brought into focus the examination of media and political discourse, and themes such as the reproduction of ethnic, nationalist or racist discourses in and across different sites of representation. Since the early 1990s, the journal *Discourse & Society* has served as a platform for the dissemination of CDA’s developments, including the work done by leading voices such as Van Dijk, Wodak, Fairclough and Chouliaraki (Van Dijk, 2001; Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 2001).

In Chapters Two and Three in this dissertation I have presented IR and Geopolitics as two disciplines where critical scholars have investigated the interstices between discourse and the production of identity/difference (Campbell, 1992/1998; Hansen, 2006; Neumann, 2008; Ó Tuathail, 1996a; Ó Tuathail & Agnew, 1992). A defining feature in this scholarship is that it relies on modes of inquiry that seek to illuminate the significance of discourse in the construction of social life (hence the influence of CDA and poststructuralist discourse analysis). The gist of this perspective on discourse and power is aptly summarised by Jackson (2007) here:

An understanding of language as constitutive of meaning; an understanding of discourse as structures of signification that construct social realities, particularly in terms of defining subjects and establishing their relational position within a system of signification; an understanding of discourse as being productive of subjects authorized to speak and act, legitimate forms of knowledge and political practices and importantly, common sense within particular social groups and historical settings; an understanding of discourse as necessarily exclusionary and silencing of other modes of representation; and an understanding of discourse as historically and culturally contingent, intertextual, open-ended, requiring continuous articulation and re-articulation and therefore, open to destabilization and counter-hegemonic struggle (pp. 395-396).

My purpose next is to define a few concepts that usually appear very close to each other in the literature on discourse and discourse analysis —‘discourse’, ‘text’ and ‘intertextuality’; ‘narrative’, ‘story’ and ‘subject positioning’. The breadth of knowledge and debate on these issues is well beyond what I am able to give account of in this chapter. The following review develops these concepts to an adequate extent for the investigation’s purposes.

4.2 Discourse, text and intertextuality

It is difficult to take issue with Van Dijk’s (1997) recognition that ‘[I]t would be nice if we could squeeze all we know about discourse into a handy definition’, or with the assertion that ‘the notion of discourse is essentially fuzzy’ (p. 1). But, that is exactly what we need to do here: find a handy definition of ‘discourse’. My point, however, is that defining discourse is something that can best be accomplished if we undertake the definition of ‘text’ at the same time. After all, as will become visible in the upcoming chapters, my exploration of the meaning of modern Iran from the perspective of Spanish diplomats, travellers and humourists consists in the analysis of practices of representation contained in texts.

But let us begin with discourse and by saying that Foucault’s influence in discourse studies has been largely recognised by critical scholars, and so it happens that works dealing with discourse and Geopolitics (Kuus, 2014; Lisle, 2006; Müller, 2008) or discourse and IR (Hansen, 2006; Neumann, 1999) are coated with or dialogue with Foucault’s philosophy. In this way, my approach to discourse also ends up being substantially Foucauldian in the way that Holstein and Gubrium (2005) capture here:

Foucault considers how historically and culturally located systems of power/knowledge construct subjects and their worlds. Foucauldians refer to these systems as ‘discourses’, emphasizing that they are not merely bodies of ideas, ideologies, or other symbolic formulations, but are also working attitudes, modes of address, terms of reference, and courses of action suffused into social practices (p. 490).

In this vein, Milliken (1999), for instance, grasps discourse(s) as ‘structures of signification which construct social realities’ (p. 229); Ó Tuathail & Agnew (1992) have it that discourses are ‘the socio-cultural resources used by people in the construction of meaning about their world and their activities’ (pp. 192-193); and Dalby (1990) suggests that a discourse is ‘a set of capabilities and ensemble of by which

readers/listeners and speakers/audiences are able to take what they hear and construct it into a meaningful organized whole' (p. 7). Whether we call them 'systems of power/knowledge', 'structures of signification', 'socio-cultural resources' or 'a set of capabilities', what we have here is a shared concern with the frameworks for interpretation by which individuals or groups construe and make the world understandable to themselves and others. Yet, due to the uneven distribution of power and influence in society, the discourses (on gender, race, class or geopower) that manage to become socially dominant also become an instrument for the reproduction of societal or political difference.

In a landmark work, Laclau and Mouffe (1985) contend that 'every object is constituted as an object of discourse' (p. 107). This represents a significant deviation from the Foucauldian argument that presupposes the differentiation between discursive and non-discursive practices, and yet, this is not to say that Laclau & Mouffe (1985) deny altogether the possibility that a material world exists outside of thought:

[T]he fact that every object is constituted as an object of discourse has nothing to do with whether there is a world external to thought, or with the realism/idealism opposition [...] What is denied is not that such objects exist externally to thought, but the rather different assertion that they could constitute themselves as objects outside any discursive condition of emergence (p. 108).

For the authors of *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, irrespective of whether there exists a world external to thought, the naming of any object (i.e. an idea, a concept, a thing or a social problem) takes place against the backdrop of structures of signification (discourses) available in the social world. And, in this way, the kind of relationship that social/political subjects establish with the objects of the world is discursive —and so are the subjects and objects of discourse.

A text-based discourse analysis provides the occasion to examine the discursive constitution of subjects and objects in specific textual representations. This gives texts a special status as research material; texts are condition of possibility of the subjects and objects of discourse. Chouliaraki and Fairclough (2001) are compelling when they define 'texts' as forms of 'mediated interaction' (p. 45) constituted in social practices that are —and this is a critical aspect of their argument— a product of modernity and

become increasingly more complex in the late modernity. Their argument deserves a long quotation:

The category of ‘text’ arises with mediated interaction. We understand a text to be a contribution to communicative interaction which is designed for travel, so to speak — which is designed in one context with a view to uptake in others. So the category of text is linked to the category of mediation [...] The first texts were of course written, but the texts of contemporary mediated interaction and quasi-interaction are also spoken (radio), televisual (combinations of speech and image and sound effect), or electronic (for example, email). Even ‘written’ texts are increasingly multisemiotic, not only combining written language with visual images (photographs, diagrams, etc.) but also treating the written language itself as a visual surface which is often intricately worked. The term ‘text’ is not ideal for this diverse set of forms because it still powerfully suggests written language, but we shall use it nevertheless in the absence of any better alternative (pp. 45-46).

The question of mediation is crucial because, as suggested, unlike in immediate communication (e.g. face-to-face talk) the ‘text’ category engenders the concomitance of three different time-space dimensions —the contexts of production, reception and interpretation of texts. The awareness about how each of these different contexts affects the constitution of texts is pivotal for the comprehension of texts as real ‘discursive events’ (Fairclough, 1992, p. 269). Here I shall define texts in broad terms as semiotic units —meaning-making units— that can have different lengths or durations: from one word (*Oh!*) to long stretches of talk or written text (Dostoyevsky’s *Crime and Punishment*). Texts are also objects with (usually) recognisable beginnings and ends — this is directly related to the question of ‘genre’— which adopt different modes: written, spoken, or any combination thereof (Peräkylä, 2005).

Mode is an important property of texts. In recent years, scholars working in the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) tradition (Baldry & Thibault, 2006; Kress & Leeuwen, 1996, 2001) have developed a social semiotic approach to language which recognises, first of all, that texts can be ‘uni-’ or ‘multimodal’; that is, they can construct meaning by employing one or several semiotic modes. Semiotic modes can be linguistic or non-linguistic. The linguistic mode *par excellence* is the lexicogrammatical mode (i.e. what we commonly understand as the language). Non-linguistic modes are, for instance, visual language, music and sound, and body language. Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) ‘is concerned with texts which contain the interaction and integration of two or more semiotic resources —or “modes” of

communication— in order to achieve the communicative functions of the text’ (O’Halloran & Smith, 2013, p. 1).

In addition to this, my argument is that *texts do things*: texts do/produce discourse, but are at the same time a reflection of discourse productivity. The relationship between texts and discourse is complex and paradoxical, and discourse analysts have not spared efforts at trying to disentangle it. Texts and discourses constitute each other mutually: we cannot produce, receive and interpret texts without the active intervention of structures of signification, in the same way that discourses do not exist independent from their textuality. For Kristeva, the crux of the matter is that ‘every text is from the outset under the jurisdiction of other discourses which impose a universe on it’ (quoted in Ashley, 1989, p. 281). Echoing this, an important premise in this work is that the texts I will be inspecting in Chapters Five, Six and Seven can be read under the light of dominant geopolitical discourses. For this reason, one purpose in this dissertation is investigate the relationship between text and discourse (and also narrative), and to observe whether practical and popular representations support, challenge or resist the spatialisations of the world embedded in dominant geopolitical discourses.

The current discussion leads us to consider, however briefly, the question of ‘intertextuality’. Working in the tradition of Bakhtin, in the 1960s, philosopher Julia Kristeva proposed ‘intertextuality’ as a concept that would help to explain ‘how texts draw upon, incorporate, recontextualize and dialogue with other texts’ (Fairclough, 2003, p. 17). This point of view presupposes that an individual text does not exist apart from other texts with which it resonates. The most explicit form of intertextuality (‘manifest intertextuality’) is that which allows us to recognise ‘the presence of actual elements of other texts within a text’ (Fairclough, 2003, p. 39), as in those instances when texts reproduce the literal words of other texts. In these cases, quotation marks function as unequivocal indicators of intertextuality, which might suggest that the intertextual connections across texts are always this evident. The truth of the matter is that intertextuality operates also in complex and subtle ways. The notion of intertextuality is illuminating because it shows that texts construct meaning by drawing upon former texts, but also by anticipating themselves to texts that are not yet in existence, meaning that texts are bound to other texts through retrospective and

prospective relations. Ultimately, by investigating the intertextuality (and interdiscursivity) of texts, discourse analysts pursue to map out the construction of meanings in texts, across texts and across genres with the aim of, eventually, being able to identify the formation of more or less complex intertextual/interdiscursive chains (Fairclough, 1992).

4.3 Narrative and subject positioning

In analysing the construction of Iran's difference, it is important to become aware of the narratives by which 'We' usually make sense of 'Them'. The following definition of narrative is useful to understand the gist of the concept:

Each narrative has two parts, a story (*histoire*) and a discourse (*discourse*). The story is the content, or chain of events. The story is the 'what' in a narrative; the discourse is the 'how'. The discourse is rather like a plot; how the reader becomes aware of what happened, [and] the order of appearance of events (Sarup, 1995, p. 17, quoted in Fontana & Frey, 2005, p. 717).

The 'what/how' distinction is a useful analytic device which lays bare that the 'story' is the sequence of events featured in an account, whereas the 'discourse' conveys the point of view that informs the narration of the story. Thus, inspecting the discourses in which narrators locate stories entails essentially the study of the modal character (the *how*) of narratives —i.e. an examination of the attitudes and subjective positioning of narrators before the events, situations and people that get featured in stories. Take an example. The difference between 'Bin Laden ordered the 9/11 attacks' and 'Bin Laden might have ordered the 9/11 attacks' is the modality of the propositions. The propositional content of the two utterances is identical; what changes is the attitude of the speaker before the propositional content: the first instance expresses certainty, whereas the second instance expresses possibility. Here we will not inspect the modality of individual and non-contextualised propositions, but the essentials of this logic inform my reading of the texts that inspire the analyses in Chapters Five, Six and Seven.

It is also useful to deal with the concept of narrative in the terms proposed by Ashley (1989):

A narrative is a representation that arrests ambiguity and controls the proliferation of meaning by imposing a standard and standpoint of interpretation that is taken to be fixed and independent of the time it represents. A narrative typically accomplishes this structuring by adopting a perspective from which it privileges the least complex, least

ambiguous elements of the text it interprets: the least-questioned constructs, the dominant tropes, the recurringly heroic figures, the modal forms of subjectivity, the conditions that are then and there objectified as the necessary and fundamental structures of life. A narrative regards these textual elements, not in their historicity, but as the fixed, identical and self-sufficient origins of meaning. It regards them as the basic truths in terms of which other elements of a text must be seen as secondary, contingent, derivative, ‘superstructural’, or marginal. [...] a narrative reasserts closure by imposing a central ordering principle whose categories and standards of interpretation are taken to express the essential and timeless truth integrating all of the historical times and places among which it discriminates. It constructs a story in which all time, all space, all difference, and all discontinuity are cast as part of a universal project in which the ordering principle is itself redeemed as necessarily, timelessly, and universally true (pp. 263-264).

And so, narratives develop within structures of signification that tend to naturalise and simplify the links between events, situations and people or, as argued by Adib-Moghaddam (2011), operate a massive reduction in the complexity of the objects of narration by, *inter alia*, privileging ahistorical, incomplete or decontextualised readings of such objects of narration, which in turn allows us to see narratives as ‘particular mode[s] of knowing’ (Chase, 2005, p. 6) and precious assets of power’s economy of Truth. In this regard, Campbell (1993) argues compellingly that:

Telling a story establishes order and meaning. Scripting a narrative, providing a sequentially ordered plot, a cast of characters, identifiable forces, attributable motivations, and lessons for the future, is one of the most common ways we ascribe intelligibility when confronted with the novel or the unfamiliar [...] Narrativizing is a practice in daily use in multiple sites through numerous actors, but not all participants in the plot share power equally (p. 7).

This takes me to address, however briefly again, the question of the ‘subject’ and its discursive constitution. Critical theorists often agree on the idea that the subject ‘cannot be conceived independently of its inscription into the discursive surfaces (Stäheli, 2000, p. 48) or the practices by which it constitutes itself (Bevir, 1999, p. 96)’ (Müller, 2008, p. 327). The subject —another artefact of Foucauldian theory— enables the comprehension of the articulation of the positions (Self/Other) by discourse. An argument made earlier in Chapter Three was that the investigation of identity in IR had become analogous with the study of Self/Other relations (Neumann, 1999). Neumann (1999) saw a gap between the poststructuralist assumption about the contingency of identities and the observation that, in practice, identities tend to be reified —essentialised, petrified, spoken of as uncontestable objects of the world. To ‘solve’ the problem, he proposed to deal with the constitution of Selves and Others under the

assumption that, insofar as sets of subject positions made available by discourse, Self and Other are always 'storied'. In the view of Davis and Harré (1990):

The constitutive force of each discursive practice lies in its provision of subject positions [...] once having taken up a position as one's own, a person inevitably sees the world from the vantage point of that position and in terms of the particular images, metaphors, story lines and concepts which are made relevant within the particular discursive practice in which they are positioned. There are many and contradictory discursive practices that each person could engage in. Among the products of discursive practices are the persons who engage in them (p. 46).

Subject positioning (Bamberg, 1997; Davis & Harré, 1990), therefore, is a pivotal analytic device in discourse analysis that allows us to observe how discursive practices (and narratives, for that matter) operate a distribution of the semiotic space available for the representation of 'Us' and 'Them'.

4.4 Intertextual models and levels of geopolitical discourse

The difficult part of doing Discourse Analysis is actually *doing* it. The practice of discourse analysis engenders the 'operationalisation' of complex concepts such as 'discourse', 'narrative' and 'intertextuality' in order to make them applicable to the representations one wants to investigate. And there is no single and overarching formula that will satisfy everybody's needs. For this reason, each discourse analyst needs to find the ways and means that will make things work in their individual investigations. In recent years, the field of international studies has seen the emergence of compelling methodological proposals that combine the interest in the international/global with the attention to the discursive (Hansen, 2006; Jackson, 2005; Lisle, 2006; Neumann, 1999). The influence of Hansen's (2006) work in the design of the current research is considerable.

In *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*, Hansen (2006) offers a comprehensive plan for the study of identity/difference in foreign policy discourse. Therein, the purpose of surveying intertextuality is far from rhetorical. Now, it is important to bear in mind that the object of study in Hansen's book is foreign policy and how the Self/Other relation is brought into the formulation of foreign policy via identification/differentiation processes. In fact, a main goal in Hansen's analysis is the observation of discursive stability —a sensitive option considering the centrality of

‘official discourse’ in the definition of foreign policy and the assumption that all other instances of discourse are by necessity referenced to official discourse. But, what is official discourse and why is it so central in Hansen’s analysis?

Official discourse refers to the representations of a particular subject (in her work, the debate on intervention in the Bosnian war) produced by ‘political leaders with official authority to sanction the foreign policies pursued [by the state] as well as those with central roles in executing these policies’ (Hansen, 2006, p. 60). The practices of representation at this level are produced by state and government officials in the civil and military institutions and heads of international bodies in discursive events such as presidential speeches, parliamentary statements, press notes or governmental documents. The purpose of this intertextual model —model 1 in Hansen’s design— is ‘to analyze the way in which intertextual links stabilize this discourse, and to examine how official discourse encounters criticism’ (p. 60).

The intertextual model 2 deals with the foreign policy debate at large, including the discourses produced by the political opposition, the media and corporate institutions (Hansen, 2006, p. 61). Surveying this level of discourse is helpful for discerning whether official foreign policy discourse meets criticism, resistance or acceptance in political sites different from the official institutionalised realm of politics. Texts such as parliamentary debates, media texts and, potentially, texts produced by ‘employers’ associations, trade unions, large firms, powerful NGOs, and in some cases the armed forces’ (Hansen, 2006, p. 62) belong to this level.

In model 3 are located discourses not traditionally considered political (model 3A) or only marginally political (model 3B). Specifically, model 3A explores the identity articulations enabled in cultural representations such as film, literature, the plastic arts or music; while model 3B inspects marginal political discourses including the discourse of scholars, social movements, illegal associations and NGOs (NGOs different from the category included in model 2). Analyses centred on model 3A pursue to observe the crystallisation or (re)production of social, political and cultural identities in sites of representation categorised at first sight as ‘non-political’. The discourses in model 3B are worth looking at when one wants to identify resistance, dissent and alternative identity articulations not available on other levels of discourse (Hansen, 2006, pp. 63-64).

Earlier in this dissertation (Chapter Two), critical geopolitics was featured as an area of knowledge with an acute sense for the significance of discourse in the construction of geography's models of theory and practice. Scholars related to critical geopolitics saw geopolitics as a spatial-discursive that can best be investigated if one is aware of who and how one is involved in the production of discourse, hence the differentiation between formal, practical and popular geopolitics. Reading Hansen's model under this light reveals coincidences between 'formal geopolitics' and the discourse of scholars and intellectuals (model 3B); 'practical geopolitics and official discourse (model 1); and 'popular discourse' and the investigation of media representations (included in model 2) and artistic representations (included in model 3A). The coincidences in both proposals suggest that authors working in the field of critical geopolitics and IR alike have been attentive to the differences across the contexts in which representations are produced (by state officials, scholars, journalists, workers in the third sector, social activists, big corporations' workers or artists), as well as to the differences in the reception and interpretation of those representations by sources of opinion, researchers, citizens, readers, spectators, etc.

4.5 Genre, authority and knowledge

Genre is a concept traditionally associated with literary studies. At present though, it is not uncommon to come across discussions about 'genre' in other realms of the humanities and the social sciences (Swales, 1990). In social research, the array of textual genres that can be investigated is vast: tourist brochures, museum guides, school textbooks, military strategies, biographies, travel books, archival documents, parliamentary debates, presidential statements, memoirs, letters, conversations, expert interviews, and many more. Generally, it can be said that for any given investigation the analysis of certain genres (and not others) will be more or less convenient.

In addition to this, three important factors affect the decision of which textual genres to analyse: availability, access, relevance and the general conditionings of a specific research (availability of funds and time, and perhaps limitations as regards the length of the work). Due to their availability, accessibility and relevance, this project focuses on the exploration of four textual genres: interviews, travel narratives, media

comedy and political cartoons. In the case of interviews, one should be more precise and say that *per se* interviews were not available, but had to be conducted.

Drawing on Bakhtin, Chouliariaki & Fairclough (2001) define 'genre' as 'a general category of discourse; the language used in a particular form of activity, characterized by a particular thematic content, a particular style and a particular compositional structure' (p. 49). In a similar spirit, Fairclough (1992) defines genre as:

A relatively stable set of conventions that is associated with and partly enacts a socially ratified type of activity, such as informal chat, buying goods in a shop, a job interview, a counseling session, a newspaper article, a television documentary, a poem, a scientific article. A genre implies not only a particular text-type, but also particular processes of producing, distributing and consuming texts (pp. 284-285).

Although one shall not expect textual typologies to be universally valid (think, for instance, of the differences across cultures and disciplines in the canon of scientific article production), 'genre' is a notion that orients people (specialised and non-specialised publics) in recognising and classifying different types of texts. For this reason, I shall define 'genre' as an ensemble of tacit and non-tacit knowledge that enables language users to identify as non-equal two instances of text such as, say, a personal letter and a medicine prospect. In this example, the differences are easily remarkable in terms of layout, register, style, the use of technical vocabulary or lack of it, the kind of syntactic structures employed, etc. Formal differences across texts are indeed an important subject for discussion, but here my focus is on the implications in terms of authority and knowledge derived from the consciousness that interviews, travel narratives, comedy and political cartoons constitute distinct discursive events because each of them is inscribed in specific contexts of production, reception and interpretation—hence Fairclough's (1992) understanding of 'genre' in connection with 'particular processes of producing, distributing and consuming texts' (pp. 284-285).

Now, the key issue about genre is that, as Hansen (2006) cogently argues, it 'helps establish some parameters as regards the interpretation of texts, the modalities of authority they seek to establish and the forms of knowledge they rely upon' (p. 66). An example can help understand the gist of Hansen's argument.

It is not difficult to realise that a science fiction novel narrating a nuclear dystopia is a different kind of text than a congress report addressing the risks of nuclear proliferation. In both texts, the common theme is nuclear energy, but while the science

fiction novel might tackle the nuclear energy question in, so to say, a trivial manner — without there being a strict obligation to offer faithful information on the issue—, a congress report on this subject needs to be based on real and verifiable data. It is very likely that the novel's quality would be higher if the story is grounded on a good understanding of how nuclear energy is produced, and for which purposes, but that would not make the dystopia novel a less fictional text. Hypothetically, the novelist could end up being considered some kind of nuclear expert, but when it comes to the public debate over nuclear energy, it is likelier that a congress report would be read as a more authoritative piece than a science fiction novel. This is precisely the core of Hansen's argument: the generic conventions that rule over texts have implications in regards to the capacity of texts for setting up the subject positions in a public debate on a certain matter. And so, when discussing foreign policy, it is more likely that texts such as presidential speeches, governmental reports, think tank documents or military strategies will be considered more authoritative than science fiction novels or articles in a satirical magazine.

We have some assumptions about the different ways in which research interviews (with diplomats), travel books, stand-up comedy and political cartoons establish authority and the distinct forms of knowledge upon which these pieces rely. Aprioristically, the analysis considers that diplomatic representations of Iran rely on knowledge built on 'expertise' and 'experience'. In their capacity as diplomatic agents of the state, it is easy to grasp diplomats as international relations' experts (regional experts or Iran experts, for that matter), but their 'experience' on the field adds up a valuable dimension to the knowledge they might be able to develop about foreign places and peoples. Also, considering the institutional significance of diplomats, it can reasonably be said that diplomatic representations project a 'formal' modality of authority.

The premise of having been 'over there' on the field is inherent to the generic definition of travel writing and, therefore, it is little contentious to assert that the accounts of travellers in Iran shall be firmly established on 'experiential' knowledge (see Table 4.1). A different thing is that readers could eventually confer upon travel tales the consideration of stories specialised in different aspects of a foreign country (culture, society, geography, folklore, etc.), in which case they could be considered 'expert' texts

(and in some way they are). Defining the kind of authority that travel tales are able to establish is directly related to this —thus, in principle, the stories of travellers are not expected to be authoritative from a strict point of view, but could end up being so if the reception context encourages that possibility. When a country (culture or polity) is scarcely known and alternative texts are not available or accessible for a given readership, travel books could become referential works. I believe this is the case in the study under way.

Comic representations differ from the aforementioned in that they are not essentially bound to the first-hand knowledge premise. And so, the dissertation assumes that the knowledge in humorous texts is ‘mediatised’, reliant on third sources. Furthermore, the thesis categorises stand-up comedy and political cartoons as ‘performative’ satirical media genres that differ from ‘documentary genres’ (Hansen, 2011) such as reporting or photojournalism in the treatment of news stories. It is obvious that a sarcastic and irreverent tone is peculiar of satirical texts; while it is absent from serious journalism texts. And so, it is difficult to think that readers or spectators consume political humour texts because they expect to find *there* reliable or informative chronicles about political events. In this way, comic representations establish an ‘informal’ modality of authority.

Table 4.1 Genre, modality of authority and type of knowledge

Social/Political subjects	Diplomats	Travel writers	Humourists
Object of analysis	Practical representations	Popular representations	Popular representations
Textual genre	Research interview	Travel books	Stand-up comedy monologue/Political cartoons
<i>Modality of authority</i>	Formal	Informal/Formal	Informal
<i>Type of knowledge</i>	Expert/Experiential	Experiential/Expert	Mediatised

4.6 Techniques and methods

Thus far, the key elements intervening in the design of my research have been introduced and reasoned upon, except for one —the research techniques used to collect the texts that make up the thesis’ empirical material (Table 4.2). Interviewing and

textual selection are methods with a long tradition in qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Klotz & Prakash, 2008), but also methods that can be approached under different lights and put in practice with diverse aspirations. Owing to this, it is important to specify how this work understands and applies interviewing and textual selection.

Table 4.2 Research design

Levels of geopolitical discourse	Subjects of discourse	Genres	Techniques
Practical	Diplomats	Interview Research	Interviewing
Popular	Travel writer	Travel narratives	Textual selection
	Comedian	Stand-up comedy	Textual selection
	Cartoonists	Political cartoons	Textual selection

This project starts off from the premise that methods and techniques are ‘part of the repertoire of devices where knowledge exists and is created in action rather than in representation’ (Aradau & Huysmans, 2013, p. 9). In this way, we take issue with the traditional view that empirical data are ‘out there’ and that the role of social scientists is to apply the techniques that will best apprehend them. Consonant with critical theory’s basic tenet denying the separation between subjects and objects of investigation, the investigation sees techniques and methods as an intervention in the social world by which the social world is actually created.

4.6.1 Interviewing.

The current research uses in-depth interviewing (Corbetta, 2007, pp. 352-353) as a technique for exploring how Spanish diplomats view Iran. As cogently argued by Kuus (2014) ‘[D]iplomacy is one of the principal social realms in which the constitution and circulation of geopolitical knowledge actually happens’ (p. 33), and yet, the ‘geopolitical knowledge’ (Cornago, 2016) of diplomats has been scarcely investigated. Also, Kuus (2014) sees diplomats as professionals that ‘are not quoted on the front pages of newspapers’, but who nonetheless are many times in charge of coining, testing

and operationalising geopolitical knowledge claims (p. 38). If this is so, analysts could think of more ways for studying the way in which diplomats spatialise the world.

The use of interviewing for inspecting meaning- and identity/difference-production is not wide-spread in critical international studies. Remarkable exceptions to this are Merje Kuus' (2014) book on *Geopolitics and Expertise*. The rare inclusion of interviews in poststructuralist discourse analysis has been associated (Hansen, 2006, p. 85) with the generic definition of interviews as text types produced in the interaction between an interviewer and an interviewee, where usually the interviewer is also the person in charge of the investigation. This poses challenges as regards the researchers' participation in the production of the text.

In recent years, the various problematiques around interviewing have been subjected to reflective work by qualitative researchers (Dunn, 2010; Fontana & Frey, 2005; Gubrium & Holstein, 2002; Gubrium, Holstein, Marvasti, & McKinley, 2012; Kichenloe & McLaren, 2005; Koro Ljunberg, 2008) who have provided significant insights into the ontology of the interview —and, by extension, interviewers' and interviewees' ontologies.

Conventionally seen as a form of interaction between an interviewer and an interviewee, critical qualitative researchers continue to regard the interview as an interactive discursive event. What has changed —substantially— is their elucidation on how interviewers and interviewees contribute to that particular conversational event. Traditional approaches anchored the interpretation of interviewees' participation in interviews in the aprioristic definition of interviewees as 'vessels of answers' (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002, p. 11) —individuals whose role in the interview situation was to act as providers of answers to the questions fired by interviewers. The respondents' involvement in the interview was considered to be (only) a matter of transferring pre-existing knowledge to an interviewer that was, by contrast, seen as the active party in the dialogue.

Reflective methodologies find these assumptions fundamentally flawed and argue instead that knowledge is constructed in the course of the interview. This shift in perspective is crucial because it redefines altogether the place of the interviewer and the

interviewee in the interview situation. For Fontana & Frey (2005) therefore an interview is:

a contextually based, mutually accomplished story that is reached through collaboration between the researcher and the respondent. Thus, just to tell what happened (the *what*) is not enough because the what depends greatly on the ways, negotiations, and other interactive elements that take place between the researcher and the respondent (the *how*) (Ellis & Berger, 2002) (p. 714).

This new perspective places the interviewer and the interviewee in the position of co-producers of the interviewing event and categorises interviews as ‘negotiated texts’ (Fontana & Frey, 2005, p. 716). Two important implications follow from this. The first is that, as noted by Fontana & Frey (2005) above, for the new paradigm of analysis the interaction that takes place between the interviewer and the interviewee is worthy of attention in its entirety, and it is assumed that both interlocutors are involved in the co-making of questions and answers. The second implication concerns how all of this forces the resignification of the idea of production.

In my general introduction to the text before, I reminded the common distinction between the contexts of production, reception and interpretation of texts, and also presented ‘texts’ as modern forms of discourse practice defined by their mediated character where, ideally, we shall be able to establish distinctly who the producer, the receptor and the interpreter of a piece is. My point now is that featuring the interviewer and the interviewee as co-producers of the interview text challenges the analytical usefulness of the ‘three-context’ premise: what we have in the research interview situation is that the productive and receptive dimensions of the interview collapse into each other. This is true for all genres of interviews, but the specificity of research interviews is greater in one particular regard: the purpose of this material is not massive dissemination and circulation across broad audiences (as would be the case of journalistic interviews). Research interviews are specifically conducted for investigative purposes, hence the issue of confidentiality and the obligation of handling interview material ethically. The relevance of mentioning these matters here is that they, ultimately, force us to revise not only how the production side of interviews is reconceptualised under this new paradigm, but also the very idea of reception.

Today, the use of interviewing as a research technique is not uncommon in geographical investigation. Kuus’ (2014) work is a telling example, but others are also

worthy of mention. A few pieces (Cameron, 2012; Prokkola, 2009, 2015; Wiles, Rosenberg, & Kearns, 2005) have discussed the potential of interview-based research in geography and the centrality of concepts such as ‘story’, ‘narrative’ and ‘discourse’ in them. A common technique in sociology and anthropology investigations (Cook-Gumperz & Gumperz, 1997; Riessman, 2012), interviewing can be used by geographers to explore the subjective construction of the meaning of particular events or experiences and the significance of space and place in the constitution of such events.

Such perspective has been convincingly applied by Prokkola (2015) in a survey of border living experiences across the Finnish-Swedish border. In a previous work, Prokkola (2009) also raised an interesting point concerning strategies for the interpretation of interview material. The argument was that researchers have two broad options: either to offer their particular accounts of the interview and the interview process or to narrativise the accounts told by interviewees (Prokkola, 2009, p. 443). In either case, one must bear in mind that interviews involve a good deal of ‘retrospective meaning-making —the shaping or ordering of past experience’ (Chase, 2005, p. 656) and that interviewees are ‘narrators [who] constantly evaluate their accounts and their impact on their audience’ (Wiles et al., 2005, p. 91). What follows from this is that a critical reading of interview material shall be oriented to inspect ‘layers of meaning’ and ‘the embedded meanings and evaluations of the speaker and their context’ (Wiles et al., 2005, p. 89).

4.6.2 Textual selection.

There is one fundamental difference between the two research techniques used in this dissertation: acting as an interviewer, I have been an active participant in the co-production of the interview texts, but there is no involvement whatsoever on my behalf in the production of discursive events such as travel books, a stand-up comedy monologue and political cartoons. The two travel books, one stand-up media comedy monologue and seven political cartoons analysed in Chapters Six and Seven are authored by producing subjects in space-time contexts (‘producing contexts’) radically detached from the context of the current investigation. In this way, when this material is investigated we shall still be able to establish distinct moments in the production, reception and interpretation of texts. Personally, I have been a receptor of these pieces

(sometimes even before the start of this project) and will act here as their interpreter. In lieu of a production stage, the significant moment here was the selection of texts for the analysis from a broad textual universe.

Generally, the selection of texts for an investigation comprises decisions on how many texts and which textual genres to include. The issue of genre has been tackled before, but as regards the construction of a textual sample (and the elucidation of how big it should be) I shall begin by establishing first a broad distinction between the specific texts that will be subjected to analysis and discussion, and the undetermined number of texts which the discourse analyst exposes herself to throughout the research process (and even before)⁹. The second category of texts performs a pivotal service to the discourse analyst in the interpretation of the first genre of texts.

Still, the question that most of us would like to know after all is how many texts one should read. And the answer shall be as many texts as necessary to ensure a good analysis (Hansen, 2006, p. 82) —vague yet right enough. For Neumann (2008), the ‘how-many’ decision is closely connected with a different kind of asset —‘cultural competence’—, because ‘a researcher needs a basic level of cultural competence to recognize the shared understandings that create a common frame of reference’ (p. 64). In this setting, being competent means being well-equipped enough so as to recognise the embedding of narrations in particular discourses and to give account of how narrations orient the construction of meaning towards particular directions. There are no shortcuts: building such competence requires reading a lot of texts.

With this in mind, I shall further argue that no objective criterion can be set for elucidating the adequate size of a text sample. The adequacy of a sample will be determined by individual research purposes and the strategy of analysis adopted in the interpretation of texts. Potentially, the empirical base of a text-based research can range from one single text to infinite. Thus, in view of the difficulty for establishing beforehand how many texts one should read, I suggest that we would better ponder over whether our interpretive practice will be ‘intensive’ or ‘extensive’. In the first case, a small selection of texts will suffice because it is assumed that texts will be subjected to in-depth scrutiny. The opposite rationale is true for extensive analyses. This kind of

⁹ I am here drawing inspiration from Hansen’s (2006) difference between ‘key texts’ and ‘general material’ (pp. 82-85), but here understood in looser terms.

strategy is more common in content analysis studies, which have a much stronger quantitative orientation —hence the number of texts for analysis tends to be wide. My preference here is for intensive analysis, which explains why my sample is not too broad.

Previously, I have succinctly argued why interviewing was an attractive technique for this project —talking to Spanish diplomats involved with ‘the Question of the Islamic republic’ (Adib-Moghaddam, 2008) was feasible and notably relevant for my interests. The reason why I also opted for studying travel books, stand-up comedy and political cartoons was also the availability and accessibility of these texts, and my presupposition that these would be valuable discursive events. The question of availability was absolutely central. Tales of travels in Iran have been coming out in Spain since the early 1980s, making up a dozen titles as of today. The thesis deals with the production of Iran’s meaning and difference in two of them: *Negro sobre Negro* (1996/2000) and *La Cueva de Alí Babá* (2002), both authored by Ana María Briongos.

My selection of humour texts took place in two steps, where the second step was determined by the first. I will explain. Chapter Seven reads as a chapter on geopolitics and humour organised around the analysis of one central and key text: a stand-up comedy monologue that shows a parody of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad performed by a famous Spanish comedian: Joaquín Reyes. The selection process was restrained in advance —to my knowledge, the one featured here is a unique text within its genre (i.e. there is no broader universe of sketches parodying Mahmoud Ahmadinejad done by other Spanish comedians). This being so, the option of elaborating an in-depth analysis of this single text seemed the most adequate, but also a decision with implications in my later decisions. This concerns particularly my selection of the political cartoons also analysed in Chapter Seven (step 2), which was guided by the purpose of surveying more humour practices that would help buttress the analytical path initiated with the sketch analysis. This is the reason why Ahmadinejad is the thematic focus on most of the caricatures included in the analysis.

4.6.3 Interpretation as analysis

For Michael Shapiro (1988) the ‘hermeneutic enterprise’ (the ‘interpretive enterprise’ for that matter) consists in ‘an attempt to disclose the meanings of various cultural practices in a way that makes us (those who share the culture of the interpreter) reflect on the meanings of our own practices’ (p. 15). Indeed, the thrust of reflective work (with its varied combinations of critical theory and critical methodologies) is to heighten the awareness of the beliefs, visions and assumptions underpinning the interpretation that ‘We’ make of surrounding realities —as well as of the realities that are culturally, historically and geographically far from ‘Us’. An interpretive enterprise, therefore, sets out to look at how the construction of meaning is accomplished in diverse sites of representation by different social subjects. And so, doing interpretive analysis is an ambitious enterprise. On the one hand, because, unlike with other methods, in interpretive practice discourse/narrative analysts need to deal with themselves as part of the process of dealing with others’ subjectivities; hence the importance of pondering over our actual uses of methodology and the intervention of analysts in them. On the other hand, interpretive analyses are exigent because the process of constructing meaning is a complex one, and so it is the process of interpreting how meaning was constructed by others.

In the next chapters, I set out to investigate the construction of Iran’s meaning and difference in the representations of Spanish diplomats, travel writers and humourists. This group ‘translators’ can also be grasped as ‘geopolitical story-tellers’ —subjects whose practices of representation contain geographical arguments and geopolitical representation that reproduce a host of binary geographies that make Self different from the Other. Diplomats, travel writers and humourists are subjects whom, from their situated points of view, construe the world, and the place of people and their dramas in it. And thus, this investigation envisages diplomats, travellers and humourists as interpretive subjects whose beliefs, visions and assumptions are woven into the stories that recount what goes on in the world.

5. Diplomacy at the encounter with Iran: Practical geopolitics and the narration of the world

5.1 Introduction

Of all state institutions, diplomacy is the one whose contribution to the cultivation of interstate relations is conceivably the most substantial. In a modern sense, therefore, diplomacy renders meaningful the principle of ‘a world of territorial states’ (Agnew, 1998/2003). The cultivation of relations between states, however, does not take place in a vacuum. As simple reasoning is that how states see each other influences the kind of relations they develop —If state A considers state B a ‘friend’, state A will want to develop intense political, cultural and economic relations with state B. If state A considers state B a ‘foe’, state A will seek to ignore or combat state B in any form. Yet, the factors which affect how two states see each other —and the extent to which states achieve the goal of establishing relations with others— are not easy to determine. Past perceptions and constructions of each other’s identities are probably relevant, but also how states see the world more generally and their place in it more particularly.

In lieu of a conventional definition of ‘state as object’, the thesis generally draws on a definition of ‘statecraft as a multitude of practices’ (Kuus, 2010, p. 687). This analytical distinction is important. It reveals that the thesis adopts an anti-essentialist standpoint on the state and that, in consequence, the discussion of how states see other states is in fact a discussion of how a multitude of ‘intellectuals of statecraft’ engaged in the production of world politics view other states —or events, situations and people of the international relations. As introduced in Chapter Two, the phrase ‘intellectuals of statecraft’ stands for ‘the whole community of state bureaucrats, leaders, foreign policy experts and advisors throughout the world who comment upon, influence and conduct the activities of statecraft’ (Ó Tuathail & Agnew, 1992, p. 193). And since the members of a state’s diplomatic corps (diplomats) belong to this community, it is assumed that by looking at how Spanish diplomats view and represent Iran the dissertation inspects visions/representations of Iran which symbolize the state’s official visions of the Islamic Republic. In this way, it is also assumed that while the diplomatic imagination does not exhaust the state’s imagination of Iran, it represents a meaningful part of it.

Other than valuable from an ‘official’ (Hansen, 2006) and ‘practical’ (Ó Tuathail & Agnew, 1992) point of view, the investigation of diplomatic representations of Iran is

important for what it reveals about the construction of modern Iran's meaning and the production of identity and difference. The previous chapter introduced the argument that '[T]hese professionals [diplomats] are not often quoted on the front pages of newspapers but it is often them who actually coin, test, and operationalize geopolitical knowledge claims' (Kuus, 2014, p. 38). The rationale behind this argument is that, in spite of diplomacy's distance from the public eye, the geographical arguments and geopolitical representations enshrined in diplomatic narratives of world politics inform the practice of international relations; because ultimately diplomats are 'intellectuals of statecraft' that spatialise the world as they elaborate narrations of 'Us-here', 'Them-there' and the world of international relations. Diplomacy, therefore, can be seen as a social and discursive practice because diplomats should also be grasped in their double role as cultivators (practitioners) of international relations and narrators of world politics' dramas.

The chapter sets out to investigate the representation of Iran in the practical geopolitical discourse of Spanish diplomats and, therefore, the constitution of the Iranian subject in diplomatic narratives. Also, the analysis starts out from several key assumptions. The first assumption is that the occurrence of the 1979 revolution 'revolutionised' perceptions of Iran world-widely and that Spanish elites were not unaffected by such transformations. The second assumption is that Spanish diplomats' visions of Iran are informed by how diplomats construe the history of Hispano-Iranian relations. The third assumption is that, other than by the construal of Hispano-Iranian relations, the diplomatic imagination of Iran is influenced by the more general debate over the meaning of Iran and thus by narratives by which post-revolutionary Iran has been narrated in the West.

And so, the chapter is as much about the meaning of Iran for Spanish diplomacy as it is about Hispano-Iranian relations and the place of Iran's in Spain's foreign policy orientations. It first proceeds by introducing the intellectual perspective that deals with diplomacy as 'social practice' and with the link between diplomacy and the production of identity/difference (Section 5.1.1). The chapter then offers a broad introduction to Spanish foreign policy that aims to illustrate Iran's marginal place in it (Section 5.2). It then offers insights into the history of Hispano-Iranian relations until the 1979

revolution (Section 5.3). In the remaining sections, the chapter deals with Hispano-Iranian relations and the representations of Iran in accounts of Spanish diplomats.

To construct these arguments the chapter draws extensively on interview material from 16 in-depth interviews I conducted for this project (see Annex One). Almost all my interviewees were diplomats who have been involved in Iranian affairs at some point in their careers; a few were MFA officials generally involved with Middle Eastern affairs. Their testimonies were central to the investigation, for the reason that Hispano-Iranian relations have not been studied in any systematic way thus far and the more general literature on Spanish diplomacy and Spanish foreign policy does not offer many insights into the subject of my investigation. No argument has been made solely on the basis of one single or two interviews. Any time that an idea has been taken literally from the interview material, it is duly quoted and followed by the word '(Interview)'. In all possible occasions, I have used alternative sources to cross-check testimonies on events and situations of the distant past.

5.1.1 Diplomacy and mediation.

There has been in recent years a continuous stream of works examining diplomacy's place in the broader domain of international relations (Constantinou & Der Derian, 2010; Constantinou et al., 2016; Cornago, 2013; Der Derian, 1987; Sharp, 1999). Often drawing on illuminating accounts of diplomatic history, these works offer critical insights into the classical and contemporary meanings of diplomacy, the relation between diplomacy and foreign policy, and the conventional understanding of diplomacy as a state practice generally endorsing the existence of the international system of states. As noted by Constantinou and Sharp (2016):

Diplomacy has been seen in mainstream IR as a state practice. It is assumed to exist, and exist in the way it does, because states and the modern system of sovereign territorial states exist. It is assumed to function in accordance with the interests, priorities and concerns of these entities. In short, for most scholars the sovereign territorial state provides diplomacy *raison d'être* (p. 16).

In consonance with this, there has prevailed in mainstream IR the vision that diplomats represent national interests and that their main task is to implement abroad the state's official foreign policy. Critical scholarship has opted instead for seeing diplomats as subjects that mediate between the several forms of estrangement operating in the

international world —that is, as subjects who inhabit an interstitial space between *different* individuals or groups of entities (Der Derian, 1987, p. 6); hence the increasing tendency to study diplomacy in relation to the investigation of identity/difference, representation and the world politics stories in which ‘intellectuals of statecraft’ (Ó Tuathail & Agnew, 1992) locate ‘Us’ and ‘Them’. In this spirit, critical scholarship has come to see diplomacy as ‘a site for the deployment of truth claims and identity games [...] a site for exercising knowledge as power and power as knowledge’ (Constantinou & Sharp, 2016, p. 21); or, as Sharp (1999) has suggested, ‘a discrete human practice constituted by the explicit construction, representation, negotiation, and manipulation of necessarily ambiguous identities’ (p. 33). To an extent, this challenges the vision that diplomats ‘narrate the dominant story of the nation’s place in the world’ (Kuus, 2014, p. 35), or at least that they *only* do this. And still, a good starting point for us is to acknowledge that whatever these ‘intellectuals of statecraft’ (Ó Tuathail & Agnew, 1992) know, think or say about ‘Us’ and ‘Them’ is a matter of public/political interest.

Modern discourse and practice often take for granted that diplomacy is essentially bound to statecraft but, as critical scholars have readily pointed out, that is a ‘modern vision’ which obscures the fact that diplomacy —and diplomatic practices for that matter— predates the modern state and the *raison d’état* imperative. For this reason, critical scholars pursue to critically historicise and contextualise diplomacy and, by doing this, draw attention to the fact that diplomacy’s meaning and diplomacy’s meaning-makers change across temporal and social settings. Thus, while nowadays diplomacy is established as a professional practice undertaken by accredited state agents, the diplomats of the past belonged to a much more variegated stock. They were travellers, soldiers, merchants, geographers or adventurers who did not necessarily represent ‘the state’ in a modern sense, but were nonetheless involved in the mediation among strangers, the collection of information and the dissemination of knowledge about other places and peoples.

This leads to another crucial argument: the idea that there is a ‘symbiotic relationship between diplomatic knowledge and practice’ (Constantinou, 2013, p. 144) and that different understandings of diplomatic practice are coupled to different forms of diplomatic knowledge. Constantinou’s (2013) reflection on the matter is worth quoting:

the production of diplomatic knowledge should be understood not only within the parameters of the diplomatic service that is the business of legitimating foreign policy nowadays, but also within the context of the mediation work and questioning that is necessary for the understanding of social and political phenomena (Gadamer 1975) and, more ambitiously, with regard to critical humanist concerns that seek to “awaken consciousness”, through dialog, esthetics, and affect, to new forms of being and becoming (Irigaray 2000; Halliwell and Mousley 2003) (pp. 146-147).

The mode of diplomatic knowledge oriented to and resultant from the enactment of a state’s foreign policy —knowledge that is thought to help states in ‘getting their way with others’ (Constantinou, 2013, p. 143)— has been named ‘advocacy-knowledge’. In contradistinction, the label ‘reflexive-knowledge’ has been used to refer to the mode of knowledge which derives from and is infused with the daily encounters of diplomatic agents with the *other* diplomatic agents and Others in general —the knowledge gathered in the constant interaction between ‘Us’ and ‘Them’ (Constantinou, 2013, p. 143). Reflexive knowledge is the ‘self-inquisitive’ and ‘questioning mode’ knowledge (Constantinou, 2013, p. 148) and the prevalent tradition of humanist knowledge in diplomatic practice until modern statehood fostered the gradual institutionalisation of the advocatory style of diplomacy. For Cornago (2013) the historical sequence behind the gradual weakening of humanism appears as something like this: ‘[F]irst, wars of religion, then competition amongst European monarchies, and finally the rise of Western imperialism greatly complicated the normal continuity of that humanist tradition of diplomacy’ (p. 37).

Of particular interest for us is that each mode of knowledge relies on a different understanding of Self/Other relations. On this issue, Cornago’s (2013, 2016) distinction between ‘diplomatic knowledge as heterology’ and ‘diplomatic knowledge as statecraft’ proves helpful and suggestive. To construct his argument, inspiration is drawn from *On the Way to Diplomacy* (1996) where Constantinou registered the vision that:

any reflective understanding of diplomacy should consider the experiences of diplomats not only through the lenses of the representational burden of diplomatic ‘self’, but also through the implications of his or her engagement with the diplomatic ‘other’, either as ‘subject’ or as ‘object’ (Cornago, 2013, p. 33).

Thus, Cornago (2013) understands that the social and political significance of diplomatic practice cannot be fully appreciated unless attention is paid to the interactive dimension of diplomatic relations, which entails the full recognition that diplomacy is

constituted in the interaction between Selves and Others. The logical consequence of this seems to be —drawing on Michel de Certeau— that diplomacy shall be understood as a form of ‘heterology’:

For its actual performance endlessly demands of the ‘self’ —in front of a ‘returning other’ which can neither be avoided nor overcome— the establishment or cultivation — without assimilating each other to the category of sameness— a mutual and durable relationship (Cornago, 2013, p. 34).

Formulated as such, we are no longer dealing with a theoretical or philosophical question. Rather, as Cornago (2016) notes, ‘it comes easily from the observation of the phenomenology of diplomacy’ and ‘its observable practices’ (p. 137), that the diplomatic Self’s engagement with the Other occurs in complex and varied forms, and that this engagement bolsters ‘the very questioning of the “self” in a process of mutual re-configuration of subjectivities’ (Cornago, 2016, p. 136). The opposite reasoning applies to conceptualisations of ‘diplomatic knowledge as statecraft’ which, imbued in the tradition of advocacy knowledge, presuppose the placement of the Other ‘in a position of observable exteriority outside the closed boundaries of the “self”’ (Cornago, 2016, p. 136), thus excluding the possibility of recognising the dialogism in the constitution of Self/Other relations (Neumann, 1999; Guillaume, 2002).

The symbiotic relation between diplomatic knowledge and practice began to inspire empirical investigations in recent years. Based on audacious ethnographical interventions in diplomatic hubs such as the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the EU institutions, Neumann’s (2012) *At Home with the Diplomats: Inside a European Foreign Ministry* and Kuus’ (2014) *Geopolitics and Expertise: Knowledge and Authority in European Diplomacy* provide clear guidance to researchers seeking to investigate the mechanisms of diplomatic knowledge production and their insertion into the more complex and often unclear foreign-policy making processes at national and transnational levels.

Neumann’s (2012) work pays extensive attention to the process by which diplomats produce knowledge and, more specifically, to how knowledge-production practices are affected by the peculiar professional life of diplomats forged in the ‘nomadic trek between postings at home and abroad’ (p. 13) This inspires different considerations about the work done by ‘diplomats at home’ and ‘diplomats abroad’. For

Neumann (2012), it is clear that ‘[T]he practice that anchors the knowledge production of field diplomats is the gathering and processing of information’, whereas ‘diplomats at home are caught up in a web of text-producing practices that ensure that, when not interfered with by politicians, they produce nothing new’ (pp. 169-170).

In *Geopolitics and Expertise*, Kuus (2014) examines how diplomatic *qua* ‘expert’ knowledge is constituted, crafted and circulated in transnational policy-making settings such as the EU. In particular, the book focuses on the production of expert knowledge around the European Neighbouring Policy design, especially what concerns its eastern direction. Kuus’ (2014) work successfully combines elements from various fields of knowledge (pivotal also for the current investigation) —critical diplomacy studies and Critical Geopolitics. Its main premise is that diplomacy is a ‘social practice’ and not a ‘state-practice that merely reproduces the statu quo’ (Kuus, 2014, p. 34) — Diplomats, for this very reason, ‘become analytically more interesting’, since they are ‘no longer cast as minions of the state’ (Kuus, 2014, p. 35). A similar approach is adopted towards geography, which is addressed ‘not as a given variable but as a question’ (Kuus, 2014, p. 33). Drawing on Agnew (2007), Kuus (2014) investigates expert (diplomatic) knowledge not only in terms of ‘know-how’, but also in terms of ‘know-where’. ‘Know-where’ refers to the places where knowledge is produced and circulated, and the places to which that knowledge is referred. Given this, as has been suggestively put: ‘[M]uch of what passes for expert knowledge about world affairs rests on a hefty dose of interpretive projection of knowledge claims from some places to others’ (Kuus, 2014, pp. 32-33).

All of this suggests that space (in particular, the modern ‘domestic’/ ‘foreign’ division that informs the discourse and practice of world politics) is an essential dimension of the practice and discourse of diplomacy, not only due to what has been argued thus far, but also because, as conventional visions of diplomacy assert, the central function of diplomacy is ‘to symbolize the existence of the society of states’ (Kuus, 2014, p. 34). The argument is originally made by Hedley Bull, whose work is fruitfully put under revision by critical works on diplomacy. One of the most contentious aspects of such argument is that it is based on an aprioristic spatial framework —the national/international (Kuus, 2014, p. 34). Critical scholars (critical geographers and geopoliticians, above all) take issue with this, because precisely their

purpose is to show that geographical scales (the national and the international, but also the local, the regional or the corporeal) do not exist independently from the discursive practices in which they are constituted. Thus, when Kuus (2014) asserts that geography/geopolitics shall be inspected as a question and not as a given, the underlying argument is that geography/geopolitics is a discourse that produces the subjects about which it speaks in myriad practices of representation. It follows from this that the practice and discourse of diplomacy is responsible for the production of ‘states’, ‘nations’, ‘peoples’ or ‘the international community’.

5.1.2 The interview event: Meeting the diplomat.

The 16 interviews that form the core of my primary material were conducted between March 2014 and June 2015 (see Annex One). The interviews’ general purpose was to survey how Spanish diplomats interpret Iran’s place in the world —and therefore to inspect the meanings ‘We’ confer on ‘Them’ and by which ‘We’ make ‘Them’ an intelligible subject of world politics. As noted in Chapter Four, interviews were planned as in-depth conversations. This means that a pre-established schema of fixed questions was not followed, but generally diplomats were solicited insights into the significance of the 1979 revolution and the Islamic Republic for world politics, the West-Iran’s relations and the relevance of mutual perceptions in the development of such relations, and Iran’s place in Spanish foreign policy schemata. The dissertation’s initial purpose was to explore the post-revolution’s scenario, since it was assumed that the 1979 events (the ‘Islamic’ revolution) brought about notable changes at the level of perception, representation and discourse.

I managed to establish my first contacts with this group of ‘prominent observers’ (Kuus, 2014) with the help of a couple of academic acquaintances who referred me to specific individuals. Once these individuals had been reached out and interviewed, they would refer me to other colleagues —a basic snowballing strategy that was followed until it ceased to be effective and forced me to search for alternative strategies for reaching out to more informants. The databank *Base de datos integrada de política exterior hacia el Mundo Árabe y Musulmán* (BDPEX)¹⁰ proved extremely helpful at

¹⁰ This database was the outcome of research projects developed with funds from the Ministry of Science and Innovation and Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha. The projects’ references are the following:

this stage. This database provides information on the Spanish diplomatic personnel (name, rank, period of service) and their postings in resident embassies in the Arab and Muslim countries. Through these means, I was able to retrieve the name and position of Spanish diplomats in Iran in the period 1974-2009. Officials at the Sub-Directorate General for Personnel and Administration at Spain's Ministry of Foreign Affairs proved very helpful in facilitating the contact data of subjects whom I had not been able to reach out to via snowballing. I obtained an e-mail address or office telephone number only when the given individuals granted their permission.

There were some cases of (unfortunately) deceased diplomats and several cases of subjects no longer serving as diplomatic agents, but still available for participating in this research. Of those who were on active service, all of them had been dispatched to different diplomatic offices at home or abroad. None of the interviewees were, at the moment of being interviewed, dispatched in Spain's resident embassy in Tehran. Not all my attempts at establishing contact or arranging interviews with officials were successful, but I am grateful to anyone who answered my e-mails or calls and especially to those who conceded to be interviewed. Most interviews were conducted face to face in public or private venues in Madrid, but because of the distance two of these interviews had to be conducted via Skype and one on the phone. I was overwhelmed by the generosity of these professionals who could have just overlooked my petitions, but instead consented to talk to a total stranger. I am positive that most of them did so because of their enduring commitment with building dense and fruitful relations with Iran and because, as many of them remarked, Iran is a country 'largely misunderstood' (Interviews) and they wanted to contribute to dispelling myths and fears.

Due to different reasons (age, rank and geographical specialisation), the professional careers of my interlocutors differed greatly. All of them, however, were highly proficient individuals. Since most of them spoke on condition of anonymity I will not attribute citations to anyone in particular. Most interviews were recorded. On the occasions when I was not allowed to record, I took handwritten notes and filled in the notes shortly after the end of the interviews. On these occasions, I strived for

“Actores e intereses en las relaciones exteriores de España con el Mundo Árabe” (CSO2008-06232-C03-03), “Política exterior y relaciones culturales con el Mundo Árabe” (SEJ2005-08867-C03-03) and “Nuevos espacios, actores e instrumentos en las relaciones exteriores de España con el Mundo Árabe y Musulmán” (CSO2011-29438-C05-02).

retaining key words, phrases or ideas that spoke more directly to the purposes of my survey and that could eventually be paraphrased with the least distortion. However, it must be emphasised that the long segments of interviews used to support my arguments in the remaining of the chapter are all taken from complete interview transcripts.

Some of my interviewees had been on the field in Iran a very long time ago (in the 1970s, 1980s or 1990s) and not directly involved with Iranian matters ever since. Given the obligation to alternate posts at home and abroad, the career of most diplomats had developed across countries in Europe, America, Asia, Africa or Oceania. A few of them had served in Spanish missions in several Middle Eastern countries (Iraq, Afghanistan, Israel, Jordan...), which allows us to consider them regional experts. All of this is important to bear in mind, because even if my initial assumption was that my interviewees would form a homogeneous group, it soon became apparent that the kind of insights I would be able to retrieve from them would vary significantly: some of my interviewees had accumulated a great deal of expertise that allowed them to apply a long-term perspective on the matters that came up in the conversation; some others would be more able to provide detailed insights into particular crises or events tightly connected to the present (for instance, into the current negotiations on Iran's nuclear programme). With respect to this, however, it is important to bear in mind something that Kuus (2014) cogently remarked:

A personal view in diplomacy is not the same as a private view. Personal is the opposite of official but it is nonetheless a public view. In some cases, the personal view may be the private view but we should not assume this. In diplomacy, the personal is the public and the private realm does not come into play at all (p. 50 based on Neumann, 2012, p. 126).

The chapter proceeds by narrativising the interview texts produced in my talks with the diplomats. In this regard, it should be noted that, for the subjects participating in this research, the interview situation involved a substantive dose of retrospective meaning-making about the events, situations and people relevant in the 'Question of the Islamic Republic' (Adib-Moghaddam, 2008), and also about the personal and professional experience of having been a diplomat 'over there' in Iran.

5.2 Locating Spain in the geography of the ‘Other’: From the Maghreb to the Gulf

Despite the long-term duration of Hispano-Iranian relations (roughly 400 years), one hardly has the feeling that Spain and Iran have ever been close. On the contrary, Iran seems a rather distant place. The space-time compression of late modernity might have helped to mitigate that feeling, since almost any advanced modern state has means at its disposal to shorten distances with the remotest places in the world; and yet, it is not easy to say how Spain operates such reduction with Iran (if she does) or anticipate which resonances the idea of Iran has for Spanish diplomats involved in the cultivation of relations with the Islamic Republic —the main reason being that the ‘Iranian question’ is largely absent from public debate. Thus, when addressing the matter for the first time, one might indeed wonder whether the cultivation of interstate relations with Iran responds to the exact calculations of state elites on how to deal with the world, or else to the opportunities that history and geography bring about. And one soon realises that when history and geography do not make ‘Us’ and ‘Them’ natural allies or natural foes —as is probably the case with Spain and Iran—, those involved in mediating between ‘here’ and ‘there’ might need an extra dose of creativity and political imagination.

The following pages unpack the significance of Iran for Spanish diplomacy and relate it to Spain’s broader foreign policy agenda in the Arab/Muslim/Mediterranean world. The analysis refers mostly to the period since 1979. But, to aptly appreciate how the birth of the Islamic Republic affected the discourse and practice of foreign policy elites in Spain, one needs to get a wider picture of Spain-Iran relations before the triumph of the revolution. Since both a long-term perspective and the regional dimension are crucial for contextualising such relations, my account begins in the late 19th century and —perhaps paradoxically— close to home in the Maghreb.

A matter of militaristic concern at the *fin de siècle*, Spain’s interest in the region was concentrated initially on the western Maghreb, and remained constrained to the western Maghreb for much of the first half of the 20th century —the primary reason being the Spanish Protectorate and the Spanish Sahara—, and only started to steer towards the east of the Mediterranean in the 1950s. Indeed, as has been noted, ‘Spain lacked a Middle Eastern policy per se until after World War II’ (Fleming, 1980, p. 121); and yet, it is probably right to recognise that, ever since, Spain’s efforts at enlarging the scope of her external action beyond the Maghreb —to the eastern Mediterranean

countries and the Near East— have not been negligible, despite the many limitations and the not so few inconsistencies of the Franco regime and democratic governments afterwards.

5.2.1 Franco's colonial policy and the 'special relations' with the Arab world.

The 1898 'disaster' marked the end of Spain's old imperial status, and the beginning of a long period of impaired international politics. Crippled by the loss of the American and Far East colonies, and risking to be nullified by the Anglo-French pretensions over the Western Mediterranean, Spain's colonial policy in the Western Maghreb and Africa sought to compensate the wounded national pride and the threat posed by the great European powers. After decades of military involvement in the area, Spain's Africanist policy yielded some tangible results: the Spanish Protectorate was established (1912) over the five per cent of the total land appropriated by France from Morocco, and the Western Sahara was occupied in 1934. Pure economic reasons, however, were not the major driver behind the occupation: the territory ceded by France lacked economic value and the phosphate deposits in the Western Sahara had not yet been discovered. The motivation was rather geopolitical, trying to counterweight the influence of France and Britain on the continent and the Mediterranean basin (Gillespie, 2000, pp. 11-12). In retrospect though, it is difficult to see that Spain's Africanist policy was able to restore the country's old great power status. In spite of this, the whole colonial experience had a decisive influence on Spain's practice and discourse towards the broader 'Arab' world in later decades (Algora Weber, 2010, p. 57).

Thus, withdrawn from the American continent and with a secondary participation in European affairs (Powell, 1995, p. 13), during the first decades of the 20th century, Spain's colonial policy in Africa became an instrument through which to alleviate domestic strife and accommodate the military's interests. The most tangible evidence of the extremely volatile political situation was Franco's armed insurrection against the Spanish Second Republic (1931-36), initiated precisely in the Protectorate. On the issue of the Protectorate, an interesting argument has been made which states that, both during the monarchy and the republic, 'Spanish governments did not necessarily see themselves as colonialist, at least in relation to the Moroccan protectorate (Pennell, 1986a: 22)' (Gillespie, 2000, p. 13), which was rather a 'sub-protectorate' dependent on France's (Gillespie, 2000, p. 12). Significantly as well,

official discourse was cautious about marking the difference between Spain's 'permanent' coastal possessions (Ceuta and Melilla) from the Moroccan Protectorate over which authority was 'temporarily' extended (Gillespie, 2000, p. 13).

A general premise in many analyses of Spain's external action during the Franco regime (1939-1975) (Armero, 1978; Cortada, 1980; Gillespie, 2000; López García & Hernando de Larramendi, 2010; Pardo, 2001) is that when dictatorship began Spain was in a 'retrenched' position that reflected the country's unrelenting international decay since the late 19th century. Franco's four decades in power did, however, not help mitigate the effects of such long-term retrenchment because Spain was, in the opinion of many, left aside from History's march towards a brighter future. This became particularly visible when, in the aftermath of the Second World War, Spain was not invited to participate in the political, economic and defence institutions set up to steer Europe's reconstruction by the war victors. As most observers interpret, the exclusion from the United Nations (UN, 1945), the Organisation of the European Economic Cooperation (OEEC, 1948), the Western European Union (WEU, 1949) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO, 1949) was a punishment for Franco's 'original sin': the association with the Axis powers during the war (Powell, 1995, p 18). Not only was Spain barred from the UN, the I General Assembly celebrated in 1946 adopted Resolution 39/I recommending Spain's non-admission in international bodies and the cessation of diplomatic relations with the Franco regime (Algora Weber, 2007, p. 16).

Ever since, Franco worked hard to bring the international boycott to an end, first by campaigning for the lifting of the UN resolution and then by competing for a seat at the UN. Unable to reach out to the European states and the U.S., Franco was then forced to look for alternative international scenarios for developing relations that could possibly alleviate the burden of international isolation. For long-term cultural, geographical and historical reasons (Hernando de Larramendi, 2011, p. 308) hopes were pinned on the Arab-Muslim world (and on Latin America). The Arab-Muslim world was also the area where Franco had developed much of his military career. Based on his personal experience, in fact, Franco thought himself a great connoisseur of the Arab-Muslim world (Armero, 1978, p. 54) and, by extension, a particularly gifted interpreter of Arabs' and Muslims' culture, history and politics. This shall render more understandable the General's personal interest in promoting the idea of Spain's

‘traditional friendship’ or ‘special relations’ with Arab countries (which, certainly, had also roots in Spain’s Muslim history), and the expectation of reaping political benefits from the exploitation of such rhetoric. Yet, to win the Arab approval, Franco had first to overcome the reluctance of Muslim ‘brethren’.

In the period running from the creation of the UN and the year 1948, the one obstacle hampering the materialisation of the regime’s ‘special relations’ with the Arab world was the ‘Sahara question’ (Algora Weber, 2007). The fact that Francoist Spain was a colonial power extending her authority over Muslim lands did not go unnoticed to ‘Muslim’ states that held Spain responsible for the submission of the Western Sahara. Intriguingly, Franco never seemed to see any contradiction between his ‘paternalistic’ colonial policy in the north of Africa and the aspiration to deepen his ‘special relations’ with the Arab countries (Armero, 1978, p. 156). In the end, the regime managed to strike an unworkable balance between both things. It is not a secret that mending fences with the Arab-Muslim countries was possible because the Franco regime refused to support the UN Partition Plan for Palestine (1947); it expressed solidarity with the Palestinian cause from the outset and declined to recognise the state of Israel. In 1950 ‘Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey and Yemen voted for the lifting of sanctions (Portero, 1989: 214, 401)’ (Gillespie, 2000, p. 187); and in 1955 Spain finally made it through and was accepted as a UN member.

Yet, once the formal support of the Arabs was attained at the UN, the regime needed to provide substance to the so-known in the literature (Algora Weber, 2007, 2010; Hernando de Larramendi, 2011) ‘substitution’ and ‘bridge’ policies with the Arab (and Latin American) states. The thinking was that establishing relations with the Arab-Muslim states made up for the absence of relations with the U.S. and European states (hence ‘substitution’); and also that Francoist Spain could act as the ‘bridge’ between Latin American regimes and Arab states which tried to garner as much support as possible in votings to condemn Israel’s performance against Palestinians (Algora Weber, 2010, p. 62). Alleged common ideological orientations eased the cultivation of relations between the Franco and Arab regimes. As has been cogently argued in this regard:

[t]he governmental propaganda encouraged the establishment of an ideological framework in which Christian principles, the keystone of National-Catholic ideology, related to the doctrinal principles of Islam on their opposition to communism. This argument inspired decisively the diplomatic contacts of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with the Muslim interlocutors (Algora Weber, 2010, p. 61).

But, the fact of the matter is that the ideological positioning against communism did not last forever. In the course of the 1950s, revolutionary regimes came to power in some of the countries with whom Franco had reached the greatest level of relations: Egypt (1952), Syria (1954) and Iraq (1958) (Hernando de Larramendi, 2011, p. 309). The ideological gap was then compensated with the development of a cultural policy that engendered less political costs and could, in fact, benefit from the mystification of common cultural ties between the populations on both sides of the Strait of Gibraltar, as well as of the Arab-Muslim dimension of Spanish identity —a dimension that nonetheless and paradoxically ‘we’ had many difficulties to digest. This cultural policy led to tangible results such as the opening of cultural centres and the fostering of cultural exchanges between Spain and countries in the Near and the Middle East, especially. Cultural treaties were signed with Lebanon (1949), Egypt and Yemen (1952), Syria (1953), Iraq and Jordan (1955), Turkey (1956), Morocco (1957) and Libya (1962); and in Madrid the Hispano-Arabic Cultural Institute was founded under the auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (González González, 2010, pp. 96-97).

Interestingly, as one author has suggestively put (Pardo, 2010), at this point Spain’s ‘special relations’ with the Arab world also benefitted from the lack of an economic agenda for which Francoist Spain could have been associated with a more aggressive outlook towards the region. Economic relations would only start to gain importance by the end of the decade. It was then (in 1959), when Spain adopted a Stabilisation Plan providing for the liberalisation of foreign trade and investment (Powell, 1995, p. 21), which translated into a greater interest in strengthening the economic dimension of relations with the Arab nations (Hernando de Larramendi, 2011, p. 311). Another advantage for Spain was that, despite the ‘Sahara question’, she did not have an imperial record in the Levant and the Middle East and this, arguably, allowed her to be looked at by leaders of Muslim states with gentler eyes than Britain or France would (Pardo, 2010, pp. 128-129).

In the midst of the Cold War, however, the Arab support was certainly not the only factor enabling the partial end of Spain's ostracism. In time, U.S. strategists realised that, more important than Franco's authoritarian reputation, was the fact that a Western Mediterranean state like Spain could perform a great service in containing Soviet influence on the Mediterranean. And so, by virtue of the Pact of Madrid (1953), Spain joined America's anti-communist struggle. The Franco regime received over one billion of dollars of aid in exchange for allowance to use military bases (Pardo, 2001, pp. 53-54) but, more generally, the arrangement had three major implications: i) Spain got partly integrated in the defence system of the West—at a time when member states had not authorised admission to NATO— (Story, 1995, p. 17), ii) Franco got recognition as the “sentinel of the West” and an honourable partner in the Western family's struggle against Soviet Communism' (Jaúregui, 2002, p. 91), and iii) the Western Mediterranean confirmed as a geopolitical area of global strategic importance. In 1953, Spain also signed a Concordat with the Roman Catholic Church and, as anticipated, was finally accepted as member of the United Nations in 1955.

In spite of her colonial possessions in the Western Maghreb and Equatorial Guinea, once at the UN, Spain adopted notably anti-colonialist orientations, often aligning with the Arab and Third World newly independent nations. This, together with the increasing international discredit to colonialism, fostered rapid transformations on a global scale, which eventually had repercussions on Spain's colonial policy in Africa. In Morocco, the nationalist movement had been gaining momentum, forcing France to relinquish her possessions in 1956. Spain followed suit by granting independence to the northern part of the Protectorate also in 1956. Franco withdrew from the southern territories —Ifni (1958) and Tarfaya (1969)— at a later stage, and from Equatorial Guinea in 1968. The Western Sahara though remained in Spanish hands until 1975, when it was hastily abandoned.

The security pact with the U.S. (1953) did not satisfy all the regime's 'families'. In particular, it found the opposition of foreign minister Castiella (1957-1969), whom in November 1968 advocated the withdrawal of the U.S. and Soviet fleets from the Mediterranean. Castiella opposed the military alliance with the U.S., for that placed Spain in a position of subservience before the world's superpower (Gillespie, 2000, p. 27) leading to contradictions such that of the U.S.' utilisation of Spanish bases to assist

Israel in the 1967 war with the Arabs (the Six-Day war), while Spain boasted her 'special relations' with the Arab world (Gillespie, 2000, p. 29). For security reasons, the regime never embraced Castiella's anti-American doctrine, yet it imposed on the U.S. a more restrictive use of the military bases during the Yom Kippur war (1973) (Fleming, 1980, p. 146). Castiella was succeeded in office by former industry minister Gregorio López Bravo (1969-1973).

With the 'technocrat' López Bravo in the ministry, commercial goals were more decidedly woven into Spain's foreign agenda. By then, the identification of the Arab-Muslim world as a fossil fuels supplier had gained prominence. The Francoist elites became aware of the necessity of diversifying their economic partners. Algeria was a gas provider already then, and Libya was targeted as a potential future supplier (Gillespie, 2000, p. 91). And while Saudi Arabia had played a key role as Spain's chief oil supplier, officials at the ministry during López Bravo's tenure noticed the timeliness of opening up the country's economic agenda to other producers such as Iraq and Iran (Gillespie, 2000, p. 124). The 1973 oil crisis bolstered the geostrategic significance of the Gulf, laying bare the West's dependence on the oil and gas producers (Gillespie, 2000, pp. 27-28). Like everybody else, Spain had to face a larger fuel bill as a consequence of the 1973 crisis, but suffered no disruption in the supply of oil (Fleming, 1980, p. 146).

5.2.2 The foreign policy of democratic Spain: Milestones and general orientations.

Spain's foreign policy orientations under democracy have been largely scrutinised by both national and international scholars (Balfour & Preston, 1999; Beneyto & Pereira, 2011a, 2011b; Del Arenal & Sotillo, 1989; Gillespie, Rodrigo, & Story, 1995; Mesa, 1982; Pereira, 2003;). Analyses of Spain's 20th-century foreign policy often pay attention to two matters: i) the post-1975 novelties in the foreign policy of democratic Spain, and ii) the elements of continuity with respect to the former period both from the point of view of practice and discourse. Four decades into the beginning of Spain's 'external transition' (Viñas, 1996), the specialised literature also agrees to establish two distinct periods. The period between 1976 and 1988/-89 is understood as the era when Spain set up the new bases of her new foreign policy. Of foundational value, it gave

way to a much longer period (stretching over until the present) when Spain develops an external action in consonance with the political and strategic options during the decade following Franco's death.

Thus, analysts share the view that between 1976 and 1988/-89 period, Spain tries to transcend the weakly defined and little influential foreign actions of the Franco regime and undertake the definition of 'a global, coherent and realist model [...] characterised by the correspondence between the domestic context and the international scenarios in which Spain is present' (Del Arenal & Sotillo, 1989, p. 13). Such aspiration engendered the redefinition of the bases that would inspire the state's external action in the immediate future and, by extension and in practice, considerable debate on which principles should orient Spain's participation in world affairs, now that the end of dictatorship have rendered feasible the possibility of being accepted by other states and by international bodies. Debates on these matters were heated and exposed the dissenting views between Spain's early centrist governments and the opposition (especially the Socialists) until 1982, but also the lack of total agreement on key external matters inside the Unión de Centro Democrático (UCD) governments, and inside the Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE) governments after 1982. All of this shatters the myth of the exceptionally consensual spirit guiding foreign policy in the early transition days and after (Aixalà i Blanch, 2005).

About Adolfo Suárez's tenure of office (1976-1980), it has been said that the urgency of domestic affairs and the vagaries of the constituent process did not leave much space for the meditation of Spain's direction in foreign affairs. There were nevertheless international matters on the agenda that required attention and generated clashes between government and opposition —principally, the Western Sahara question and Spain's entry to NATO. With Franco still alive, November 1975 saw the signature of the Tripartite Agreement (the Madrid Agreement) between Spain, Morocco and Mauritania. The pact stated the transfer of Spanish authority over the Western Sahara to Morocco, Mauritania and a local Saharawi council. In her capacity of metropolis, Spain did not meet her commitment to the celebration of a self-determination referendum due in 1974 (Algora Weber, 2010, p. 75). It opted for an accelerated withdrawal with no guarantees for the Western Sahara which, admittedly, eased Morocco's 'Green March' over the territories. Spain's first democratic government embraced the discourse that

sovereignty had not been transferred over to Morocco and Mauritania, the new occupying powers; but, the Socialists made of Franco's abandonment policy towards the Western Sahara and Suárez's implicit defence of it a key pillar of the opposition strategy against the centrist government (Hernando de Larramendi, 2011, p. 312).

Other themes on the agenda were Gibraltar, the Canary Islands' *Africanness* and the cultivation of ties with the Community of Hispano-American nations. In 1977, the reestablishment of diplomatic relations with almost all of the eastern and western states came in effect (Mesa, 1982, p. 13). Of particular relevance was the reactivation of relations with the Soviet Union—which had lent support to the Spanish Republic and continued to lead the geopolitical bloc of the East—and Mexico—host of the Spanish Republic in exile (Viñas, 1999, pp. 250-251). By contrast, Spain did not lend recognition to Albania, Israel and North Korea. Reactivating diplomatic relations with countries in the vicinity and beyond was interpreted as evidence of Spain's desire to be back on the international scene. Yet, as steps were taken towards the normalisation and internationalisation of Spain's external action since the mid-1970s (Grasa, 1997), the home and foreign advocates of a pro-Atlantic Spain could not digest the prevalence, especially throughout Suárez's tenure, of international practices that exuded an air of neutralism and Third-Worldism.

In June 1980, Suárez's first foreign minister—Marcelino Oreja—expressed the government's firm determination to gain NATO membership before 1983 (Mesa, 1982, p. 22). Under the new premier Calvo-Sotelo, in October and November 1981, the Congreso de los Diputados voted in favour of Spain's entry; and in December it was formally invited by the Organisation. Membership was formalised in May 1982 (Story, 1995, p. 35). As with the Sahara question, once in power, the Socialist party also ended up adopting a more pragmatic view on the matter. In October 1984, President González had presented the 'Decalogue' on peace and security which acknowledged Spain's belonging to the Atlantic Alliance, at the same time that it declared Spain's non-nuclear status and inclination for détente and disarmament (Story, 1995, p. 41). Confronted with a highly reluctant popular opinion, González campaigned for the 'yes' in the NATO popular referendum of March 1986. And in November 1986, it gained 'active observer status' at the WEU. Thus:

By the end of 1988, Spain had ended the definitional period of its Western alignment. Nevertheless, during the following years it had to work on the consequences of its membership of Western security organizations and the EEC. But soon this process would be mixed up with responses to the great change that shook the Western world following the fall of the Berlin Wall (Rodrigo, 1995, p. 64).

Unlike the polemics on account of the NATO question, the consensus was major amongst Spanish elites in relation to the country's candidacy to the EEC. The negotiations on Spain's entry began in February 1978. The signature of the European Communities Act came on 12 June 1985 and since 1 January 1986 membership was completed. As most observers argue, the figuration of 'Europe' as a space of 'freedom', 'democracy' and 'modernity', on the one hand; and the interpretation that, by joining the EEC, Spain left her peripheral status behind, on the other hand; explain largely the overall pro-Europeanist attitude of Spanish elites and population:

Europe [...] had a powerful affective meaning in Spain, because [...] it symbolized the culmination of the struggle for the widely cherished, quasi-mythical ideas of *la transición*: 'freedom', 'democracy' and 'modernity'. From this perspective, a shameful national past of bloody civil wars, economic stagnation, political oppression, and international isolation were depicted as tragic disasters which should have never again be repeated; and in opposition to these painful collective memories, a promising future of *convivencia pacífica* (peaceful coexistence), prosperity, liberty, and European solidarity were presented as the fundamental objectives of a new, self-confident Spain (Jaúregui, 2002, p. 82).

[J]oining the EEC [was perceived] as a historical goal that would allow the de-peripheralisation of Spain and the symbolic transfer of Europe's border from the Pyrenees to the Strait of Gibraltar (Hernando de Larramendi, 2011, p. 312).

At the turn of the century, therefore, a new period started when Spain had to concentrate on reboosting her external image and status, by then closely linked to the internal and external perception of Spain being a 'middle power' (Palou, 1993). In ensuing years, Spain developed her external action in consonance with the bases established between 1976 and 1988/-89. The idea of consensus continued to inform the imagination of elites, but it became gradually apparent that the country's foreign policy orientations were also a subject of public/political debate, meaning that the ideological leanings of the party governments —PSOE and PP— and the personal outlook of leaders such as Felipe González, José María Aznar and José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero (Beneyto & Pereira, 2011a, 2011b) played an important part in the definition of Spain's foreign policy agenda.

5.3 Broad introduction to Spanish diplomacy in Iran (1617-1979)

5.3.1 Soldiers, travellers, ambassadors, kings and queens: From Persia to Iran.

Sources tend to establish the beginning of diplomatic relations between Spain and Iran four hundred years ago (Blecua, 2002, p. 92; Extractos de la historia de las relaciones bilaterales, n.d.), when the Spanish soldier and traveller, Don García de Silva y Figueroa, arrived in Persia (1617) and established a mission at the court of Shah Abbas I in Isfahan. A representative of the Castilian King Philippe III, the main goal of Don García's main goal was to negotiate an alliance with the Persians against the threatening Ottoman Empire. In this sense, Spain was no different from other European countries which, in modern times, sought to establish relations with Persia out of 'fundamental concerns, such as coping with the Ottoman Empire, preventing Russian influence in India and its access to the Persian Gulf, and using Iran as a buffer against Soviet expansionism' (Hunter, 2010, p. 79).

The Spanish mission's ultimate goal was not attained, but after a seven-year stay in the country, the Castilian ambassador gained extensive understanding of Persia's politics, culture and the life at the Safavid court, possibly quenching Philippe III's thirst of knowledge of the Orient, albeit not his strategic pretensions. Don García's travel notes saw publication for the first time in 1667 in a French edition titled *L'Ambassade de D. García de Silva Figueroa en Perse*.

This noble 17th-century traveller was not the first prominent Castilian envoy on visit to Persia, however. Two centuries prior, the royal chamberlain Ruy González de Clavijo was sent by King Henry III on a mission destination Samarkand, the capital of the Timurid Empire from which Tamerlane exerted control over great portions of land—including the territory of Persia—and warred against the Turks. Also fearful of the Ottoman Empire's mounting influence on the Western Mediterranean, Henry III sought to forge an alliance with Tamerlane that would benefit both rulers' pretensions. Ultimately, the enterprise did not succeed, but was recorded extensively on travel notes which came out later on under the title *Embassy to Tamerlane*. Having journeyed across Persia around the year 1404 on his way to Samarkand, scholars agree that González de Clavijo's book of travels is a key text for the investigation of Hispano-Persian early modern diplomacy; and yet, due to its greater length and breadth, Don García's embassy

tends to be awarded more significance than his predecessor's. Admittedly too, what rendered Don García's mission more transcendental for diplomatic purposes was that it was reciprocated by the Persians, who responded by dispatching envoys to the European courts in the ensuing years. This allowed a certain development of relations between the Persian Empire and the Western European kingdoms, including Castile's.

Throughout the 18th century though, Hispano-Persian diplomacy entered into a phase of stagnation, only altered by a couple of important episodes in the middle and final years of the 19th century. Largely, Spain's inability to establish relations with Persia at this time shall be explained by reference to further-reaching conditionings affecting Spanish geopolitics during much of the 18th and 19th centuries. Back then, Spain was excluded from Europe's systems of alliances, did not have specific political goals on the Eastern Mediterranean, suffered constant political and economic crises and was devoted to the maintenance of her American and Far East colonies (Vilar, 2010, p. 40). Despite the little favourable conditions for expansion to the East of the Mediterranean, the year 1842 saw the signature in Constantinople of a Treaty of Friendship and Commerce between the Spanish ambassador and the Persian Minister Plenipotentiary to the Ottoman Empire. It was ratified in 1849 by the Qajar king, Mohammad Shah, and Queen Elisabeth of Spain (Toledano, 1858, pp. 177-178; see also Extractos..., n.d.). The legal provisions contained in the treaty regulated Hispano-Persian relations until the mid-1950s, when a new treaty was signed.

The 19th century did not end without a new diplomatic enterprise of relevance for Hispano-Persian relations. Under the ephemeral First Spanish Republic (February 1873-December 1874), the young diplomat Adolfo Rivadeneyra was appointed Deputy Consul General to Persia on 14 December 1873. The Spanish legation in Persia was finally established on 11 April 1874. The main purpose of Rivadeneyra's mission was to explore the possibilities of expanding commercial ties with Persia and also of establishing a permanent mission in this key Gulf enclave. Having fulfilled the goal of gathering economic and technical information (and written extensively about it in the study-travelogue *Viaje al Interior de Persia*), Rivadeneyra's poor health condition hastened his return home, where the monarchy had been restored in the throne. In the absence of clear foreign policy priorities and suffering from overall domestic instability, Spain was at this point not able to preserve the level of relations with Persia initiated

with Rivadeneyra's Vice Consulate General (Escribano Martín, 2005, 2008). The domestic situation finally urged the cancellation of the Spanish representation in Tehran.

In a short article published in 1962, Emilio Beladiez —Spanish diplomat and chronicler— glosses Alfonso XIII's dispatch of a Minister Plenipotentiary to Tehran early in the 20th century. The diplomat in question stayed in the Iranian capital until 1919 (p. 272). Similarly, Beladiez (1962) notes that Spain's diplomatic activity in Persia during the First World War focused on ensuring the safety of Christian communities in the country (p. 273). Not having found additional references that corroborate these early 20th century episodes, what seems out of question is that a new phase in the diplomatic relations between Spain and Iran began in the aftermath of the Second World War. Spain's legation in Iran was then reopened, with Beladiez acting as Chargé d'Affairs between 1951 and 1953¹¹. Crucially, it was the Cold War and the alignment with the U.S. in their struggle against communism which eased the reactivation of Hispano-Iranian diplomacy. Beladiez's insightful comments on this breakthrough are worth quoting at length:

From the very outset, we had very cordial relations. The modern Iran has for Spain the respect and reverence that have for each other two peoples which, in different historical moments, have been masters of the world. This adds to the feeling of having formed part of the same political and cultural conglomerate during the splendid years of the Arab civilisation, when Spain and Iran marked the occidental and oriental borders of the Crescent Empire. A further connection can be found in the feeling of belonging to one of the political blocs in which the world is divided up at the moment (Beladiez, 1962, p. 274).

While cultural and historical traditions provide a basis for the long-standing cordial relations between the two countries, it must be emphasised that the immediate reason for the understanding and cooperation between Madrid and Tehran at present is their shared international views. Indeed, despite her geographical location and the two-thousand-something kilometers of shared border with the USSR, Iran is a Western country, aware that her future, independence and even her existence depend on her

¹¹ According to the BDPEX, Beladiez took charge of Spain's affairs in Iran until 1953. The mission in Iran inspired the writing of a book *Cartas Persas (1951-1954)*, published in 1961. Presented as a collection of letters addressed to 'a friend', the book is a good example of travel literature. But my concern is with the book's title, which would suggest that Beladiez would have taken care of Spain's affairs in Iran until 1954, albeit no clarification on this is provided in the narration.

belonging to the Western bloc [...] Precisely Iran, like Spain, comprehends very well what communism represents inside her borders (Beladíez, 1962, p. 275).

The revitalisation of relations with Iran at this point had immediate effects. In November 1952, Beladíez and Dr. Fatemi —foreign minister in the cabinet of Premier Mossadeq— ratified the former Treaty of Friendship and Commerce signed by representatives of Spain and Persia in Constantinople in 1842 (Extractos..., n.d.). In 1954, Iranian representatives visited Madrid and Iran's mission in Spain was reopened after several decades since its closure. In truth, Persia's first representation in the Spanish capital had been established in 1916, but budgetary restrictions forced the transfer of affairs from Madrid to the Paris mission three years after (Extractos..., n.d.). The reactivation of diplomatic activity since the early 1950s was to introduce a pattern of continuity in the relations between the two nations, which no major domestic, regional or global event has been able to disrupt to date. Both parties' adherence to several treaties ever since the 1950s confirm this. In 1954, an Economic and Commercial Cooperation Agreement was signed (Marín Quemada, 2002, p. 114), and in March 1956, both parties concluded a Treaty of Friendship and Establishment.

Towards the end of the decade, the first important state visit in the history of 20th-century Hispano-Iranian relations took place. In May 1957, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi —the Shah of Iran— and his second wife, Soraya Esfandiari, were warmly welcomed in Madrid by General Franco, his wife and high-ranking officials. Journalists wrote flowery chronicles giving account of the Pahlavis' tour in Madrid, Seville, Granada and Palma de Mallorca¹². Official means also seized on the occasion to present the Shah's state visit as evidence of the regime's international acceptance¹³. Their Imperial Majesties were awarded with decorations of the Spanish Civil Order of Isabella

¹² Hoy llegan a Sevilla SS.MM.II. Reza y Soraya de Persia. [Persian Emperors Reza and Soraya arrive in Seville today] (1957, May 29). *ABC*, p. 15; and, El Sha y la Emperatriz Soraya salieron ayer para Sevilla. [The Shah and Empress Soraya set off for Seville yesterday] (1957, May 29). *La Vanguardia Española*, p. 6.

¹³See, for instance: NO-DO (Producer). (1957, June 3). Huéspedes Reales. Los Reyes del Irán en las calles de Madrid. [Royal guests. King and Queen of Iran in Madrid] *Noticiero N° 752-B*. [Broadcast] Retrieved from <http://www.rtve.es/filmoteca/no-do/not-752/1486774>

the Catholic¹⁴. Twenty years later the Shah also received the Collar of the Royal and Distinguished Spanish Order of Charles III¹⁵.

One month after the Shah's visit (in June 1957), foreign minister Castiella signed a decree raising the Spanish representation in Tehran to ambassadorial level, although it was not until 10 March 1964 when the first Spanish ambassador to Iran, José Rives López, presented credentials to Iran's chief of state¹⁶. Before the arrival of the Spanish ambassador, a Cultural Cooperation Agreement had been signed in Tehran on 24 November 1958. The signature of the cultural agreement with Iran was in consonance with Franco's 1950s cultural policy towards 'Arab-Muslim' countries with whom the regime tried to develop relations that could alleviate its international isolation. The fourteen-article agreement was confirmed ten years later (1968) in Madrid¹⁷.

Franco and Mohammad Reza Pahlavi met once more in 1965 when, on its way to Brazil for a state visit, the Shah's aircraft stopped in Barajas' airport for refuelling. Spanish, Iranian and Brazilian representatives in Madrid received the Shah and his wife (now Farah Diba) in a special hall at Madrid's Barajas airport. It was 2.30 a.m. and the encounter between the two statesmen lasted one hour, but Franco seized a new occasion to exhibit his international relations¹⁸. While Franco never visited Iran and there were no more official visits from the Iranian king to Spain, Iranian and Spanish authorities did continue to cultivate relations (see Annex Three for the full record of visits) in a steady manner and with an ever more visible commercial and industrial orientation. To

¹⁴ Decreto del 22 de mayo de 1957, por el que se concede el Collar de la Orden de Isabel la Católica a su Majestad Imperial Mohamed Schah Pahlavi, Schaenschah del Irán. *Boletín Oficial del Estado*. Madrid, 1 de junio de 1957, núm. 144, p. 1904.

¹⁵ Decreto 836/1975 del 19 de abril de 1975 por el que se concede el Collar de la Real y Muy Distinguida Orden de Carlos III a su Majestad a su Majestad Imperial Mohamed Schah Pahlavi, Schaenschah del Irán. *Boletín Oficial del Estado*. Madrid, 22 de abril de 1975, núm. 96, p. 8445.

¹⁶El Embajador de España en Irán presenta credenciales. [Spanish ambassador to Iran presents credentials] (1964, March 11). *ABC*, p. 60.

¹⁷ Instrumento de ratificación del convenio cultural entre el Gobierno de España y el Gobierno del Irán. *Boletín Oficial del Estado*. Madrid, 11 de mayo de 1968, núm. 114, pp. 6911-6912.

¹⁸ Pasan por Madrid, hacia Brasilia, el Shah de Persia y su esposa. [Flying visit to Madrid of Shah of Persia and his wife on their way to Brasilia] (1965, May 4). *ABC*, p. 39.

provide relations with a more solid and updated structure, both parties concluded a new Trade and Cooperation Agreement on 11 July 1973¹⁹.

On behalf of Spain, state visits did not take place until the 1970s, once Prince Juan Carlos had been designated as Franco's successor to the head of the state with the title of king (22 November 1969). Juan Carlos and Sofía visited Iran on three occasions—all of them before the 1979 revolution. In 1971, they attended the 2,500 anniversary of the Persian monarchy at Persepolis. In 1975, they undertook a five-day visit (20th-24th April) to Tehran whose purpose was to explore commercial, economic and technical cooperation²⁰. The last official visit took place in 1978, when the now king and queen of Spain travelled to Tehran as part of a 10-day Asian tour which included visits to Iran, China and Iraq. Only three years prior, Franco had died and Spain had initiated her internal and external transition. Two ministers of Adolfo Suárez's cabinet escorted the king and queen: foreign secretary, Marcelino Oreja; and the minister of industry, tourism and commerce, Carlos Bustelo. Speaking with the press, Spain's ambassador to Iran (1976-1978), Aurelio Valls Carreras, linked the good understanding between Iran and Spain to a long history of cultural, historical and political closeness between the two nations:

There exists a feeling of genuine friendship and fondness between our peoples, our countries and our governments. This feeling is based on the extraordinary similarity of our historical developments. I would say [...] that Spain, among all European nations, is the country which has a more extensive and more accurate understanding of the Orient; and that Iran, among all the Oriental nations, is one of the few which understands better. We are both blended nations²¹.

On 16 January 1979, Mohammad Reza Shah and his family left Iran on board of an aircraft that took off from Mehrabad airport. On that day the imperial family's long exile began and the Pahlavi dynasty ended. The Iranian monarchy would never again perform the highest state representation (not officially at least), although it remained friends of the Spanish monarchy. Revolutionaries claimed victory on 11 February 1979.

¹⁹ Acuerdo de Comercio y Cooperación Económica entre el Gobierno de España y el Gobierno Imperial del Irán, hecho en Madrid el 11 de julio de 1973. *Boletín Oficial del Estado*. Madrid, 11 de octubre de 1974, núm. 244, p. 20671.

²⁰ Próxima visita oficial de los Príncipes de España a Irán. [Next official visit to Iran of Spanish Princes] (1975, April 18). *ABC*, p. 29.

²¹ Cordial recibimiento en Teherán a los Reyes. [King and Queen warmly welcomed in Tehran] (1978, June 15). *ABC*, p. 17.

5.3.2 Strategic alliance and cultural blend in Hispano-Iranian relations.

In the long period stretching over from the 15th century to the 1979 revolution, diplomacy's greatest impulse came from geostrategy and commerce. Spain's three early and classical missions in Persia have given evidence of this. If the dispatch of envoys to Persia in the 15th and 17th centuries was coupled to the strategic interests of the Hispanic monarchy and the quest for counterweighing the Ottomans' influence on the Mediterranean; contrastingly, in the 19th century, commerce took precedence over geostrategy. The short-lived experience of Spain's first Vice Consulate General to Persia in the 1870s would give way to a decades-long hiatus in Hispano-Iranian relations. Only the Cold War would bring geostrategy back to the remit of bilateral relations, which would then enter into a path of steady cultivation. A major consequence of this was that willy-nilly the U.S. global agenda got woven into the framework of Hispano-Iranian relations; because the fact of the matter was that U.S.' interests were penetrating, one by one, in Spain's and Iran's domestic agendas. In the Spanish case, a most evident sign of such penetration was the 1953 security pact between Madrid and Washington.

The year 1953 was also a landmark in the history of foreign penetration in Iran. Not that the years and decades prior to 1953 had been exempt from foreign intervention—quite the opposite—, but in 1953, Britain and the U.S. in collusion with factions of the *artesh* (imperial army) orchestrated a *coup d'état* against Iran's legitimate government. In 1951, Iran's premier and leader of the National Front, Mohammad Mossadeq, passed a bill for the nationalisation of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC). The AIOC had been founded under British sponsorship early in the 20th century (in 1909), one year after the discovery of oil in Iran's south-western provinces (1908) and several years after the ruling Qajar King Mozzafar al-Din Shah had granted William Knox D'Arcy exclusive rights on oil prospects in Persia (1901), except for the five northern provinces under Russian influence (Keddie, 2007, p. 125). By nationalising oil, the purpose of Iran's premier was to regain control over the company's profits thus far largely at the hands of the British. The British, naturally, disapproved of his decision. The U.S., for its part, had fears that the Mossadeq's government would tilt towards the Soviet Union. The Shah, exiled in Rome since the early 1950s, was then brought back to the throne. In the words of a prominent historian:

The 1953 coup has often been depicted as a CIA venture to save Iran from international communism. In fact, it was a joint British-American venture to preserve the international oil cartel. Throughout the crisis, the central issue was who would control the production, distribution, and sale of oil (Abrahamian, 2008, p. 118).

Suggesting that the revitalisation of Hispano-Iranian relations in the 1950s was solely a function of U.S. Cold War geostrategy would downplay the significance of national interests, which looked at from the Spanish point of view seem significant to an extent. Thus, one can say that cultivating relations with Pahlavi Iran was in full consonance with Franco's broader 'policy of substitution' and the regime's reliance on exploiting Spain's cultural and historical proximity with the 'Arab' world with the aim of compensating the country's markedly ancillary position in the post-World War II geopolitical order. While the specialised literature barely mentions the Iranian dimension of Franco's 'policy of substitution', there are reasons to believe that the regime's imaginative geography of the Arab world included Iran, despite Iran's distinctiveness as the 'Persian' island in 'an ocean of Arab states'.

The foregoing discussion has gathered evidence that would confirm this point — namely: Iran and several other 'Arab-Muslim' countries voted in favour of the lifting of UN sanctions against Spain in 1950 (Gillespie, 2000, p. 187); Spain's representation in Tehran was reopened in 1951; Iran reciprocated in 1954; and the Shah's 1957 visit to Spain initiated a flurry of visits by authorities from the two countries. Arguably, this provides a background for the development of the narrative which comes into view in Beladíez's text, in which the construction of Iran as 'a Western country' (Beladíez, 1962, p. 275) plays a central role, for it is ultimately this vision of the Pahlavi state which enables the fabrication of a story in which Spain and Iran are 'allied/aligned' states —thus, subjects which share 'the feeling of belonging to one of the political blocs in which the world is divided up at the moment' (Beladíez, 1962, p. 274) and 'international views', more generally (Beladíez, 1962, p. 275). To secure this identification, the narrative identifies that 'communism' is a common enemy for both Spain and Iran —an enemy which Franco and the Shah know well because it is also a

domestic enemy—, which ultimately lends legitimacy to Spain-Iran strategic alliance with the U.S. (Beladíez, 1962, p. 275)²².

But there are more elements in Beladíez's (1962) writing that are worthy of reflection. In the diplomat's account, we also see indications of a move to enframe Spain-Iran's relations in a broader narrative going back to, so to say, the beginning of times: the times when Spain and Iran were 'masters of the world' (p. 274) —imperial powers which managed to carve out vast spheres of influence and develop their flourishing civilisations (and civilising missions). At a certain point, these powers did eventually share concerns resulting from the pressure that the Ottoman Empire exerted westwards and eastwards, although these concerns did not have a practical translation in the formation of a strategic alliance against the Sublime Porte, as the Castilian kings had wished. Beladíez's (1962) narrations have nonetheless further resonances. The author of *Cartas Persas (1951-1954)* indeed suggests that the roots of Hispano-Iranian criss-crossing histories are deeper, going back to the days of the Umayyad caliphate (7th-8th c.) —literally: to 'the splendid years of the Arab civilisation' (Beladíez, 1962, p. 274)— when Spain and Iran belonged to 'the same political and cultural conglomerate' (Beladíez, 1962, p. 274)²³. Precisely, the basis of a broader cultural genealogy of Hispano-Iranian relations shall lie here: in the vision of the Iberian Peninsula and the Iranian plateau standing on the flanks of the great Islamic caliphate, the westernmost and easternmost frontiers of an extinct empire.

To which extent the anti-communist ideological umbrella continued to be a comfortable point of mutual recognition for Hispano-Iranian diplomacy in the 1960s and 1970s, is not easy to say, but the somewhat loose reference to Hispano-Iranian historical intersections persisted in the discourse of Spanish diplomacy. On the occasion of King Juan Carlos and Queen Sofia's visit to Tehran in June 1978, resident Ambassador Valls praised the 'extraordinary similarity of Iran's and Spain's historical developments' —two countries that had for each other 'genuine feelings of friendship

²² In the year 1946, pro-Soviet republics were set up in the Iranian Kurdistan and the region of Azerbaijan. Their existence was, however, extremely short-lived for it did not take long for the U.S. to force the Soviet withdrawal from Iranian territory (Abrahamian, 1983; Hunter, 1987; Keddie, 2007).

²³ The history of Hispano-Persian cross-fertilisation under the Umayyad Caliphate is extensively documented by Shojaeddin Shafa (2000) in *De Persia a la España Musulmana* [From Persia to Muslim Spain] (Publicaciones de la Universidad de Huelva).

and fondness'; two essentially 'blended nations' whose hybrid identities made them particularly capable of understanding each other. By then, Spain's Iranian agenda had acquired a marked commercial and technical character that overshadowed classical geostrategic questions. After 1973, and despite the Cold War's continuity, Hispano-Iranian history set out to write a new chapter: Iran was an 'oil state' with enormous weight in the geopolitics of oil, whereas Spain was in a position of subservience in the fossil fuels market. Securing oil supplies became, therefore, a central element in Spain's Gulf agenda.

In a seminar held in Tehran back in 2001, a Spanish diplomat on mission there pondered over Iran's place in Spain's traditional framework of international relations. Speaking from a long-term perspective, he made the point that, while from a geographical point of view Iran could not be considered a part of the Mediterranean — and thus, not a part of Spain's Mediterranean policy—, Spain was fully aware of Iran's 'strategic importance' for both the region (the Middle East and the Gulf) and the world. The diplomat, in turn, related Iran's 'strategic importance' to her role as an oil state:

Despite this country not being integrated in the Mediterranean regional framework appointed as one of Spain's international priorities, the strategic importance of Iran in the Middle East and the Gulf, as well as the new geopolitics of oil, render Spain an active observer of Iranian affairs (Blecua, 2002, p. 94).

On redefining the bases of her external action after 1975, the discourse of foreign policy elites in Spain was that 'Europe/the West', the 'Mediterranean' and 'Latin America' were Spain's areas of strategic interest. Strictly speaking, such view was not novel —it had solid cultural, historical and geographical bases—, yet it constituted an act of geographical assertion offering explicit indications about the world Spain 'cared for' particularly, and the scenarios in which she projected herself as a valuable actor. For quite a long period, Spanish foreign policy discourse remained largely silent about other geographical areas. As far as Iran is concerned, this results in a paradoxical situation, such that, by and large, Spanish diplomacy in Iran acts in the absence of a specific policy framework. Not that this is a novel element in the history of Hispano-Iranian relations either, but shows that the lack of clear 'code' that orients the discourse and practice of diplomats involved in the cultivation of relations with Iran is an absence with which practitioners —and analysts— have to deal with.

5.4 Diplomacy with the Islamic Republic in the late Cold War.

5.4.1 'Islamic' Iran and the world's (dis-)order.

In the year 1969, Britain announced the withdrawal of troops east of the Suez Canal. The end of Britain's military presence in the Persian Gulf concluded a long era of British colonial rule (Ansari, 2006, p. 59). The 'power vacuum' in the region offered the U.S. with the opportunity to go on the Gulf stage. The only problem was that the Cold War was proving a heavy enterprise in scenarios such as Vietnam and, thus, the idea of picking up the Middle East's reins single-handedly did not seem very affordable for the American administrations. This hastened the conversion of Iran into a surrogate state.

On their way back from a historic visit to the Soviet Union in 1972, President Nixon and National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger came to the Shah with the proposal of partaking in the Twin Pillar policy for the Gulf (Parsi, 2007, p. 36). As part of the Nixon doctrine, the Twin Pillar policy aimed to raise Iran and Saudi Arabia — the two major world oil producers— to the position of U.S. proxies in the region. The policy's backbone was the deal by which Iran and Saudi Arabia were authorised to give 'regional stability as the prerequisite for the free flow of oil from the Persian Gulf' (Adib-Moghaddam, 2006, p. 12). However, the role of Iran in this schema was more important (Sick, 2001, p. 192). Nixon had literally asked the Shah to 'protect him' (Sick, 1985, p.14), and so the Shah became the 'policeman of the Gulf'. Strengthening ties with the U.S. was an alluring option for Iran where the Shah was consecrated to the restoration of the Persian great civilisation (*tamadon-e bozorg*), the enterprise of modernising the country and the construction of the largest military in the Middle East with the help of U.S. supplies of weapons and military equipment. In 1973, a five-year plan was devised that doubled the country's targets and expenditures, but the foundations of Iran's economy continued to be weak. With the country facing 'rising prices, falling exchange reserves, pervasive waste, inefficiency' (Ramazani, 1976, p. 328), Iran's economic situation had worsened throughout the decade. And, in addition to this, the Shah's police (SAVAK) subjected political dissidents to brutal repression, producing major popular alienation.

On New Year's Eve 1977, Jimmy Carter and his wife —guests of the Emperors at Niavaran Palace in Tehran— raised a toast for the king of Iran, an ally country still regarded 'as an island of stability in a turbulent ocean'. Earlier in the year, Carter had

asked the Shah to show a greater commitment with human rights, to which the Shah responded positively, if only because the continuity of arms sales needed to be ensured. Yet, only nine days after Carter's visit to Tehran, demonstrators in Qom were fired by the Shah's police; and in February 1978 the north-western city of Tabriz became the scenario of ruthlessly repressed protests. After this, the Shah made a rare TV appearance apologising for past errors and promising the regime's democratic overture. However, new episodes of violence took place in the summer 1978. Demonstrators insisted for Khomeini's return to Iran and the Shah's departure. Martial law was declared on 8 September 1978. On December 1978, Shapour Bakhtiar, member of the National Front, was appointed Prime Minister of Iran, with the prospect that his appointment would help the Shah in his survival operation. To no avail: as of January 1979 the Shah was about to leave the country, the Bakhtiar government on the brink of collapse and the military ready to take action, while the political upheaval continued undeterred. Khomeini returned to Iran on 1 February 1979. Revolutionaries claimed victory ten days later and shortly afterwards Mehdi Bazargan was appointed Prime Minister of the provisional revolutionary government.

On generally reflecting upon how the Islamic revolution impacted on the relations between Iran and the world, one of the diplomats interviewed for this project offered this remark:

Iran was a country on the way to becoming the great *cornerstone*... it had become, in the Cold War years.... The cornerstone of U.S. strategy in the region [...] Iran was not a problem. Mmmm, but then... the revolution happened; a theocracy was established; and... ever since, the perception of Iran changed completely (Interview).

The argument subtending the diplomat's declaration is not novel. On the contrary, myriad accounts produced in academic, policy and media circles have naturalised the basic cause-effect logic enshrined in it: 'Iran was not a problem' until the happening of the revolution and the ensuing establishment of the Islamic republic *rendered* it one, particularly in the eyes of the U.S. because the fact of the matter was that an almost immediate consequence of the demise of Pahlavi Iran was the loss of an ally state that had served the U.S. Gulf strategy in critical years during the Cold War. In this way, it is easy to see that reading Iran's identity prior to the revolution in terms of the 'cornerstone of U.S. strategy in the region' precipitates conclusions such that, on triumphing a revolution that was essentially anti-imperialist, 'the perception of Iran

changed completely'. And so, many agree that the 1979 events (and their aftermath) catalysed a radical change in Iran's status from U.S. 'friend' to U.S. 'enemy':

Then, that for the U.S. is dreadful... to see not only that there is an enemy where there was a friend before, and also that it's exporting a new political product nobody really knew... Nobody expected that (Interview).

The narratives of Spanish diplomats (re)produce the story about how the emergence of 'Islamic' Iran eventually brought under revision the order of the Cold War, with particular damage for the U.S. They *reproduce* rather than produce such story because, generally, it is the narrations of post-revolutionary Iran in the West which have naturalised the causal connection between the Islamic revolution and the beginning of U.S.-Iran hostilities. What goes often unrealised is that such story favours the U.S. vantage point in narrations of the crisis with Iran, as it holds 'Them' (Iranians; revolutionaries) responsible for the world's disorder—in fact, for introducing a 'new political product' whose specific definition was 'unexpected' and unknown to most in the West. Other attempts at making sense of the Islamic revolution's impact on the international politics of the day reveal a similar standpoint of interpretation:

[Iran and Saudi Arabia] were the pillars around which Western, and particularly, American presence in the region centred. In effect, the 1979 revolution *signalled the collapse of one of the pillars* and, therefore, *a rupture in the Western political imaginary* (Interview).

Iran's *original sin* was to try to change the order of the world. That caused alert among the two great, the two great powers: the politico-strategic power of the U.S. and the energy power of Saudi Arabia (Interview).

What takes places is, as I say, within popular imagination, there was a modern or modernising monarchy at least equitable to any other European monarchy, in all senses. For many people, the surprise was to find out that there were Muslims in Iran and that, as a matter of fact, they were Shi'ite Muslims (Interview).

Attributing to the 1979 revolution 'the collapse of one of the pillars [of the Twin Pillar policy]' reinforces the vision that the actions of Iranian revolutionaries transcended the perimeter of domestic politics and affected the architectural design of U.S. strategy in the Gulf. The narration, therefore, places Iran in the position of the subject who produces the collapse—it renders the Islamic Republic the instigator of structural instability. This in turn is constructed in diplomatic account as the primary reason—the 'original sin'—explaining the long history of U.S.-Iran antagonism. A formulation such

that ‘Iran’s original sin was to try to change the order of the world’ plays a similar function.

5.4.2 ‘Not our business’.

Unlike the U.S., Britain or France, in the eyes of Iran’s revolutionary elites, Spain did not carry the stigma of the colonial powers involved in the making of the Middle East after the fall of the Ottoman Empire. Diplomats judged Spain’s non-imperial status, and the absence of major diplomatic incidents with the new authorities, the factors that guaranteed the continuity in Hispano-Iranian relations after 1979 (Interviews). This was also possible because Hispano-Iranian relations ‘were based on shared interests rather than on ideology’ (Interview). Spain’s interests in Iran were mainly economic affecting the import-export activity of companies operating in the country and major construction companies with important engineering projects in the provinces bordering the Gulf (the Bandar Abbas port). During the early years of Khomeini’s government, therefore, diplomats on the field in Tehran stayed vigilant to the possible consequences of Iran’s regime change on the activity of Spanish companies. At the same time though, Spanish elites did not envision the ideological orientations of Iran’s new regime as a matter of concern. Revelations such that ‘[W]e didn’t feel in a collision mood with the regime at all’ (Interview) attest to this and would explain why the relations between Suárez’s Spain and Khomeini’s Iran were judged ‘pretty normal’ (Interview).

In this vein, it can be noted that, for the Spanish diplomacy, the continuity in Hispano-Iranian relations was compatible with the awareness that the Islamic revolution had produced a rupture in the global order of the world and that the gulf between Iran and the U.S. did nothing but widen ever since February 1979. The following long excerpt encapsulates diplomacy’s point of view on Spain’s particular positioning before events in which ‘We’ had no direct participation —Iran’s overall change of course and the early stirrings in the enduring U.S.-Iran standoff:

The feeling was that the gap was huge with the United States because there had been moments of great tension [...] Moreover, I believe that the Iranian MFA didn’t consider us a part of that confrontation and *our intention was certainly not to look like. It’s true there was that tension: to be part of it or not, but the Khomeinist revolution was really not our business.* That was the reality, wasn’t it? Thus, we were not part, neither in their

vision nor in ours, of either a conspiracy or an open confrontation against the Shi'ite revolution, against the Islamic Republic. At least that was my feeling (Interview).

Of relevance in this passage is, seemingly, the close correspondence between the discourse and practice of Spanish representatives on the field in Tehran; in particular, between the appraisal that 'the Khomeinist revolution was really not our business' —a belief which in turn matched well with the vision (uttered elsewhere) that the Khomeinist revolution was 'something curious, exotic, strange, but [not] a severe concern for our interests' (Interview)— and the practical decision not to do or declare anything against the new Iran. In short, the significant argument is that Spain appeared determined not to draw attention to herself in the broader canvas of Iran's crisis with the West. Why Spain did not have a more hostile reaction to the emergence of the Islamic Republic has to do with longer-term processes shaping Spain's international outlook in the decades prior to the 1979 revolution. Two kinds of arguments can be considered in this regard.

One of the arguments follows from the history of Hispano-Iranian relations until 1979 and the recognition that, while diplomacy with Iran had been operating without interruption since the 1950s, the scope of Spain's relations with the Western Asian country was indeed narrow. Pahlavi Iran started being a sort of ideological ally in the 1950s and, over time, became an economic partner and an oil supplier; but Iran was not a neighbour whose domestic evolution would have a direct impact on Spanish affairs. The meditation of one of my interviewees on Spain's stance on the new Iran is in tune with the point I am trying to raise here:

We had maintained good relations with the Shah and didn't intend to change that situation [...] We apply the Estrada doctrine [...] We recognise states, not regimes. Therefore, if we recognise the state of Iran, we don't care who is in power (Interview).

Thus, if anything, what came into view with the Islamic revolution was that Spanish elites did not feel urged to revise Spain's relations with Khomeini's Iran. The other argument is more general and derives from the inertias attached to Spain's strategy for reaching out to the world under Franco —principally what concerns the continuity in the discourse of 'special relations' with the Arab world (and of practices consonant with it) and the courting of Third World nations.

Previously, the argument was made that by the end of 1989 Spain had taken all the necessary steps for her full integration in the political, economic and security structures of the West. Elites figured this out as the means for cleaning up Spain's stigmatised image on account of the Civil War and the Francoist dictatorship, and be recognised at large as a 'democratic' and 'Western' state. But, critically, during the period between 1976 and 1989, the international direction of the new Spanish democracy did not always come clearly into view or, differently put, was distinctly contradictory.

In September 1979, representatives of Adolfo Suárez's government attended the 6th Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) celebrated in the capital of Cuba, which granted Spain the status of observer (Viñas, 1999, p. 254). In a public statement, the first foreign minister of Suárez's government, Marcelino Oreja, justified Spain's presence at the summit with the argument that 'the Western world is not monolithic, but a democratic conglomerate of pluralistic and free states' (quoted in Mesa, 1982, p. 40). In the view of many, however, Spain showed up at the summit due to concerns with the Sahara problem and the Canary Islands (Mesa, 1982, p. 40). Originating at the Bandung Conference in 1955, this coalition of non-aligned states formed in response to the two-bloc schema promoted by the Cold War with neutralism being the common thread uniting an otherwise disparate group of Third World nations. Attending the 1979 NAM summit confounded those who expected something different from the newly-born Spanish democracy and from the first UCD government —something such as Spain's straight-out embracement of Westernism and Atlanticism.

And it just so happens that the newly-born Islamic Republic of Iran was also amongst the attendees to the 6th NAM Summit, where it was confirmed as a member. (Iran has been a permanent member of NAM ever since). For a novel 'Islamic' Republic that revolutionised the Cold War order by extolling her neutralist stance on international politics, joining the NAM was in tune with the country's new foreign outlook and the necessity of taking distances from her former alignment with the West. The revolutionary motto 'na qarbi na sharqi, jomhuriy-e eslami' (i.e. neither Western nor Eastern, but an Islamic Republic) showcased Iran's will pretty clearly. Yet, in the Spanish case, the show-up at the 6th NAM Summit produced a completely different effect. It was understood as indicative that, at the turn of the decade, the accommodation

of foreign policy practices and objectives (chiefly, attaining EEC membership) was far from optimal.

Flirting with the non-aligned was not the sole question causing unease amongst the supporters of a pro-Atlantic and pro-Western Spain. The other key subject was Suárez's lack of determination to establish relations with the state of Israel. A legacy bequeathed from the Francoist era, Spain's transition to democracy (and the more specific policy of normalisation of relations with all world nations) had generated the expectation that Israel would soon be recognised. Instead, for a decade after Franco's death, the dominant reasoning continued to be that starting relations with Israel could enrage Spain's Arab 'brethren' and, more precisely, that it would be totally contradictory with Spain's traditional support of the Palestinian cause. In 1979, Suárez received Yasser Arafat in Madrid. The visit led to the aperture of an office of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO). Distrustful of the Palestinian leader, European powers observed Suárez's welcoming of Arafat also with suspicion (Algora Weber, 2010, p. 77). At the UN, Spain continued to cast votes condemnatory of Israel's actions (Algora Weber, 2010, p. 77), to the chagrin of the atlanticist sectors in the party government (UCD) for whom the non-recognition of Israel amounted to a 'historical anomaly'.

5.4.3 'Friendlier than the Satans'.

When Felipe González came to power in 1982 three hot potatoes remained on Spain's foreign agenda: the proceedings for the country's full accession to NATO, the negotiations conducive to EEC membership and the pending recognition of the state of Israel. Of these matters, one could have caused direct and severe damage on Spanish diplomacy with the Islamic Republic —the foreseeable establishment of relations with Israel and what could be interpreted by friendly Arab states as the revision of Spain's traditional stance on the Middle East conflict. With Khomeini in power in Iran, the defense of the Palestinian cause and the rejection of Zionism had become a distinctive feature of the new Iran's identity, which especially during the early years of the Islamic Republic, attempted to reach out to the wider 'Muslim' world through the performance of a pan-Islamist discourse.

In Spain, Francisco Fernández Ordóñez, González's second foreign minister (1985-92) and successor of Fernando Morán (1982-85), took the lead in the negotiations for the final normalisation of relations with Israel. About Morán, one source puts rightly that he was the real ideologue of the Socialist foreign policy (Delgado & Sánchez, 2007, p. 295), but also someone who wanted to steer Spain's international involvement in an 'autonomous' direction and at a different pace from what Prime Minister González had in mind. Aware that the non-recognition of Israel constituted a deviation from the dominant position amongst advanced Western democracies, Morán insisted that the Palestinians should be granted guarantees before further international recognition was lent to Israel. In the end, differences of criteria with the Spanish Prime Minister accelerated the end of his tenure and Fernández Ordóñez's appointment.

There is little doubt nowadays that Fernández Ordóñez's management of the Israeli question was a conspicuous success and this, mainly, because it had no further repercussions on the relations with the Arab states and because none of the imagined worst-case scenarios was enacted. Spanish authorities had, for instance, feared violent actions against Spanish missions in Arab-Muslim states or, what seemed little likely but still possible, the rupture of diplomatic relations. The minister prepared the operation carefully. He travelled to several Arab countries and held meetings with Arab authorities as the UN General Assembly September 1985. Early January 1986 he received ambassadors of the Arab states, and representatives of the Arab League and the PLO in Madrid, his main purpose being to explain fully Spain's decision on Israel. On 16 January 1986, the decision was communicated to members of the Common Market and, on the following day, Israeli and Spanish diplomats issued a joint statement giving account of the historical resolution (Delgado & Sánchez, 2007, p. 295).

Over the decades, the major obstacle for Hispano-Israeli diplomacy had been the fear that Spain would lose her specificity in the Arab world; the loss of an exceptional status essentially coupled to our Euro-Mediterranean identity and Muslim history for which Spain believed she was regarded with special consideration by Arab friendly states. But, at this point, a foreign policy based on the principle of universal diplomatic relations and independence from the specific political orientations of states won over — or had to be wisely combined with— the traditional solidarity with the Palestinians. Before the enactment of the official recognition, in August 1985, the Socialist

government granted the PLO office in Madrid diplomatic status as a means to compensate for Spain's activation of relations with Israel. In Iran, the staging of support for the Palestinian cause had reached greater dramatic intensity some years earlier, when, upon a visit to Khomeini only a few days after the triumph of the revolution (18 February 1979), Prime Minister Bazargan handed over Yasser Arafat the keys of Palestine's new representation in Tehran on the location of Israel's former embassy in a street renamed '*khiabun-e Filastin*' (Palestine street).

Anticipating a possible hostile reaction by Iran's pro-Palestinian authorities to Spain's decision on Israel, members of the Spanish police Special Operations Group (*GEO*) were dispatched to guarantee the safety of the Spanish mission in the Iranian capital (Interview). As a diplomatic agent who was on the field in Tehran at this critical juncture elaborated:

The establishment of relations with Israel was a bit of shock in the bilateral relations between Spain and Iran [...] The relationship was almost unaffected. I mean, it was rather our concern, the preparation, the explanation, I mean... the efforts to articulate it for them for whom the U.S. was the Great Satan, but the other Satan was... their existence was also against it, wasn't it? Against, against Zionism. It was more our concern than anything else (Interview).

It becomes apparent that on-field diplomats had rightly weighed down the possibility that a decision (the recognition of Israel) stemming from national interests could have negative repercussions on the relationship with Khomeini's Iran. That was reasonable in view of the values, norms and culture that informed the revolutionaries' world-vision — '[P]ro Palestinian sentiments, anti-Zionism and anti-imperialism, Islamic communitarianism, 'third-worldism', and cultural and political independence' (Adib-Moghaddam, 2008, p. 71)—, and needed to be taken seriously into account. In the most recent past, such values had inspired most transcendental actions: not only had revolutionaries toppled the Shah, pulverising the Pahlavi dynasty (1925-1979), they had also dynamited a certain order of things by putting the relationship with the U.S. under serious revision. Under these circumstances, therefore, it is important to realise that — the Israel's recognition episode offers indications of it— the priority goal for Spanish diplomacy was to avoid antagonising Iran and homogeneisation with the 'imperial' powers for whom the triumph of the revolution meant loss of influence in the Gulf. This goal is also implicit in the following excerpt:

Back then it's when we became members of the European Union [sic] [...] and we started to participate in EU [sic] meetings [...] It was interesting because for the first time Spain had access to that small group of states and we had an additional source of information, from those coordinating meetings, and access to their analyses, especially of those who were better informed. At that time it was the British, the Germans and the French. [...] But, despite all, we wanted to keep that small margin of differentiation. One of the goals of our presence in Iran was that, to be a little bit different and preserve that margin 'we are a little bit friendlier, we are not the small Satan'. The Great Satan was the United States, the small Satans the Germans, the British, and the rest... No, we pursued a slightly different status... why? Because after all our foreign policy was very flimsy and we tried to obtain margins of differentiation and optimisation where we goodly could [...] almost exaggerating as... 'Mediterranean brethren'. We are Mediterranean, we share a common culture. At the end of day, we have been a Muslim country, we have been colonised by the Arabs for eight centuries. That discourse sells.... (Interview).

It is remarkable that Spain adopted the strategy of, what I would like to call, 'distinction among the Satans'. In tune with what has been said before, the 'distinction' strategy consisted in not adopting an antagonistic political stance against the Khomeinist revolution —thus avoid drawing attention to ourselves on this matter— and, as explicitly put by my interviewee, try to seem 'a little bit friendlier' than the great and small 'Satans' that inhabited the revolutionaries' imagination and inspired the Islamic Republic's international orientations. The 'distinction' strategy consisted in leaving a margin for action —or rather 'inaction'— that would not compromise the continuity of Hispano-Iranian relations. I think, however, that to aptly appreciate the point that I am trying to make here two subjects need further elaboration.

One is the question of the 'Satans' and the diagnosis that the Cold War superpowers —the United States and the Soviet Union— were unjust rulers that strangled countries under their influence economically, politically, culturally and morally. This idea was central to the revolutionaries' imagination. And the phrase 'Great Satan' came to convey what was further central in the revolutionaries' world-vision: that the U.S. was 'an outside corrupting force' which 'shared a historical legacy with Iran's old nemesis, Great Britain'; that this legacy consisted of 'strong-arms tactics in the oil market, undue influence on the throne, monopolistic trade concessions and an impervious attitude towards Iranians and Iranian institutions' (Beeman, 2005, p. 65). The key issue is that Iran's revolution meant, precisely, that after 1979 a new era had started where imperial practices of the past would no longer be tolerated. The long history of interventionism in Iranian affairs —harking to the early 19th century at least— was solid enough so as to convince revolutionaries that the days of Iran's subservience

to Russian/Soviet, British and American interests shall be gone for good. And in tune with this was revolutionary Iran's vehement opposition to Zionism, based on the reading that the creation of Israel was essentially a further show of imperial politics in the Middle East, hence its identification as the 'small Satan'.

On reflection, it does seem reasonable, that Iranian revolutionaries could have not come to the conclusion that Spain was a 'satanic' force on a par with the Soviet Union, Britain or the U.S.; yet the narration of the episode on the recognition of Israel suggests that the diplomatic elites had concerns in that regard. This leads me to the second subject we need to address here.

My point is that Spain's purpose of not antagonising 'Islamic' Iran and the 'distinction' strategy were consonant with the balances that the country was trying to strike internationally. This affected, in a very significant way, the relationship with the West (Europe and the U.S.) because, by the time Iran was starting to write a new chapter in her history extolling Iranians' resistance against imperialism and Western influence, Spain was writing quite a different thing —a story about going back to the future and about the return to Europe and the West after forty years mired in backwardness. In the end, this shall explain why one should not confound Spain's non-will to antagonise Iran with a real alignment with the ideological orientations of the new Iranian authorities. As this final statement proves:

No, never neutral. We were members of NATO and members of the EU [sic]. I mean, you are where you are, and you are who you are. The first and foremost mistake of a state is not to acknowledge what it is and where it belongs. That is... No, we knew very well where and who we were (Interview).

The last quarter of the 20th century saw major political changes in Spain and Iran, but also on a global scale, since it was also when the end of the Cold War was 'fabricated'. Spain commenced her 'transition' to democracy and towards international integration. In Iran, the 'Islamic' revolution 'happened'. So, Iran also commenced her 'transition' to a radically different (from the past) national and international status. Both in Spain and in Iran, the new thinking of elites had particular translations in the countries' foreign policy and international projection —the big difference being that Spain's transitional process was essentially 'reformist', while Iran's was essentially 'revolutionary'. Despite

this, the interesting parallelism is that by 1989 both countries had completed an important phase in their particular evolutions towards democracy and Islamic Republic.

In the Spanish case, what was clear by 1989 was that the country aspired and worked tenaciously to become integrated in the West's economic, political and security schemata (the EEC, the NATO, the WEU) and also to set up more even bases in the relationship with the United States by reviewing the terms of the former 1953 security pact. In sum, the late Cold War saw Spain in the process of deciding who she wanted to be in order to not to be the same 'thing' as in the past, despite this not meaning a radical rupture from it. Avowedly, it decided to reaffirm her Westernism, her Europeanism, her Latinism and her Mediterraneism, at the same time that she struggled to vindicate her particular/special/exceptional positioning in the attending geopolitical areas.

But, in spite of the profound changes taking place in the Western Asian country and the severity of the war with Iraq (1980-88), diplomacy with Khomeini's Iran continued, albeit within very narrow limits. Spain's embassy in Tehran was small—it only staffed two or three diplomats—but went on with her regular activity, even in times of war: assisting the small community of Spanish residents in the country, safeguarding commercial relations and briefing Madrid on Iran's domestic situation (interview). Visits of authorities were scant (see Annex Three for the details), but some of them held at a ministerial level: Luis Ortiz, Minister of Public Works (1981); Claudio Aranzadi, Minister of Industry and Energy (1988); and Jorge Dezcallar, Director General of Foreign Policy for Africa and the Middle East (1988). On the Iranian side, also three ministers visited Spain during this period: Hassan Ali, Minister of Commerce (1979); Mustafa Hashemi, Minister of Industry (1982); and, Ali Akbar Velayati, Minister of Foreign Affairs (1989).

5.5 Diplomacy with the Islamic Republic in the post-Cold War.

When the Cold War 'ended', the Islamic Republic had reached one decade of age and faced no 'existential threat' by either inside opponents—they had been 'deactivated'—or outside enemies—the reluctant acceptance of the UN ceasefire resolution 598 brought the war with Iraq to a halt. Over the previous years, the domestic and foreign policy orientations of the Islamic Republic had been informing Western visions of the

‘new’ Iran, which by now was largely figured as a ‘deviant’ element of the modern system of states. Events such as the Hostage Crisis and the detention of Western hostages in Southern Lebanon during the 1980s, and a foreign policy articulated around the purpose of ‘exporting the revolution’ (Ramazani, 2001) were read as evidence that the international aspirations of Iran’s revolutionaries clashed fiercely with the standards of modern international relations. In consequence, it was largely believed that the Islamic Republic seemed ‘prepared to ignore the conventional niceties of diplomatic convention to achieve its policy goals’ (Joffé, 1991, p. 83).

It is not surprising that the ones who found Iran’s behaviour particularly worrying were the United States. In the early 1980s, the U.S. defence and security community continued to think about the world along Cold War lines. Yet, post-revolutionary Iran did not seem to fit in the basic East/West structure of the Cold war architecture. By the mid-1980s, Iran started to be defined as a ‘sponsor of terrorism’. This definition was given official and lasting status when Khomeini’s regime was included on the State Department’s annual listing of terrorist states, 14 January 1984 (Caprioli & Trumbore, 2003, p. 383). In the final 1980s and early 1990s, the conceptualisation of Iran as a ‘rogue state’ that menaced world stability and was a direct threat for the U.S. government gained saliency and was turned into policy once Clinton came to power in 1993. Yet, for a Spanish diplomat:

Iran had already been defined by the U.S. as a ‘rogue state’, an untrustworthy state, a state that goes it alone and so... at that moment, not for us, but for the Western world it was an unreliable state. You can’t know what it’s going to do, it’s not predictable, it doesn’t stick to the rules. That’s obvious. It’s in the essences of Khomeini’s revolution. It’s in the lack of clarity of their structures of power, who is in charge and who isn’t; who is in control of intelligence services and whether they have intelligence services in charge of terrorist activities —Lockerbie and the like... —That’s a crucial factor (Interview).

The truth is that, in spite of its prominent role in the narration of world politics’ dramas, the U.S. was not alone in the competition for establishing who post-Khomeini Iran was. Since the early 1990s, Western Europe’s participation in the debate over modern Iran’s meaning came in sight with an approach that differed substantially from U.S. thinking. The most important factor explaining Western Europe’s increased participation in this debate was the creation in 1993 of the European Union on the basis of the Maastricht Treaty (1992), and the early stirrings of the Union’s Common Foreign and Security

Policy (CFSP). Thus, a post-Cold War novelty in the relations between Western European countries and Iran was that these were now mediated by multilateral foreign policy instruments developed inside the Union. Very critical of Iran's record on human rights (and a number of other issues), Europe launched initiatives for dialogue with the Islamic Republic (the 'Critical Dialogue' in 1992 and the 'Comprehensive Dialogue' in 1998) aimed at Iran's (re-)integration in the international system, yet under certain conditions. Despite the initiatives, for most of the decade, the obstacles for achieving major accomplishments in EU-Iran relations were manifold.

5.5.1 'Rogue' and the New World Order.

To say that the Cold War 'ended' and the post-Cold War 'began' is to say that the years following 1989 (1990 or 1991) saw major changes in the 'routinized rules', 'institutions', 'activities' and 'strategies' characteristic of the international political economy during 1945-1990 (Agnew & Corbridge, 1995, p. 15). Such changes were also visible in the geographical representations by which elites explained and acted upon the world. In other words, the ideological discourse of the Cold War —built upon the metaphor of the competition between a 'capitalist West' and a 'communist East' (or the First *versus* the Second world)— ceased to be the structure of significance mostly evoked to make sense of world politics. A post-Cold War discourse awaited articulation and the question was which geographical arguments would become more popular (dominant or hegemonic) in narrations of the world.

The story of 'rogue states' came out at a moment of systemic change that staged a competition for the redefinition of global space (Ó Tuathail, 1998b). When one admits the fact of the competition, the assumption is entailed that the story about certain states 'whose external behaviour runs afoul of the standards of the international community' (Caprioli & Trumbore, 2003, p. 377) —'rogue states'— did not become hegemonic. Rather, it co-existed with other stories of 'what went on in the world' that fabricated other events such as the 'end of history', the 'clash of civilisations' or the 'new world order'. The current analysis, however, deals with the 'rogue states' narrative at some length because it oriented decisively the vision of U.S. policy-makers involved in the question of the Islamic Republic since the early 1990s.

Homolar (2011) cogently argues that the rogue states' story was the U.S.' chief security narrative in an era dominated by an overall sense of 'uncertainty' following the end of the bipolar confrontation with the Soviet Union (p. 710). It came out from the shift of focus from the Soviet threat to the perception that the greatest threat to global peace and security came now from Third World states —namely, from developing countries not comparable in their military capacities to the U.S., but largely conceived of as 'norm deviants'. Typical characteristics of norm-deviant states were, first, that they were ruled by 'unpredictable regimes seemingly beyond the influence of leading state' (Henriksen, 2001, p. 171); and, secondly, that they sought to accomplish their strategic goals through unconventional means related to the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction and terrorist activities.

In this regard, it is important to note —drawing on Homolar's (2011) insightful analysis— that the genealogy of the 'rogue states' narrative harked back to the 1970s and to the concerns with regimes whose domestic behaviour was unacceptable in the eyes of the U.S. —overtly repressive regimes such as Pol Pot's Cambodia or Sidi Amin's Uganda). In this vein, over a period of two decades and because of the drastic changes in the order of world politics, the idea was naturalised that regimes which violated human rights at home would not replicate their unexemplarily in the international arena. It followed from this that these were 'aggressive' regimes that threatened world stability and the U.S., particularly. The conviction that these regimes were interested in acquiring weapons of mass destruction or the means to deliver them across borders, and the suspicion on their involvement in terrorist activities provided further evidence of their deviant nature. Over time, the vision of rogue states became indelibly linked to i) human rights violations, ii) weapons of mass destruction, and iii) terrorist activity (Homolar, 2011).

The turning point in the 'rogue states' story came in the early 1990s, when its translation into policy was undertaken. In those days, what seemed a catchy rhetorical device became the ideological motif that inspired U.S. foreign policy towards the Gulf (especially towards Iran and Iraq). True though, the way had started to be paved in previous years. In a 1985 speech, President Ronald Reagan asserted that Iran belonged to a 'confederation of criminal governments' (where also North Korea, Cuba and Nicaragua featured) 'involved in a campaign of international terrorism against the

United States, her allies, and moderate Third World states'. The threat was deemed so real that the 'community of civilized nations' was urged to counteract 'the increasing involvement of these states in terrorism in every region of the world' (Reagan, 1985). In retrospect, it is conspicuous that Iraq was not grasped at this point as a 'deviant' or 'undeterrable' regime in the same way that Iran and others were. But the fact of the matter was that the non-definition of Iraq as an 'outlaw' was consonant with the U.S. strategic decision to support Saddam in the war against Iran and the general silence (in the West and on behalf of 'Arab' states) over Iraq's aggressive behaviour against the Islamic Republic.

Iraq's status, however, would change very soon. On 2 August 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait leading to the outbreak of the Second Gulf War. The U.S. responded to Saddam's aggression by launching Operation Desert Storm on 17 January 1991. A coalition of 34 nations —Spain formed part of it— endorsed the U.S. operation. It has been convincingly argued that the invasion of Kuwait provoked major transformations in the international politics of the Gulf (Adib-Moghaddam, 2006), mainly because finally the U.S. realised that the preservation of its geostrategic interests in the region could not be entrusted to a regime like the Iraqi and was, consequently, prompted to rethink the rationale behind its regional policy. This accelerated the conclusion that the Middle East necessitated a new security architecture able to cope with the challenges of the post-Cold War order.

At this juncture, the decision concerned whether to include Iran in the new Middle East/Gulf order or to perpetuate Tehran's ostracism from regional decision-making. The second option won over. In 1991, the Islamic Republic of Iran —whose 'influence' on the Middle East conflict was nonetheless widely recognised— was not invited to the Talks held in Madrid to advance on the peace agenda concerning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. As noted by Parsi (2007), '[T]he noninvitation deprived Iran of an opportunity to help shape the new order according to its own interests' (p. 154). A Spanish diplomat judged it 'a great mistake' (Interview) to exclude Tehran from a conference which, then again, was considered a great success of Spanish diplomacy and a turning point in Spain's international reputation.

Tehran responded to the noninvitation to the Madrid Talks with the organisation of an alternative conference of critics with the Middle East Peace Process. The dominant view in the West was that the conference set out to dynamite the efforts made by the international community to advance on a solution for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which perpetuated Iran's reputation as a 'deviant' state. But perhaps more transcendental than this was Iran's exclusion from the security arrangements in the Gulf, where the members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) opted out for signing bilateral security pacts with the U.S. in lieu of building a regional alliance that included the Islamic Republic. Washington, in sum, managed to impose its preference for an 'Arab order with the United States' over a 'Middle East order with Iran' (Parsi, 2007, p. 147).

Other than this, another expression of the New World Order was Washington's determination to actively contain Iran and Iraq. Clinton's strategy of 'Dual Containment' was announced on 18 May 1993 before the Washington Near East Policy (a pro-Israeli think-tank) (Parsi, 2007, p. 171). The core of the Dual Containment was Washington's purpose of keeping both Iran and Iraq at bay without developing relations of dependence with neither Tehran nor Baghdad, unlike in the previous decade when the American strategy had consisted in trying to balance Iran and Iraq against each other. This time was different and Washington's purpose was to construct a '*cordon sanitaire*' (Ansari, 2006, p. 136) around Iran and Iraq that prevented their 'roguery' from spilling over the region.

In a 1994 article, Anthony Lake, Special Assistant to President Clinton on National Security, wrote that Washington was challenged in Iran 'by a theocratic regime with a sense of cultural and political destiny and an abiding antagonism toward the United States' (p. 49). The National Security Strategy of 1995 stated that Iraq and Iran 'pose[d] a threat to the U.S. interests, the other states in the region and their own citizens' (Clinton, 1995, p. 30), and specifically as regarded Iran, it mentioned that Washington's policy was oriented towards 'changing the behavior of the Iranian government in several key areas' (Clinton, 1995, p. 31), including weapons of mass destruction, terrorism and human rights.

The most visible and consequential upshot of Dual Containment was an economic embargo on Iran following an Executive Order signed by Clinton. The embargo, which added up to the U.S. policy of sanctions initiated in the aftermath of the Islamic revolution, affected primarily the investments of American companies in the Iranian oil and gas sectors. The U.S. State Department tried to convince the Europeans for joining the embargo or ‘failing that, to reduce the export of dual-use technology to that country’ (Hunter, 2010, p. 86). European powers refused to do so. The Clinton administration, however, insisted in the policy of sanctions and in 1996 a bill was approved —the so-called Iran-Libya Sanctions Act (ILSA)— which imposed ‘secondary sanctions against foreign companies investing in Iran’s petroleum sector’ (Sabet-Saeidi, 2008, p. 60). By virtue of ILSA, also non-American companies investing \$40 billion or more in Iran’s energy sectors would have to face the consequences of the U.S. sanctioning mindset. The U.S. attitude touched a nerve in the EU, which tried to withstand the American attack with legislation that prevented European companies from obeying U.S. prohibitions (Sabet-Saeidi, 2008, p. 61). It has been admitted, nonetheless, that ILSA ‘became the grounds for bitter confrontation between the European Union and the United States’ (Drenou, 2008, p. 76).

5.5.2 The question of EU-Iran relations.

During the first decade of the Islamic Republic, the relations between Iran and Western European countries (mainly, Britain, France, Germany and Italy) had been far from optimal, yet economic relations continued in spite of the initial disquietude about Iran’s economic course under the new revolutionary government. With respect to this, Ehteshami (1991) noted precisely that ‘it was clear from the early days of its life that, far from actively seeking to opt out of the capitalist world economy [...] the Islamic Republic would ultimately merely remould its relationship with global economic processes’ (p. 61). In this setting, awareness of the disastrous moment in Iran’s relations with the two ‘Great Satans’ (the U.S. and the Soviet Union) cherished the hope of upgraded relations between Iran and Western Europe, precisely on the grounds that Western European countries had been Iran’s major trading partners until 1978 (Halliday, 1998, p. 131-132). Things, however, did not play out exactly as the Europeans expected. And, with hindsight, it is easy to recognise that, other than economic interests, the Europeans’ prospects of ‘a better, privileged and more stable

relationship with Tehran' (Halliday, 1998, p. 130) remained an 'illusion' (also in Halliday's words) for the whole decade.

It is accepted wisdom amongst analysts (Drenou, 2008; Hunter, 2010; Mousavian, 2010; Sabet-Saeidi, 2008) and practitioners involved in the cultivation of ties with Iran in recent decades (critically, diplomats) that the pattern of relations between Europe and the government of Tehran did not move in a really constructive direction until 1997, when the 'reformist' cleric Mohammad Khatami won Iran's presidential elections. This notwithstanding, the period between 1989 and 1997 was critical in Europe's history of relations with Iran and also, as I would like to argue, consequential for the wider debate on the meaning of post-revolutionary Iran.

The revision of this period could not begin without mention of the *fatwa* against Salman Rushdie, the Indo-British author of *The Satanic Verses*, the novel in which Khomeini saw blasphemy against Prophet Mohammad. This prompted the pronouncement on 14 February 1989 of a religious edict that entitled any Muslim to carry out a death sentence against the offender Rushdie. The Iranian Leader's statement unclenched episodes of violence and a multitude of anti-Rushdie rallies around the world. It also caused a major diplomatic crisis with Britain. The relations between London and Tehran had been convoluted throughout the whole decade, causing the closing of the British mission in Tehran at long intervals since 1979. The *fatwa* episode dragged Irano-British relations to their lowest ebb since 1953 (the year of the *coup* against Mossadeq in which the MI6 had participated) —Salman Rushdie was an Indo-British citizen and the *fatwa*, as has been compellingly argued (Adib-Moghaddam, 2006) 'touched upon the very basic architecture of the Westphalian nation-state system whereby the citizens of a state are only subject to the jurisdiction of the territorial state law and, where applicable, to secular international law' (p. 26). Upon Khomeini's death on 3 June 1989, the question was far from settled and continued to cloud the relations between Iran and Western European countries. Khomeini's death, however, marked the beginning of Iran's 'Second Republic'²⁴.

²⁴ The phrase was coined by Ehteshami in a seminal book, *After Khomeini: The Iranian Second Republic* (1995).

Hojjatoleslam Ali Khamenei became Khomeini's successor. It is known that his religious credentials were upgraded to fit the requirements of the Office of the Supreme Leader (reserved only for *Ayatollehā*). The measure was secured in a constitutional amendment, where the prerequisite of leaving the leadership of the Republic 'in the hands of either a paramount faqeh or a council of senior faqehs' was substituted with the provision that 'the Supreme Leader could be a seminary-trained cleric with the right qualifications —"honesty", "piety", "courage", "administrative abilities" and "versed in the political issues of the age"' (Abrahamian, 2008, p. 182). In the same year, another mighty figure within the country's revolutionary elites —the influential former Speaker of *Majles* (Parliament) and Commander-in-Chief of the Iranian army during the Iran-Iraq war—, Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, was elected President of the Islamic Republic on 28 July 1989. Together, Khamenei and Rafsanjani formed a 'political tandem' (known in Iran's political parlance as *daw charkkeh-ye daw nafareh*) (Ramazani, 2001, p. 217) which put Iran's post-war reconstruction on top of the Republic's agenda. Such aspiration demanded the reactivation of the country's economy and the revamping of economic relations with Western countries (in particular, with Europe with whom obstacles seemed in principle more surmountable than with the U.S.) for, as Abrahamian (2004) illustratively recounts:

[y]ears of war and revolution, compounded by a drastic decline in oil prices and an equally drastic rise in population, had generated a host of economic problems: unemployment, inflation, foreign-exchange crises, lack of investments, shortages of schools and housing, flight of capital and professionals, and continued influx of peasants into urban slums (pp. 116-117).

By trying to liberalise Iran's economy, therefore, what Rafsanjani sought was 'to stabilize the Islamic Republic upon the pillar of mercantile capital' (Ansari, 2006, p. 11). Paradoxically, Rafsanjani's policies of economic liberalism were the ultimate reason why Iran's attempts at building closer ties with Europe failed —and not exactly because Western European countries were not interested in increasing economic exchange with Iran, but mainly due to the obstruction of Iran's 'hardliners' to the policies through which the Rafsanjani government pursued Iran's 'opening' to the world (Hunter, 2010, p. 83).

In fact, the underlying argument here is that, as most scholars point out, under Rafsanjani, Iran's foreign policy orientations adopted a markedly 'pragmatic' outlook

which decentred the ‘ideological’ motivations behind the Islamic Republic’s approximation to the world and world politics in the decade between 1979 and 1989. One should note, in any case, that the either ‘pragmatic’ or ‘ideological’ divide simplifies the picture and that, as Ramazani (2001) compellingly argues, Iran’s foreign policy has always sought —often laboriously— to accommodate the pragmatic and ideological components woven into the Islamic Republic’s design. But the question here is that, consonant with Rafsanjani’s ‘pragmatic’ approach to international relations and the abandonment of the rhetoric of ‘export of the revolution’, conditions seemed favourable for reducing the gulf with European governments. Furthermore, Europe appreciated Iran’s neutrality during Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait (1990-91) and this, together with the general climate of distrust provoked by the second Gulf War, encouraged the reconsideration of Iran’s status by European observers and governments (Hunter, 2010, p. 83).

Despite some positive signals, the truth is that the window of opportunity for Europe-Iran’s relations never got to be wide enough during the first half of the 1990s. Major obstacles were still in sight. With the question of the *fatwa* against Rushdie still lingering on the public imagination, suspicions that agents of the Islamic Republic were involved in political murders committed on European soil since the late 1980s did not help clarify the situation. Of these, the most damaging case for Europe-Iran’s relations was the so-called ‘Mykonos incident’. It concerned the assassination of four Kurdish opposition leaders with ties to the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI) in a Greek restaurant in Berlin in 1992. In 1997, five years after the attack, a Berlin court found two men guilty of murder, while other two were convicted of being accessories to murder. But more important than that, the court concluded that the men had followed orders issued by the ‘highest state levels’ in Iran. Iranian authorities, who had categorically denied their involvement in the case, were enraged by the verdict.

And so, the Mykonos’ case sentence marked the beginning of Europe’s most important diplomatic crisis with Iran since the birth of the Islamic Republic, with Germany —with whom Iran held the most intense economic relations (Mousavian, 2010)— in the eye of the storm. It had immediate diplomatic repercussions, with both countries recalling ambassadors. In solidarity with the German partner, European states also withdrew their ambassadors from Tehran —Spain was not an exception. The return

of ambassadors to the Iranian capital came only a few months later, once the ‘reformist’ cleric, Mohammad Khatami, emerged as winner in the 1997 presidential election. Other than this, another formidable obstacle for improved Europe-Iran’s relations was the Middle East Peace Process and, in particular, Iran’s rejectionist attitude towards policies conciliatory with the Israelis, the opposition to the two-state solution and the material support for groups (Islamic Jihad and Hezbollah) actively involved in the fight against the state of Israel (Halliday, 2001, p. 184).

5.5.3 Initiating dialogue.

In 1992, on the occasion of the European Summit of Edinburgh, 11-12 December, the European Council announced its will to initiate a ‘Critical Dialogue’ (CD) with the Islamic Republic. The EU initiative of dialogue aimed to tackle human rights’ abuses in Iran, the question of the *fatwa* against Rushdie and of political assassinations, Iran’s occupation of the Abu Musa and Tunb Islands in the Gulf, Tehran’s role in the Arab-Israeli Peace Process and proliferation-related problems (Struwe, 1998, p. 18). Unlike the United States—which at the end of the day was geographically distant from Iran—, Europe lent urgency to this host of issues. Addressing them was conceived of as a prerequisite for improving economic and political cooperation with Iran (Struwe, 1998, p. 15). The initiative’s announcement was not unconnected from the perception that changes in Iran’s domestic situation were promising and that, under Rafsanjani’s leadership, the Islamic Republic was in a better position to initiate the thaw with the West. With Europe interpreting Rafsanjani’s moves in terms of opportunity, a major purpose of the CD was ‘to strengthen allegedly moderate politicians in Iran’ as a means to prevent ‘a radicalization of the regime that was feared if Iran were isolated from the international community’ (Struwe, 1998, p. 10). The stories of Spanish diplomats confirm this was the prevailing standpoint in the Union:

a certain spirit of understanding with Europe and a discourse... a less aggressive discourse I would say, and change..., which at that time could have been more important than it was because, well, Iran’s priority was no longer the export of the revolution, but the consolidation, inner consolidation, and the improvement of relations, particularly with Europe, wasn’t it? The relationship with the U.S. was still the same (Interview).

The passage illustrates tellingly that Europe's policy was essentially related to a shift in the perception of Iran's attitude towards the outer world, which ran parallel to the review of her foreign policy objectives. Iran's change of attitude was observable in that it seemed more willing to build common understandings ('a certain spirit of understanding') with Europe and in public declarations which now exhibited a less militant tone ('a less aggressive discourse') than in the past. In terms of political objectives, the key issues were that the lesser amount of emphasis on ideological-Islamic-militant plans —epitomised in the objective to 'export the revolution'— and the preference for consolidating the Republic internally. The implicit argument therefore was that post-Khomeini Iran's behaviour seemed to better adjust to the standards of modern international politics.

But the passage also anticipates that the success of this early 1990s EU-Iran dialogue was modest ('change [...] could have been more important') and that the U.S.-Iran standoff continued unresolved ('The relationship with the U.S. was still the same'). Today, it is widely recognised that the U.S.-Iran standoff acted as a brake on Europe's attempts to come close to Iran and that, on the whole, the post-Cold War saw the development of two rather distinct positions on how to deal with Iran:

Critical dialogue [...] Iran cannot be regarded as *an island*. Iran is an element, I insist again, *key to the region*. Therefore, we have to deal with Iran in an integral manner; try to render Iran, *I cannot call it an 'ally'* because that's not the case, but at least a country... *a predictable regime* which does not initiate adventures in third countries and which doesn't support movements that are certainly unreliable and that have an anti-Western or anti-allies of the West discourse (Interview).

When one thinks back to the famous Critical Dialogue and looks at those who lead international politics nowadays... one realises we were more imaginative from the point of view of diplomacy because the Critical Dialogue... what it did was to address those areas that Iran needed to tackle, in particular the question of human rights, improving domestic governance, etc. But *we had respect for, say, the adversary*, hadn't we? *We sat on a table and respected each others' position* (Interview).

Considered a 'test subject' (Drenou, 2008, p. 84) of the newly-born European Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), three further questions related to the Critical Dialogue need to be looked at in order to understand why, ultimately, Europe-Iran relations and European policy towards Iran are significant referents in the stories of Spanish diplomats. The first question is that, from Europe's standpoint, Iran was not 'an island'. It followed from this that, rather than isolation, European policy pursued Iran's

reintegration in regional and international schemata (Struwe, 1998, p. 15). Indeed, as stated before, Europe's discernment was that integration could reduce the risk of internal radicalisation in Iran and that, by contrast, cornering Tehran would only enliven the most extreme factions within the Iranian establishment. The second issue is that, from the European point of view again, greater levels of political and economic cooperation with the Islamic Republic could not be attained unless Iran showed a stronger commitment with the domestic situation of human rights. On this issue, it is important to realise that a central pillar of the newly-born CFSP was the promotion of human rights and democracy (Struwe, 1998, p. 6), which evinces the strong normative push inserted in the architecture of communitarian foreign policy.

The third question concerns how differently Europe and the U.S. envisioned Iran in the early post-Cold War. Europe's conviction that Iran was not 'an island' contrasted with the U.S. approach, which at that time was inclined towards 'containing' Tehran. It follows from this that Washington flirted with the idea that Iran could be insularised. Thus, as Europe read post-Khomeini Iran's more moderate international outlook as an opportunity to support those political factions in Iran which stood for a different kind of international relations, the U.S. acted on the assumption that the Islamic Republic was monolithic. In practical terms, what derived from the U.S. 'Iran-as-a-state' approach was that American policy was kidnapped by the reasoning that the Islamic Republic deserved 'collective punishment' (Struwe, 1998, p. 10), while Europe was readier to recognise Iran's internal pluralism and exhibited this by undergirding the 'moderates'. Yet, it must be admitted that both the U.S. and Europe shared the view that the Islamic Republic's highly 'unpredictable' behaviour was difficult to combine with the norms and standards of modern international politics. And, in this way, it can be argued that the ethical expectation woven into Europe's CD was similar to what the U.S. wished for: changes in Iran's domestic and international behaviour —as concerned human rights and domestic governance, on the one hand; non-interference in conflict scenarios and non-support for anti-*statu quo* and anti-Western movements, on the other.

The accepted wisdom has remained that Europe's Critical Dialogue failed overall because the European strategy was too reliant on a pressure approach that did not pay sufficient attention to incentives for Tehran (Hunter, 2010, p. 85). Another major impediment was Europe's insistence on denouncing Iran's negative human rights

record while it remained overall silent about Iraq's or Saudi Arabia's performance in this regard. The opposition of Iran's hard-liners to opening to Europe was therefore significant, *inter alia* because they refused Europe's paternalistic attitude and the sensation that the Islamic Republic was scolded for her bad behaviour. One should also add that Israel too was sceptical about the dialogue and that the U.S. policy of Dual Containment undermined the force of the trend initiated by Europe (Hunter, 2010, p. 86). Lastly, the Critical Dialogue also raised suspicions because it was said to be Europe's 'fig-leaf to pursue economic interests in Iran' (Struwe, 1998, p. 8).

Reading the stories of Spanish diplomats under the light of this criticism suggests that diplomatic agents' view on the matter is more optimistic than analyses of Europe-Iran relations and European policy towards Iran. It is probably not surprising that those involved in the making of a particular policy look back at it more favourably than those (analysts and observers) who were not. Yet, what concerns us is the interpretation of the Critical Dialogue made by Spanish diplomacy and the subtending reading of Self/Other identities. The dominant interpretation is that the CD set up a context of 'mutual respect' for negotiations with Iran. In turn, this interpretation is enframed by the vision that, in the setting of the West-Iran crisis, Europe was the good-willed multilateral actor that struggled for improving relations with a 'key country' of the Gulf, while the U.S. developed her boycott policies. ('What's been the U.S. strategy? The dog in the manger, who doesn't eat and doesn't let anyone eat', Interview) —the most evident sign of the boycott being the policy of sanctions and, in particular, the adoption of ILSA (1996).

On the other hand, the argument of 'mutual respect' in fact permits a construction of the Self/Other relation that positions 'Us' and 'Them' at a distance that is relative rather than absolute. The identification of Iran as an 'adversary' lays bare that Iran is conceived of at this point as an 'opponent' ('Back then we did not share a strategic vision, but we talked about dialogue', Interview), yet significantly not as an 'enemy', which seemed to be the working vision in U.S. foreign policy. Defining Iran as an 'adversary' has further implications. In the first place, it recalls that European governments resisted the demonising call against Tehran (that Spain was part of such pocket of resistance) and for one significant reason: '[T]he EU never perceived Iran as an "outlaw" state' (Struwe, 1998, p. 35). From a practical point of view, one sees that

initiatives for dialogue and negotiation with Tehran were attuned with the ‘Iran-as-adversary’ approach and that alternative constructions of identity (hypothetically, ‘Iran-as-enemy’ or ‘Iran-as-radical threat’) would have foretold different scenarios of action Europe was not interested in picturing. But the fact remains that Europe’s ultimate purpose was to render Iran a ‘predictable regime’, which suggests that for Europe Iran was not solely a ‘political opponent’ but someone whose behaviour ‘We’ found profoundly troubling and distressful. The reason why Europe/Spain would find it difficult to call Iran ‘an ally’ lies precisely here, in the deep-seated conviction that there is something essentially deviant in ‘Them’ which resists rationalisation.

The last point I would like to raise concerns the construction of the Spanish Self. On this issue, it can be argued that the fact that Europe’s orientations and discourse on Iran are featured prominently in diplomatic accounts is symptomatic of yet another fact: since the early post-Cold War Spanish visions of Iran are notably informed and enframed by a greater level of the debate over the meaning of Iran, the European level, to which Spain is politically, institutionally and ideationally bound. The most conclusive evidence of this is that Spain self-identifies as ‘European’ and the official endorsement of Europe’s Iran policy. Yet, as will be argued, even if ‘Europe’ becomes a key reference in Spain’s discourse and practical orientations towards Iran, one of the most relevant narratives on Hispano-Iranian relations is built upon the representation of Spain as a ‘European’ state that is concerned with how Europe’s Iran policy might affect bilateral relations with Iran.

Iran pulled out of the Critical Dialogue in response to the sentence on the Mykonos case. Given the magnitude of the crisis that ensued, it must have been difficult to foresee a new window of opportunity for reengaging with Iran. And yet, Europe did not have to wait too long for that opportunity to arise again. It came in the form of a ‘reformist’ politician: Mohammad Khatami, who was elected President of Iran in 1997. It is not a novel assertion that Khatami’s election earned recognition to Iran’s reformist movement and that it, as far as the West-Iran relations were concerned, gave way to a period full of hope for rapprochement. It also enabled the reactivation of diplomacy with the European Union, which in 1998 made a new proposal for dialogue, this time under the banner of ‘Comprehensive Dialogue’.

5.5.4 Khatami and the ‘watershed’.

Khatami, well, he represented that *watershed* and a certain offering hand. He represented certain change, didn't he? (Interview).

Mohammad Khatami won Iran's 1997 presidential election on the promise of social reforms and the improvement of relations with the West; and it is largely accepted that women and the youth voted massively for him. Under Khatami's leadership, Iran's international voice adopted a more constructive tone. For the first time since 1979, Westerners felt that Iran's foreign policy was at last ‘conciliatory’ (Hunter, 2010, p. 86). The pillars of Khatami's foreign policy were dialogue, diplomacy and *détente* with the West. Domestically, the main preoccupation of Iranian authorities continued to be the country's reconstruction, which could not be substantially improved unless Iran was able to attract foreign investments and reschedule her debts (Hunter, 2010, p. 87). In this setting, building closer ties with Europe —and the U.S.— became imperative.

The immediate effect of Khatami's arrival to the presidency of Iran was particularly remarkable in Europe where the Iranian leader's ‘moderation’ was interpreted as an opportunity to revamp the dialogue initiated under his predecessor, but this time without assuming that the only ones entitled to be ‘critical’ were the Europeans. Under this new spirit, the initiative for a ‘Comprehensive Dialogue’ was presented at a Council meeting on 23 February 1998. It pursued to discuss a shared agenda dealing with trade, energy and investment cooperation, as well as political matters which had been on the European agenda for long —human rights and non-proliferation (Dupont, 2010, pp. 97-98). With reformists winning over the majority of seats in Iran's parliamentary elections of 2000, Europe's prospects for strengthening ties with Iran improved even more. The upshot of this was that, in May 2001, the European Council discussed the signature of a Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) and a Political Dialogue Agreement (PDA) with the Islamic Republic. The EU was Iran's largest trading partner and Europe had committed itself to help Iran adjust to the rules and obligations of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), whose membership the U.S had vetoed thus far. Over the years 2001 and 2002, high-ranked meetings took place back and forth to discuss the terms of the TCA and PDA. Yet, by mid-2002 news broke that Iran's had resumed the development of its nuclear programme and the European

agenda on Iran —the Western agenda, for that matter— fell prey of the nuclear file until the signature of the 2015 nuclear deal (Posch, 2016).

But before that actually happened, Khatami had scored a few diplomatic victories leading to the improvement of the Islamic Republic's reputation, especially in the European capitals where the 'Khatami effect' (Adib-Moghaddam, 2008, p. 179) became more noticeable. A visible sign of this was the frantic diplomatic activity initiated after Khatami's election, which translated into a 'flurry of high-level official visits between Iran and the EU member states' (Hunter, 2010, p. 86). Khatami's diplomatic tour in Europe (and elsewhere) constituted an unprecedented event in the history of Iran's foreign policy (no other President of Iran before him had embarked on state visits in Europe thus far), and therefore, widely read as Iran's determination to mend fences with the West. The Iranian leader met with presidents and prime ministers in France, Italy, Germany, Greece, Austria and Spain. In Tehran, he hosted the visits of Italy's minister of foreign affairs (March 1998), Austria's president (September 1999) or Spain's prime minister (October 2000) (Hunter, 2010, p. 86).

In early 1998, during an interview with Christian Amanpour for the CNN in the course of which Khatami had to respond to questions about the seizing of the U.S. embassy in Tehran back in 1979, the Lebanon hostages, the Rushdie affair, etc., the President of Iran seized on the occasion to praise the American people and declare American history and civilisation 'worthy of respect'. And in spite of his critical views on U.S. foreign policy and U.S. interventionist practices overseas, the general feeling — even in the U.S.— was that Khatami was a 'civilised' and 'sensitive' leader and someone with whom the West could have conversations.

Such vision was enhanced later that year when Khatami appeared before the UN General Assembly during the annual September meeting and delivered a speech in defence of cultural dialogue. The speech achieved broad resonance and the year 2001 was declared the year of the 'Dialogue among Civilisations'. This initiative stemmed out from Khatami's political philosophy and the view that relations between nations shall develop in a framework of 'dignity', 'wisdom' and 'prudence' (Sabet-Saeidi, 2008, p. 61). The fact that Khatami's conciliatory outlook was more than rhetoric became evident in relation to the Rushdie affair. In the fall of 1998, on the occasion of a

meeting with the British foreign secretary, foreign minister Kamal Kharazi declared that “[T]he government of the Islamic Republic of Iran has no intention, nor is it going to take any action whatsoever to threaten the life of the author of the *The Satanic Verses* or anybody associated with this work, nor will it encourage anybody to do so” (quoted in Parsi, 2007, p. 204). By doing this, the Khatami government took distance from Khomeini’s ‘personal opinion’ (Parsi, 2007, p. 204) on the connotations of Rushdie’s work.

The less provocative character of Khatami’s foreign policy also urged the revision of the country’s stance on the Middle East Peace Process, with Iran abandoning her traditional opposition to the two-state solution and declaring to be ready to accept ‘any agreement that is palatable to the Palestinians’ (Abrahamian, 2004, p. 108). Iran’s reassessment of her position on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was in tune with a novel outlook towards the region and the ‘Arab’ neighbours —amidst which there were some long-term geopolitical rivals—, with whom the Khatami administration also sought a climate of improved relations. The most evident signs of this new attitude were Iran’s rapprochement with Saudi Arabia and the overall climate of détente that came after the celebration of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Summit in Tehran, December 1997.

Arguably, therefore, with Khatami in the presidency of the Islamic Republic, it became less easy to engage in demonising strategies and the rhetoric of rogue states. As the U.S. did not revise the policy of containment, the Union’s opting for Comprehensive Dialogue with Iran showed that the EU’s vested interests were worthy of defence. In retrospect though, one finds that Halliday (1998) is compelling when he argues that ‘given their membership to a NATO under US direction, the Western countries could not, even if they were minded to, act in a manner radically at odds with the United States’ (p. 132) —which ushers in the conclusion that, despite the differences over the Iranian question, Europe would not choose a strategy that would divert in any radical way from the U.S.’ line; in the same way that Tehran’s two main foreign policy purposes —integration in the economic and financial systems ‘of the West’ and recognition of her prominent role in Middle Eastern geopolitics— could not be attained by solely fuelling relations with Europe at the expense of the United States (Halliday, 2001, p.177).

5.5.5 Assisting Iran's aperture.

Drawing on what has been discussed thus far, it becomes evident that the birth of the EU (1993) and the early developments in the CFSP added a new and crucial dimension to Hispano-Iranian relations. As seen, until 1986, when Spain's admission to the EU was formalised, relations between Spain and Iran developed simply on a bilateral level. Yet, with Spain's 'Europeanisation', Hispano-Iranian relations were dragged into a process of multi-scaling where the bilateral scale was not abandoned in favour of multilateralism, but had to co-exist with a multilateral (European) level of relations. Naturally, this did not affect Spain only, but any member state involved in relations with the Islamic Republic. Analysts have offered two interpretations on how the two levels of relations generally intersect. One interpretation is that the EU foreign policy framework exerts a 'constraining' effect on members' bilateral agenda of relations with Iran —'relations of individual European countries with Iran became constrained by broader EU policies' (Drenou, 2010, p. 84). Another interpretation is that 'the member states' bilateral relations with Iran still play a significant role in determining the European policy' (Struwe, 1998, p. 14), which suggests that it is the individual agendas which constrain the communitarian agenda from bottom to top.

One would say that both interpretations are actually compatible and that, in practice, Europe's Iran policy comes out of transactions between national and communitarian interests. On this issue, for instance, it would be interesting to see to which extent Spain's national interests —or any other member state's interests, for that matter— are merged into Europe's Iran policy or what is truly communitarian in Europe's Iran policy, but that is a subject that cannot be thoroughly tackled at the moment. Anyways, what must be understood is that this broader policy context has enframed the development of Hispano-Iranian relations since the early 1990s. This would be insignificant if it was not because diplomatic accounts reveal that the communitarian framework places some kind of strain on Spain's relations with Iran and, what is perhaps more important, on Spain's identity projection before Iran:

Well, yes, the Spanish foreign policy in Iran... the European Union was a landmark, but it is also true that, all things considered, within this scope of action, we have been a country that has had *particularly good relations with Iran* (Interview).

Within the European Union, of course, we were critical of certain [Iranian] policies, but we didn't draw attention to ourselves, we didn't identify ourselves with a political

objective in relation to the regime [...] *We had a good practical relation*, although Spain —logically— as member of the European Union was critical of a series of Iranian policies regarding human rights, the rights of women, regarding Iran's strategic international outlook, ehm... but relations were good (Interview).

I mean, we followed European policies. When Germany, the Germans... asked for solidarity and the withdrawal of Ambassadors, we withdrew our Ambassador and didn't go back until everybody was back, I mean, our action was, of course, inscribed within a wider European policy framework. But, as I say, back then, the Iranian dossier wasn't as important as it is now; neither the perception that Iran would develop a nuclear programme was so evident... (Interview).

In discussing the accommodation of member states' agendas with Europe's Iran agenda, it has been suggestively argued that 'mechanical solidarity [is] not always an expression of shared political priorities' (Struwe, 1998, p. 39). The argument is compelling when one looks at the Spanish case. As in the late Cold War period, the early 1990s did not see a substantial revision of Spain's interests in Iran —they continued to be mainly economic and relations with the government of Tehran developed in a pragmatic framework. This idea is confirmed in interviews where diplomatic agents assert with confidence that '[W]e had a good practical relation', or depict Spain as 'a country that has had particularly good relations with Iran'. There is no reason to think that Spain would not want to preserve her narrow but pivotal framework of relations with a state that has been a major oil supplier since the 1970s. But it becomes apparent that, as member of the European Union and partaker of Europe's Iran policy, the risk existed that bilateral relations with Iran would resent tensions operating at the EU-Iran level — the Mykonos crisis and the European decision to recall ambassadors from Tehran being cases in point.

And so, under this light, a statement such that 'we were critical of certain [Iranian] policies, but we didn't draw attention to ourselves, we didn't identify ourselves with a political objective in relation to the regime' becomes particularly relevant. It evinces that diplomatic discourse seeks to place Spain's commitment to the communitarian policy framework on a different level than the bilateral relationship with Iran, despite this not being perfectly possible. The stories of diplomats suggest that there have been moments when preserving that balance has been especially challenging. One source of tension is the high moral exigency enshrined in European foreign policy — visible in Europe's human rights-related demands on Iran—, by contrast with the pragmatic point of view that Spain has applied in her relations with Iran since 1979 and

also before. Put differently, the tension stems from the distinct global scope of the Union's foreign agenda —with its attending normative aspirations— *versus* the modest scope in the foreign agenda of a 'middle power' like Spain (Palou, 1993).

Overall, however, the challenge of accommodating both agendas has been greater or lesser depending on who was in power in Tehran and the policies adopted by Iranian governments. Thus, not only is the breadth of Iran's 'opening' during the Rafsanjani and the Khatami eras read differently by Spanish diplomats, also their potential and gestures to comply with the norms and standards of international relations (especially the question of human rights and democratic principles). In this regard, the Western appraisal of Khatami's tenure has by and large been more favourable than his predecessor's, and the stories of Spanish diplomats are definitely attuned with this general trend. There are specific reasons why, also in/from Spain, the Khatami era remains to date the most widely cherished period in the history of the West-Iran relations after 1979. They are essentially related to the fact that Khatami was largely regarded as the Iranian President whose commitment to 'dialogue with' and 'cultural overture' to the West has reached greater levels. Without doubt, such perception continues to be closely related to gestures such as Khatami's tour in Europe, his praising of American culture and people, the proposal for a Dialogue among Civilisations, etc. In a nutshell, therefore, the dominant vision of Khatami's Iran is strongly linked to the idea of 'opening'.

It remains to be seen what diplomatic stories make of Spain's role at this particular juncture, where Khatami's arrival to Iran's presidential office helped to unthaw the Europe-Iran's crisis (on account of the Mykonos case's resolution) —the launching of the Comprehensive Dialogue being the most evident sign of the softening of relations. As the following excerpts illustrate, the dominant vision is that Spain was a country that, within the European framework of action, was in a particularly good position to assist Iran's aperture:

At that time they saw us as the country with which, perhaps the one country with which there was greater political dialogue. I mean, the political dialogue of the Khatami era, that is, the contact, the exchange of visits, the dialogue... There was no problem in having conversations, because what we were having was a dialogue with no conditions. That is, they know that wherever we are, they are talking to the European Union and the United States. Well, but they also know they are talking to someone who listens, don't

they? And we don't have a specific Iranian agenda, as might be the case of others (Interview).

That was a moment when, well, there was a certain hope —frustrated in the end—... because one could see the progress, but it was not substantial in qualitative terms, was it? A certain cultural overture... openness for dialogue. Khatami was a man who had made a career in cultural institutions and he understood very well that kind of discourse, didn't he? The relationship with the youth and women was also distinct, wasn't it? It was a more flexible relationship, and so was understood, and we... back then, we seized on the opportunity offered by that overture and tried to open up more channels and endorse the regime's opening, didn't we? (Interview).

My point is that the central vision of Iran's as an 'opening' subject permits the elaboration of a narrative that maximises the significance of Spain's endorsement of the 'reformist revolution' taking place in Khatami's Iran, and at the same time that it foresees at least two major outcomes: i) Spain's overall positive contribution to the general improvement of the West-Iran relations, and ii) the safeguard of Hispano-Iranian. But to aptly appreciate how this narrative works out, one needs to unravel the specific construction of Self/Other identities upon which it is built.

Thus far, Iran's 'opening' has been accepted without further problematisation. Yet, what does the vision of the 'opening' conceal? Two things at least. The first thing is that such vision is built upon a movement metaphor which pictures the subject (Iran) breaking its own seal and moving into a certain direction. The second thing concerns the story's standpoint, which ushers in the interpretation that the course of the movement goes from 'There' to 'Here' —namely, that Iran's opening engenders 'Their' coming closer to 'Us' (Europe/the West), which is the ultimate reason of the positive appraisal of the changes in Iran under Khatami.

Other than this, it is important to note that Iran's opening refers to two different but intersecting levels: the political and the cultural. Within the political level, one can further differentiate between international and domestic politics. As far as international politics is concerned, the perception of Iran's overture is essentially related to the vision that the Khatami's cabinet was open to dialogue and negotiation with Europe/the West. Its overall conciliatory approach to relations with the West comes into view on occasions such as the UN General Assembly meeting where Khatami presented his proposal of 'Dialogue among Civilisations'. As regards Iran's domestic situation, it is key to understand that the vision of Iran's opening is essentially related to the

interpretation that Khatami could allow the strengthening and visibilisation of Iran's civil society—a respected political figure who offered the best hope for sectors of the population in Iran (especially, women and the youth) that longed for greater freedoms, more economic opportunities and a more responsive political system.

The perception that Khatami's Iran was also more open from the point of view of culture has indeed to do with the very Khatami who, as pointed out, “was a man who had made a career in the cultural institutions”. This is critical because unlike his predecessor (not to talk about Khomeini) he was seen as a less revolutionary or militant figure of the Iranian establishment. Khatami was an intellectual.

He got his bachelor degree in Western philosophy from Isfahan University, before he moved to Qom to complete his religious formation. In Hamburg he acted as the head of the Islamic Centre for a short period of time (1979-80), which gave him the opportunity to become familiar with the German language. Upon his return to Iran, he was elected as member of the Iranian Parliament (1980-2), head of Islamic Propagation during the Iran-Iraq War, Chief of Keyhan Publishing House, Minister of Guidance (1982-6 and 1982-92), head of the National Library (1992-7), and member of the Supreme Council for the Cultural Revolution (Mirbagheri, 2007, pp. 305-306). For these reasons:

Khatami appeared as a face of an Islam that the West could talk to [...] He was not talking to an infidel West, at least not openly, and appeared to praise much of what the Western world had already achieved. Yet he imbued confidence in Islam and his native culture and believed that both Islam and the West could engage in a constructive dialogue. It all seemed very sweet and rosy and it was in such a climate that his call for a dialogue of civilizations found a receptive audience (Mirbagheri, 2007, p. 308).

Of relevance, finally, is the construction of the Self in the story. As seen before, the purpose of strengthening ‘moderates’ was one of the pillars in Europe's Iran policy starting in the early 1990s. As partaker of European policy, it is not strange to see Spain publicly endorsing Europe's official policy of dialogue with Iran. But the salient issue here is the interpretation that, within the Europe/West context, Spain was especially gifted for assisting Iran's aperture and that, moreover, Iranians had a clear perception that this was so —‘[A]t that time, they saw us as a country with which, perhaps the one country with which there was greater political dialogue’. To secure this identification, the diplomat underscores these various advantages: i) Spain did not impose conditions

to the dialogue with Iran, ii) Spain showed an enhanced capacity for listening (to Iran's arguments, presumably), and iii) Spain did not pursue political goals in Iran —'as might be the case of others'. Together with these particular 'assets', it needs to be recalled that, amongst Spanish diplomats, the perception is strong that Spain is unencumbered by a history of interventionism in Middle Eastern or Gulf politics, which allows the reading that 'Our' actions in/with Iran are regarded less suspiciously than those of Britain or the U.S.

In short, the dominant interpretation made by the very diplomats who were involved in the dialogue with Iran is that Spain has a special status amidst Europeans that allowed her to be in a better position than others to push forward the dialogue with Iran. At the same time, one should not lose sight of the fact that the stories always read Spain's identity through the prism of 'Europe' and the 'West' —'they [Iranians] know that wherever we are, they are talking to the European Union and the United States'. Thus, on constructing the place of Self in the Spanish stories of Iran, Spain's 'Europeanness' and 'Westernness' seem to be out of question. But at the same time an implicit argument is that, in the multilevel and multi-interest context of dialogue/negotiation/transactions with the Islamic Republic, Spain does not want to dissolve in a general 'Europe-West', which potentially and prototypically Iran perceives of as threatening, bullying and interventionist. In what follows, the chapter argues that this narrative —with its attendant identity/difference constructions— builds up to a powerful climax when Spanish Prime Minister José María Aznar volunteered to champion the cause of Iran's reformism.

5.5.6 'Un gran país'.

Kamal Kharrazi, Secretary of Foreign Affairs in the Khatami's cabinet, arrived in Madrid on official visit in June 1998, as part of the Iranian government's strategy for reaching out to Europe and the European countries. The visit led, on the following year, to the signature of a Hispano-Iranian agreement concerning the international carriage of goods by road. Political contacts between the governments of Madrid and Tehran continued in the late 1990s and, on occasion of the UN General Assembly, September 2000, José María Aznar —who was then Spain's Prime Minister— and President Khatami met informally in New York. President Khatami invited Aznar to come over to

Tehran. Immediately, their teams set out to arrange a meeting. On Aznar's agenda, visits to Vietnam and South Korea were scheduled for October that year. The teams agreed that Aznar would be in Tehran exactly on 22 October. Aznar was the highest state authority on visit in Iran since 1978. He was escorted by the Government Spokesperson (Pío Cabanillas) and a delegation of businessmen²⁵. The visit had a mainly economic character. Significantly though, Prime Minister Aznar envisioned the relationship with a 'reformist/reformed' Iran as a great opportunity for Spanish foreign policy.

Over the next few months after the Aznar-Khatami encounter in Iran consultations at ministerial and vice-ministerial levels continued (see Annex Three for the details), and in the year 2002 Mohammad Khatami became the first president in the history of the Islamic Republic on official visit in Spain (28-31 October). The last time a highest Iranian authority had been to Spain was 1965, back in the times of the Shah. During his stay, Khatami held meetings with the King and Queen, the Prime Minister and cabinet members and local Madrid authorities. He also attended an economic cooperation seminar in Madrid, lectured on Cervantes at Universidad Complutense de Madrid and was on a private visit to Granada, where he could admire the Alhambra. The visit led to the signature of an Agreement for the Promotion and Reciprocal Protection of Investments (2002) and several Memoranda of Agreement —on Cooperation and Mutual Assistance in Customs Matters and on Tourist Cooperation (2002). Negotiations were conducted also on a Double Tax Avoidance Agreement finally signed in 2003.

The Iranian leader's visit to Spain was, however, surrounded by controversy. In the lead-up to the delegation's arrival in Madrid, the public discussion (mainly on the media) versed on the 'restrictive' code of conduct that Iranians allegedly imposed on the host authorities. The restrictions concerned the serving of alcoholic drinks during luncheons and the protocol in the salutations with women, with whom the official line in Iran prescribes the non-establishment of physical contact. The rumour was also spread that Iranians had asked that female authorities (including Queen Sofia and

²⁵ Aznar empieza mañana en Hanoi una gira que también le llevará a Corea e Irán. [Aznar starts tour in Hanoi that will continue in Korea and Iran]. (2000, October 16th). *El Mundo*. Retrieved from: <http://www.elmundo.es/elmundo/2000/10/16/internacional/971676805.html>

Foreign Minister Ana de Palacio) cover up at official events, a point that was denied by sources at the Spanish MFA²⁶.

Some of my interviewees confessed that it was such the brouhaha on the media that both teams feared that the visit would fail. As it seemed, Iranians were annoyed by the anticipated uproar and so were the Spanish organisers, for whom the substantial matter was not the protocol or the concessions to Iranians' cultural sensitivity but the progress in the bilateral agenda. With hindsight, the visit was considered overall successful. Of course, neither did Khatami shake hands with females in public, nor were women forced to wear 'Islamic' outfits. It is reported that Khatami explained to Queen Sofía the fuss in his country had he shaken hands with her. As for wine, the host delegation decided to replace the traditional gala dinner for a 'gala breakfast', which would keep the suspicions on alcoholic drinks at a low. But Aznar kept an ace up the sleeve. A formal meeting between the Iranian President and the Spanish PM was scheduled to take place in the Moncloa Palace, 29 October. After the meeting, the two men went out to have a walk in the gardens. Aznar is reported to have asked Khatami which plans he had for lunch; Khatami said that he was free at lunchtime; Aznar invited him to stay over and they lunched together privately. Wine crisis overcome (Interviews).

It is not an overstatement to say that both Aznar's visit to Iran and Khatami's visit to Spain were major breakthroughs in the history of Hispano-Iranian relations and that the early 2000s was the period of greatest diplomatic and political proximity between Spain and Iran. Also, there is no escaping the fact that the building of a stronger relationship between Madrid and Tehran took place against the backdrop of the EU-Iran Comprehensive Dialogue. How much the first owed to the second and how much the second benefitted from the first is difficult to say, but one can easily come to the conclusion that the prospects for an improved EU-Iran relationship did have an overall positive effect on Hispano-Iranian relations. It must also be mentioned that Spain held the EU presidency between January and June 2002. Other than this, it is key to understand that Spain's foreign policy under Aznar was more ambitious than ever

²⁶ Exteriores reitera que ninguna mujer será obligada a llevar velo en la visita de Jatamí. [Spanish MFA confirms no woman forced to wear veil during Khatami visit]. (2002, October 26). *El País*. Retrieved from: https://elpais.com/diario/2002/10/26/espana/1035583226_850215.html

before in post-1975 Spain. During his second term in office (2000-2004), Aznar tried to upgrade Spain's 'middle power' status to that of a 'global power' (Gillespie, 2001). My argument is that this is not unconnected from the accomplishments in Hispano-Iranian relations during the Aznar-Khatami era. In order to clarify this, let me offer a very brief revision of Aznar's re-setting of international priorities.

After 2000, Aznar pursued to conduct Spain's international relations in a way that departed from the trend initiated after 1975. In a nutshell, Aznar gave preference to the alliance with the U.S. and downgraded the ties with the European Union, which thus far had been the priority matter on Spanish foreign policy agenda. The Union's eastward enlargement and the bad relationship with Chirac and Schröder were at the background of Spain's general unrest with the Union. Aznar was extremely critical of the place left for Spain in Europe (Barreñada et al., 2004, pp. 13-14), which he saw as insufficient for a nation of this stature. In the aftermath of 9/11, Spain's shift in focus resulted in the endorsement of the American-British invasion of Iraq (2003). Scholars (Fernández Molina, 2007; Iglesias-Cavicchioli, 2007) have examined the influence of 'neocon' ideology in Aznar's foreign policy decisions and provided insights into the political-ideological context where such decisions were made, disclosing that Aznar's very personal convictions shaped many of these decisions (Fernández Molina, 2007, p. 62). Further, analysts have widely interpreted that the Iraq war was Aznar's big opportunity to exert influence on a global scale (Heywood, 2003).

With this in mind, it is conceivably right to argue that Madrid's reaching out to Tehran formed part of Spain's early 2000s re-setting of international priorities and that, at least until 2003, Aznar strategy for Iran did not seem to collide with the simultaneous strengthening of ties with Washington. On reflecting upon Aznar's motivations to endorse Khatami's agenda of domestic reforms and international strategy for situating a 'great country' like Iran in the forefront of world politics, one of my interviewees suggestively pointed out that:

I think there was also this kind of feeling that Iran is a country like Spain in 1975, in a *transitional moment* that can... And I agree with that. I believe that's an accurate analysis. Iran continues to be a *country in transition* and a country where Spain can play a tremendously important role [...] *They liked each other, they were on good terms and they shared a vision about a lot of things* because I believe that Aznar, at the end of the day, thought that *Spain was being ill-treated within the European Union*, it played

second fiddle. Iran is in a similar position: it's a great power, a great empire, a great country which is below where it should be (Interview).

Conspicuously, diplomatic accounts generate a story where the central argument is that the Hispano-Iranian 'honeymoon' (my definition) was propelled by the vision that both Spain and Iran were two 'great powers', two 'great (ex) empires' and two 'great countries' whose ambitious international projections were thwarted by a host of impediments. In particular for the Spanish case, the argument that 'Spain was being ill-treated within the European Union' —thus, that Aznar wished to play a more prominent role in the Union, which he could not— is at the basis of the Self's construction. As far as Iran is concerned, the story depends on the vision that Khatami was the real precursor of Iran's opening —the man who was good for Iran and for the West because, if anything, he showed more goodwill than anyone before him toward reform. Unfortunately, however, the obstacles for Khatami's plan were manifold and stemmed from inside Iran (the 'hardliners'), as well as from outside (chiefly, from the U.S., Israel and from reluctant 'Arab' rivals). Another significant issue is the implicit argument that the strengthening of ties between Spain and Iran benefitted from the fact that Aznar and Khatami shared strategic views on a number of matters ('They shared a vision about a lot of things') and had great affection for each other ('They liked each other; they were on good terms').

But there is one further element that plays a pivotal role in the story, rendering it in fact a familiar story for 'Us': the theme of 'transition'. Portraying Iran as 'a country in transition' (also in 'a transitional moment') is relevant for two chief reasons. The first reason is that it shows that Spain conceives of Iran as a 'transitioning' state (which comes to complement the vision of the 'opening' subject). The second reason is that it places Spain in a leading position relative to Iran. What allows this asymmetrical distribution of positions is the interpretation that the political challenges of the Khatami era resembled the challenges that Spain had to face up at the start of the post-1975 democratic era —namely, adopting/improving democratic standards, promoting the respect for human rights and the participation of civil society in public life and, importantly, advancing on the normalisation of international relations. The statement that 'there was also this kind of feeling that Iran is a country like Spain in 1975' evinces the standpoint prevailing in a story based on the reasoning that what 'They' (Iranians)

were experiencing then (early 2000s) was similar to what ‘We’ (Spaniards) experienced twenty-five or thirty years ago.

In sum, Spain was a mirror into which Iran could look (and learn). The foundations of such argument were not only political, but also cultural:

They see Spain as their Western reflection. Why so? Because it’s kind of a similar situation. Both are the extremes of the Islamic world, two particularly brilliant cultures within the Islamic world and where, under the cover of Arabness, the real protagonists are the convert population. [...] Then, they see us as the other ‘non-Arabs’ who are part of the same cultural universe (Interview).

The cultural argument has been addressed earlier in this analysis because, as a matter of fact, references to a shared cultural world come frequently in the narrations of Spanish diplomats. Cultural references offer an emotional base that facilitates the construction of the Self/Other relation, often to stress the points in common and not the differences. In this vein, the emotional common ground serves to strengthen political arguments—in this case the political argument built upon the ‘transitioning’ Self and Other. The above excerpt is a telling illustration. It establishes a framework based on the vision that Spain and Iran are ‘the two extremes of the Islamic world’ and ‘two particularly brilliant cultures’, hence two subjects ‘who are part of the same cultural universe’. Once this common framework is set up (and presumed to be accepted by both), the relevant issue is that while ‘We’ are ‘Their’ mirror (‘They see Spain as their Western reflection’), one would not say ‘They’ are ‘Our’ mirror for, do ‘We’ need an Oriental reflection? (Do ‘We’ need to learn any lesson from ‘Them’?). This standpoint is also revealing that the reading of cultural identities reproduces the asymmetry between ‘Us’ and ‘Them’—an asymmetry which is nonetheless slightly rebalanced by the ambivalent vision of the Arab Other.

5.6 Diplomacy with the Islamic Republic in the aftermath of 9/11.

5.6.1 ‘Axis of evil’.

Sustaining diplomacy with Iran after 9/11 turned generally difficult. What happened after the attacks against the twin towers and the Pentagon is widely known: Washington responded to ‘Islamic’ terrorism with the invasion of Afghanistan (October 2001). It often goes unnoticed that Iran was one of the ‘Muslim’ countries that showed more

solidarity with the American government and people after the attacks. In Iran, ordinary citizens were allowed to hold night street vigils to express sympathy for America. President Khatami was also the first leader in the Muslim world who sent condolences to the American government (Abrahamian, 2004, p. 95). Colin Powell, the U.S. Secretary of State, shook hands with the Iranian foreign minister and told the press that Iran would be included in the American coalition against terrorism. In return, Iranian authorities announced that they were willing to resume normal diplomatic relations with the U.S. When Washington announced the plans to invade Afghanistan, Tehran rejected the militaristic option, but offered assistance in rescue operations of American stranded pilots, the Gulf ports for the transit of humanitarian aid and intermediation with the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance to cooperate in the U.S. mission. After the fall of the Taliban, Iran also played a pivotal role in the negotiations for the nomination of Hamid Karzai (the U.S. candidate) for the presidency of Afghanistan (Abrahamian, 2004, p. 96). One might say that Iran and the U.S. had never been so close since the eve of the 1979 revolution.

In an unexpected twist of events, however, President George W. Bush declared that Iran, Iraq and North Korea formed an ‘axis of evil’ which threatened the world (State of the Union Address, January 2002). Bush’s address described Iran, Iraq and North Korea as ‘major exporters’ of terrorism and undemocratic regimes governed by ‘an unelected few’. The speech was interpreted as an indication of Washington’s will to settle old scores with historical enemy regimes, hence the reading that the invasion of Afghanistan was ‘just the start of the war against terror’ (Abrahamian, 2004, p. 96). The case against Iran tried to be persuasively constructed based on four allegations concerning i) the financing and arming of international terrorists, ii) the opposition to the Arab-Israeli peace process, iii) violations of democratic and human rights, and iv) the development of nuclear weapons (Abrahamian, 2004, p. 105). Indeed, it was during Bush’s era when the purpose of ‘regime change’ became more visible in the U.S. strategy towards Iran, which represented largely a victory of U.S. neoconservatism (Beeman, 2013, p. 198) and a ‘blow to the reformers in Iran’ (Sick, 2002a, p. 4).

Other than resonating with Second World War imagery, the picturing of an ‘axis’ integrated by Iraq, Iran and North Korea served, in the view of many, to justify the post-9/11 U.S. foreign policy doctrine which sanctioned the conduct of preemptive

wars against ‘threats’, including non-imminent ones. In this regard, it has been compellingly pointed out that, by evoking the image of an ‘axis’ of evil-doers, President Bush gave ‘a clear structure to the threat faced by the United States (and thus the current world order)’ (Agnew, 1998/2003, p. 28). In June 2002, Bush presented his preemptive strategic doctrine —the ‘Bush doctrine’— at the military academy West Point. By September 2002, the doctrine was coded in the National Security Strategy (Adib-Moghaddam, 2008, p. 143).

Following this, the U.S. and the UK proposed a UN resolution intended to authorise war against Iraq. On 9 October 2002, Jack Straw went to see the Iranians, whom offered their help for the resolution of regional problems. In early May 2003, Iranian authorities sent a letter to the U.S. Department of State. Popularly known as the ‘Grand Bargain’, the letter contained Iran’s proposal to accomplish the restoration of U.S.-Iran long damaged relations. Endorsed by the Supreme Leader, the letter expressed Iran’s specific demands and expectations from potential negotiations with the U.S. Tehran asked Washington to refrain from the policy of regime change and the lifting of sanctions. In return, Iran conceded to help in the transformation of Hezbollah into a peaceful organisation, and to support the two-state solution in the Middle East conflict. But above all, Iran demanded that, were they to take place, negotiations should unfold in an atmosphere of ‘mutual respect’ (Parsi, 2012, pp. 1-2). Iran’s proposal for a Grand Bargain fell on deaf ears, with the Pentagon deciding that ‘America doesn’t talk to evil’. The 2005 State of the Union Address confirmed the accusations related to the sponsorship of terrorist movements and to the acquisition of nuclear weapons (Drenou, 2008, p. 84).

The West/U.S.-Iran crisis was precipitated by at least two more events. In December 2002, news broke that Iran had resumed the development of nuclear activities in Arak and Natanz with the construction of a heavy-water production plant and a gas-centrifuge plant, respectively. Iranian authorities admitted their failure to report to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) (Drenou, 2008, p. 80). With hindsight, it is easy to see that this was just the beginning of long crisis where not only the IAEA and Iran, but also the U.S., the Europeans and the UNSC participated actively until the signing of the 2015 ‘nuclear deal’. The second major event was the election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as president of the Islamic Republic in the summer of 2005.

Considered a regime ‘hardliner’, Ahmadinejad’s electoral victory was clearly related to Iran’s crisis with the West in general and, in particular, with Iranians’ growing ‘apathy’ towards reformism’ failure to deliver to its promises of economic and freedom improvement (Ramazani, 2008, p. 13).

These things considered, my argument is that Iran’s deteriorating reputation did not affect Hispano-Iranian relations immediately after the 2002 ‘axis of evil’ speech or after the revelations on Iran’s nuclear programme. On the contrary, between 2002 and 2004, Spain managed to make compatible her Iran policy with the strengthening of ties with Washington —despite Bush attempts to undercut Iranian influence on post-war Afghanistan and Iraq, and the overall rhetoric and actions that nourished the threat of regime change in Iran. One would say, rather, that the march of Hispano-Iranian relations —after a short but flourishing period in bilateral relations— began to slow down, once the Aznar government had to face the domestic ‘consequences’ of Spain’s involvement in the invasion of Iraq. Consider this:

The interesting is, right, what was Aznar’s vision? If 9/11 had not happened... What did he have in mind? He obviously saw Iran... I think... as a country that was in a process of transition and, in that sense, I believe he was absolutely right; in a process of transition and evolution in which Spain could play a really important role. And he thought that sooner or later, *Iran would come out of this process as a country that would be much closer to the West*, and ready to develop economic, political and all kinds of relations [...] In the end things worked out very badly; that was a large-scale disaster, but during those years, Aznar managed to juggle both balls, didn’t he? The Iraq and Iran policies were not contradictory at all; Iranians couldn’t be happier for Saddam’s fall (Interview).

Indeed, the widest-held view amongst analysts is that Spain’s endorsement of Iraq’s invasion was ‘a large-scale disaster’. Also, that the Madrid bombings (11 March 2004) and the Socialist victory at the presidential election three days after the attacks, were the ‘consequence’ of Aznar’s decision to lend strategic support to the operations against Saddam Hussein. Another issue is that despite concerns with regional stability and the uncertain invasion fallout, Tehran was not particularly unhappy to see the fall of the man who had ‘imposed’ (in the revolutionary jargon) an eight-year war on Iran (1980-88) —*jang-e tahmili*. Thus, in the end, from the Spanish point of view the whole situation turned out really paradoxical because as Spain participated in the build-up of the weapons-of-mass-destruction case to justify the attack on Saddam Hussein, thus

drawing the Aznar government closer to Tehran also in a geostrategic sense, the U.S. continued to publicly veto the Khatami government²⁷.

The seeming contradiction between Madrid's closeness to both Washington and Tehran at this critical juncture did not go unnoticed to observers. To illustrate this point, we shall go back to October 2002 —to the days of Khatami's official visit in Spain. It was then, during the joint press conference offered after the leaders' meeting at Moncloa when a journalist inquired Aznar about how Spain reconciled the good relationship with Iran, the extraordinary relations with the U.S. and the fact that the U.S. catalogued Iran as a 'sponsor of terrorism', to which Aznar responded:

You're asking me about the relationship between Spain and Iran [...] And you assert that 'indeed the relationship between the U.S. and Iran is different [than ours]'. Of course, what can I say? Of course, they are different. Spain is Spain and the United States is the United States, which does not mean that we actually agree on many matters. But Spain follows the policies that she considers more adequate in relation to Iran [...] *which not does not mean that Spain does not form part of, say, and defends the values, the principles and the responsibilities of the world she shares*²⁸.

Other than Aznar's spirited defence of Spain's independence in foreign policy matters, Aznar's statement is based on a construction of Self/Other identities that establishes Spain a 'Western' subject who shares certain 'values', 'principles' and 'responsibilities' with the U.S. and liberal democracies in general; and not with Iran. There is no need to say that, in spite of the political, economic and cultural agenda which Aznar pursued to build in collusion with Khatami, Aznar's foreign policy discourse exhibits an essential impediment to place the Islamic Republic in the same position as Self. In short, the gist of Aznar's argument is that Spain can develop cooperation with Iran in a host of areas, but 'We' cannot be likened to 'Them' as long as the Islamic Republic remains essentially what it is from a political point of view.

A similar point was raised in a previous statement issued at a press conference on the last day of Aznar's visit to Iran (October 2000). On that occasion, journalists

²⁷ EFE (2003, April 4). Ana de Palacio defiende en Irán la "legitimidad jurídica" de la guerra [Ana de Palacio defends in Iran the 'legal legitimacy' of war]. *La Vanguardia*. Retrieved from <http://www.lavanguardia.com/internacional/20030404/51262772610/ana-palacio-defiende-en-iran-la-legitimidad-juridica-de-la-guerra.html>

²⁸ Joint press briefing. (2002, October 29). Joint press briefing by Prime Minister José María Aznar and the President of the Islamic Republic Mohammad Khatami [Press briefing]. Retrieved from http://www.jmaznar.es/file_upload/discursos/pdfs/01045A1045.pdf

requested the Spanish leader an evaluation of the state of Hispano-Iranian relations and of his encounter with Ali Khamenei, the Supreme Leader of Iran. The president readily stressed that he had had very ‘cordial meetings’ in an atmosphere of ‘absolute frankness’, but that —*to be honest*— Spain and Iran held very different views in many respects. Aznar interpreted this range of different standpoints as a ‘natural’ fact of the matter derived from the very distinct nature of the Iranian and the Spanish politics and leaderships. Aznar’s declaration is worth quoting at length:

You are talking about a religious leader in an Islamic revolution [sic] and I have been speaking as a Spanish and European leader that does not share those views on things — *naturally*— and that establishes a sharp division between religion and politics, and whose pattern of behaviour corresponds to the pattern of behaviour of a man who is personally and politically liberal [...] and who represents in a very exact way the essence of democracy in a Western sense, that is, in the right sense, to make it clear²⁹.

One must realise that, in spite of the evident effort at pinning down the gulf between Spain’s Western democratic system and the system of the Islamic Republic, Aznar does not abandon the narrative that pictures Iran as a ‘transitioning’ subject. What he does, first, is to establish in a straightforward and non-hesitant manner, that Iran is the bearer of difference and, much so, Iran’s Supreme Leader —a figure that comes out of an ‘Islamic’ revolution; a figure that embodies this bizarre experiment that mixes up religion and politics —the Islamic Republic. To round this off, Aznar offers an unambiguous defence of Western liberal democracy —the ‘right’ kind of democracy—, thus also making clear his stance on political systems that divert from the norm. The second thing that he does (in discourse and practice) is to indeed admit that the system of the Islamic Republic is not monochord. Thus, it can be interpreted that the recognition of Khatami as a valid interlocutor entails the implicit recognition that the Islamic Republic is a plural thing. Even if one might argue that such recognition is only reluctantly and prejudicially articulated, the fact of the matter is that, largely, Khatami came to signify the plurality within Iran’s establishment, as well as within Iranian society insofar as he contributed to the visibilisation of civil society’s push for reform and Iran’s long-term democratic ethos.

²⁹ Press briefing. (2000, October 23). Press briefing by Prime Minister José María Aznar at the end of Iran trip. [Press briefing]. Retrieved from http://jmaznar.es/file_upload/discursos/pdfs/01047A1047.pdf

Thus, the last point I should like to raise in relation to the narrative in which Spain (and Aznar personally) Self-appoints as supporter of Iran's transition is that it is crucially based on the reading that Iran is a plural and potentially transformable subject—to which one should add that such transformation shall not come about uncontrollably or, what is more transcendental, without supervision. In an interview excerpt quoted in previous pages, my interviewee linked Spain's active role in undergirding Khatami's programme of domestic and international reforms to Aznar's belief that 'Iran would come out of this process as a country that would be much closer to the West', which was grasped by Spain as a highly favourable event because it would permit the development of a thicker political, economic and cultural agenda with the Islamic Republic (Interview). Other than Aznar's political and economic calculi, what should be noted is that at no time did Aznar (and possibly Western leaders at large) contemplate the possibility that Iran's reform would consist of anything else than a movement on the part of the Islamic Republic to resemble 'Us'. In short, the subject that comes out of this narrative is one that is essentially 'non-Western', yet to an extent 'Westernisable' provided that it behaved in consonance with the norms and standards of modern international politics.

5.6.2 Ahmadinejad: The return of the revolution.

The prospects for a 'reformed' and 'Westernised' Iran wrecked when Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was elected president of the Islamic Republic in 2005. As seen and argued by many (Sick, 2002b; Takeyh, 2009; Zaccara, 2009) the crisis in Khatami's presidency was already evident before the conservative Ahmadinejad sworn into office. A widespread interpretation is that the 'apathy' factor (Ramazani, 2008, p. 13) towards reformism's insufficient achievements in the domestic and international arenas played a key role in hoisting up the candidacy of the then Mayor of Tehran (2003-2005) and partisan of Iran's 'New Right' (Takeyh, 2009). Crucially, however, only two years into Ahmadinejad's presidency sufficed to instigate a new wave of frustration with Iran's institutional politics (Ramazani, 2008, p. 13).

Largely, Ahmadinejad's presidency hastened the revision of the new sense about Iran that had flourished during the Khatami era—the sense behind narratives such that of Iran's opening, transition and reformability. Arguably then, the Ahmadinejad era

ditched the semantics of rapprochement with the West which the Khatami government had contributed to weave since 1997. Eight years later, the triumph of the New Right confirmed what was in the mind of U.S. and Israeli ‘neo-cons’ —that sooner or later Iran would show her ‘evil’ face. Thus, finally the reality pictured in the ‘axis of evil’ speech made itself visible and the prophecy fulfilled itself. In consequence, one can state that, with Ahmadinejad in power, the ‘rogue’ Iran subject was back in the narrations of the West-Iran relations and of the Islamic Republic’s place in the world’s post-9/11 order.

The motives for which Mahmoud Ahmadinejad raised the hackles of the international community and Iran’s progressive forces are too well-known. At home, his government followed reactionary policies that attacked ‘freedom of speech, gender equality and society empowerment’ (Adib-Moghaddam, 2008, p. 134). The ‘freedom deficit’ (Ramazani, 2008) which affected the Islamic Republic structurally came sharply into view upon re-election in 2009, when Ahmadinejad’s new victory at the polls was clouded in suspicions of fraud. People took to the streets in protest and were severely repressed by state police and the *basiji* militia. In the early sense of the ‘rogue state’ phrase (when it was used to describe the domestic behaviour of repressive regimes in the 1970s and 1980s), the handling of the post-electoral crisis would have sufficed to catalogue Ahmadinejad Iran a ‘rogue’. There is no escaping the fact, however, that the international agenda of the Iranian Republic under Ahmadinejad furthered the re-crystallisation of Iran’s ‘outlaw’ reputation. It is perhaps right to say that the crisis on account of Iran’s nuclear programme was the one issue that contributed most to the cooling of relations between Iran and the West —crucially, between Iran and Europe after almost a decade of good understanding and progress for achieving political and commercial accords. Also, there was the issue of Ahmadinejad’s outbursts against Israel and the president’s anti-imperialist flirtations with leaders of the Global South.

It would be difficult to say that Spanish diplomacy did not come to share the general mood about Ahmadinejad’s Iran or that the stories of diplomats did not resonate at all with the narrative of the ‘rogue’ or ‘evil’ Iran. Yet, it is also true that diplomatic discourse often avoided the magnification of the Ahmadinejad event. The benefit of hindsight might be a factor here. The interviews for this project were conducted between March 2014 and June 2015, with Ahmadinejad away from office and under a

much more positive atmosphere (Rouhani had already been elected president), which allowed the construction of Ahmadinejad's presidency as a bad dream. The bad dream was essentially related to the evaluation that Ahmadinejad's hardline presidency took Iran-West (especially Iran-U.S.) relations back to the early days of the revolution, which is condensed in the metaphor that 'Ahmadinejad opened up the jar of revolutionary essences' (Interview). As a result, Iran then came to incarnate again 'a high of degree of unpredictability' (Interview); and it was understood that Ahmadinejad dragged Iran's relations with the international community to 'a situation of absolute distrust' (Interview).

Also, while Ahmadinejad was generally regarded as an obstacle for peaceful constructive relations between Iran and the West, my interviewees were ready to recognise that Ahmadinejad's real power was way scarcer than most people thought, for as one author (Beeman, 2013) put '[I]ran's president has no power over the nuclear program, the military, or foreign policy. He would never be able to launch an attack against any foreign nation on his own authority' (p. 200). In view of this, what can be argued is that diplomatic discourse seemed rather reluctant to reproduce the terms of the narratives that pictured Ahmadinejad's Iran as a sort of decontextualised 'radical Other', and placed visions of Ahmadinejad in the context of a new peak in the long-term U.S.-Iran crisis. Statements such that 'Ahmadinejad and Mr. Bush are made for one another' or that '[Ahmadinejad] was Bush's perfect antagonist' (Interview) lay bare the unremitting influence of the logic of non-engagement (Beeman, 2005) on the world's agenda with Iran. Importantly, for ten years (2004-2014) no foreign minister of Spain visited Iran and no official visits whatsoever were held in the years following the 2009 elections.

5.6.3 Rouhani: A 'civilised interlocutor'.

Early in the year 2014, the Spanish foreign minister, José Manuel García-Margallo, acknowledged publicly that the policy of sanctions against Iran could have a negative impact on Spanish economy. In particular with regards to the EU oil embargo (2012), García-Margallo's view was that it had been highly disadvantageous for Spanish interests. In this setting, it is not strange that, when the interim agreement on Iran's nuclear programme —the so-called Joint Plan of Action (JPOA)— was reached

between the EU3+3 and Iran of November 2013, the effects on Hispano-Iranian diplomacy were immediate. Mariano Rajoy met with Hassan Rouhani in New York during the UN General Assembly, September 2013. Early in the year 2014, Foreign Minister José Manuel García-Margallo made a public statement recognising that sanctions against Iran could engender negative repercussions for Spain, which had been severely affected by the 2012 EU oil embargo. The brokering of an interim agreement (Joint Plan of Action) between the EU3+3 and Iran (November 2013) gave green light to countries which, like Spain, were eager to reestablish political and economic relations with Iran. In September 2015 three ministers of Rajoy's cabinet —García-Margallo (foreign affairs), Pastor (public works and transport) and Soria (industry, energy and tourism)— and more than forty managing directors of top Spanish companies arrived in Iran for a two-day visit³⁰. The visit evinced Spain's back-up for the implementation of the nuclear agreement, but also and crucially, the return to public (economic) diplomacy (Manzano, 2016), the project for strengthening economic relations and the rhetoric of friendship³¹. It also meant the sealing off the 'jar of revolutionary essences' — temporarily, at least.

5.7 Final remarks

The chapter set out to investigate the representation of Iran by practical (diplomatic) discourse. The chapter set out from the premise that U.S. geopolitical discourse would be a pivotal framework of reference for Spanish 'intellectuals of statecraft'. The reverberance of the U.S.-Iran drama since 1979 is so loud that any piece of research that seeks to explore the representation of Iran by representatives of a Western European state cannot overlook the narratives through which the U.S. and Iran have demonised each other (Beeman, 2005). And indeed, the testimonies of Spanish diplomats reveal that U.S. narrations of the world are an inescapable reference in diplomatic discourse. Yet, the conclusions as to which extent the structures of signification that inspire the

³⁰ Cuarenta empresas españolas llegan a Irán con el respaldo de tres ministros [Three ministers stand behind forty Spanish companies in Iran]. (2015, September 7). *The Diplomat*. Retrieved from <http://thediplomatinspain.com/cuarenta-empresas-espanoles-llegan-iran-con-el-respaldo-de-tres-ministros/>

³¹ García-Margallo: «España, un país amigo de Irán» [García-Margallo: 'Spain is Iran's friend'] (2014, March, 3). *ABC*. Retrieved from <https://www.abc.es/espana/20140302/abci-garcia-margallo-espana-pais-201403012013.html>

U.S. foreign practice constrain the geopolitical reasoning of Spanish ‘intellectuals of statecraft’ have to be drawn cautiously.

The reason why one must be cautious has to do with the technique used in this research to explore diplomatic discourse. In-depth interviewing has provided access to diplomatic narratives that most usually stood for retrospective elaborations of international junctures located in an often distant past. The intrinsic retrospective quality of my interviews with Spanish diplomats does not render them inadequate material for the study of representation, but they are elaborations of the past undertaken with ‘the benefit of hindsight’. This caution, however, does not apply to other textual pieces perused in the chapter (Beladíez’ text, media stories or presidential statements).

It can be concluded that diplomatic narratives show, overall, that the inertia predicted in critical geopolitical theorising is in sight. The inertia I am talking about concerns the capacity of core powers (in this case, the U.S.) to set up the limits of discursive space, and the ‘incapacity’ of non-core powers to avoid establishing dialogues with (resistance against or reluctance to) the frameworks of interpretation that dominate the practice of international politics. But, importantly, it cannot be concluded, based on our evidence, that U.S. geopolitical discourse colonises the representation of Iran offered by Spanish intellectuals of statecraft neither in accounts that refer to the late Cold War years nor in the post-Cold War decades. Rather, what one finds is that as diplomats elaborate their stories of Iran in world politics (Hispano-Iranian relations, Iran-West relations, etc.), they tend to introduce comments on how Spain differs in the way that the U.S. has tended to represent Iran after 1979, often to soothe the terms of U.S. narratives of Iran (for instance, the ‘rogue state’ narrative). In this way, Spanish practical discourse is often critical with the visions of Iran promoted in U.S. discourse and with the courses of action that it advances.

As seen, in the post-Cold War, the frameworks of reference of Spanish intellectuals of statecraft expand, with the European discourse on Iran also becoming pivotal. Since the early 1990s, the emergence of a European vision of Iran that differs from the vision promoted by the U.S. (and the specific courses of action that underlie each of them) is a symptom of the discursive aperture of the post-Cold War. With Spanish elites having now two inescapable frameworks of reference for their discourse and practice of international politics (and specifically, of relations with Iran), my

analysis has premised that the representation of Iran gets ‘constrained’ under various frameworks of reference. Under their jurisdiction, specific narratives flourish which are overall compatible with the EU discourse on Iran (the promotion of democracy and human rights being central features), and shortly not too at odds with the U.S. discourse on Iran. The particular narrative that evinces this is the narrative that, taking advantage of Iran’s ‘opening’ (under Khatami) and of the imaginary related to Spain’s ‘transition’, establishes Spain and Iran as ‘friends’, and in particular as Aznar as a leader with a determination to endorse Khatami’s project for reform.

Diplomatic discourse stands out for offering narratives that relate the subject Iran to a Spanish ‘we’ when it comes to relations between Spain and Iran, and to a collective ‘we’ (European or Western) when it comes to Iran’s relations with the outside world, in particular with the United States. This is not surprising because, as it has been understood, diplomacy is a social practice that generates a discourse about global space and about relations between states, in particular. The research reveals that, from the Spanish perspective —and in spite of the Islamic Republic— Iran has never been seen as an enemy state or a threat to our interests and that, on the contrary, the aspiration of Spanish diplomacy has been to forge friendly relations with the government of Tehran. This aspiration is related to a desire for continuity in relations whose roots go back four hundred years. Relations were reinforced with the opening of embassies in both capitals in the early years of the Cold War. The analysis reveals that the event of the Islamic Republic is not built as a brake on these relations, but as a factor of rupture with the Western imaginary about Iran —thus, as a factor that forces the rearrangement of the visions of Iran, including ‘ours’. In this sense, from the Spanish perspective, the emergence of the Islamic Republic’s Iran entailed consequences on an epistemic level rather than practical, because prior to the revolution relations with Pahlavi Iran were good but modest. As part of the epistemic question, it has been essential not to lose sight of the framework of the confrontation between Washington and the revolutionary elites and the discourse on Iran generated by the United States.

If Iran does not meet the definition of an enemy and, as we have said, the diplomatic narrative is permeated with a discourse on the aspiration to have more intense relations with Tehran, can we conclude that Iran is a friend? Research shows that the rhetoric of friendship has been present in diplomatic discourse at times. The

idea of Spanish-Iranian friendship has been nourished by the interpretation of being two close countries from a cultural point of view, even with appeals to the very similar ways in which Iranians and Spaniards understand personal and family relations but, more significantly, with appeals to a somewhat fantasized reading of a common Islamic heritage. However, it is important to realise that this rhetoric has flourished at specific junctures and linked to the idea of ‘shared interests’, which have traditionally been linked to an economic agenda. The most notable novelty in this regard appears in the context of Spanish-Iranian relations that took place in the early 2000s with José María Aznar and Mohammad Khatami in the presidency of both countries, where the bilateral agenda was extended to political and even geostrategic issues. The vision of a ‘friendly’ Iran appears again in discourse after the signing of the 2015 nuclear agreement between the Republic and the P5+1 that allowed Spain to resume public diplomacy with Tehran.

The narrative of friendship with Iran is in line with the perception of Spain as a meeting point of cultures and a facilitator of relations between the cultural areas with which it identifies itself (Europe, the Mediterranean, South America), but it is suspended from the diplomatic narrative in moments of crisis between Iran and the ‘West’. Diplomatic account points out to two particularly critical junctures (a diagnosis that is generally shared): the decade following the triumph of the revolution (1979-89) and during Mahmoud Ahmadinejad’s years as president of the country (2005-2013).

In essence, in spite of the rhetoric of friendship, it is clear throughout the analysis that Iran is a ‘political Other’ whose alterity derives from its essential definition as an Islamic Republic derived from a revolution that in the popular imagination happens to be exclusively ‘Islamic’ even if it was also many other things (national, popular, leftist, liberal). Hence, we can say that there is a substantial assumption of the dominant Western discourse on Khomeini’s Iran, in which the Iranian subject is constituted as a ‘disruptive’ element of an established order (the Cold War order). Obviously, this story stems from the U.S. experience and interpretation of what happened with Iran because it is the United States that sees its strategy of containing the Soviet threat in West Asia at risk. However, the important thing is that it does not manage to impose itself as a hegemonic narrative about Iran and that, although cautiously, Spanish diplomacy is willing to recognise that the Iranian ‘regime’ is not monolithic.

One decade into the life of the Islamic Republic, the visions that constitute Iran as a reformable Other come into view. This is implicit in the account of ‘openness’ that begins to emerge under the presidency of Rafsanjani (1989-1997) and is consolidated under the presidency of Khatami (1997-2005). The dominant interpretation was that, after a tumultuous period (1979-89) when Iran was retrenched, the Islamic Republic was prepared to build stronger ties with the outside world, in particular with Europe. In addition to the conception of Iran as a country ‘in the process of opening up’ (or potentially ‘open’), the narrative of ‘opening’ highlights the way in which diplomatic discourse presents Spain as an actor open for ‘dialogue’, in good terms with Tehran, and willing to play a significant role in the reintegration of Iran. This vision culminates in the stage in which Khatami wins the presidency of Iran and, with it, the hope about the possibilities of reformism to transform the Islamic Republic; and becomes a narrative about the ‘transition’ in Iran in which Spain, with José María Aznar at the head, is determined to play a key role. With the coming to power of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who comes to remind the world (after the parenthesis of Khatami) that Iran is a ‘revolutionary’ state, comes the story of the closure, the impossibility of dealing with ‘Them’ and the loss of confidence. With Rouhani, the vision of the ‘friend’ Iran, of a ‘civilised’ Iran and the idea that we can return to the time of Khatami emerges again.

6. Contemporary travel writing and popular geopolitics: Literary representations of journeys in Iran

6.1 Introduction

Other than a genre with a long literary tradition, travel writing is considered in this thesis as ‘an important part of the narration of global politics’ (Lisle, 2006, p. 33). Travel writing is a site of representation whose involvement in the constitution of subjects ‘Here’ and ‘There’ is difficult to ignore, hence a site whose implication in the (re)production of geographical imaginations needs to be thoroughly explored. The representation of Iran by literary discourse is examined here with reference to two texts (two books of travels) —*Negro sobre Negro* (1996/2000) [Black on Black] and *La Cueva de Alí Babá* (2002) [Ali Baba’s Cave]. The author of these two narratives is the Barcelona-born travel writer, Ana María Briongos. For the purpose of investigating the narratives by which the traveller makes sense of the experience of journeying in Iran — and thus, more broadly, what kind of place Iran is and what it means to journey in ‘there’—, the chapter draws extensively on Debbie Lisle’s (2006) study of the discourses that shape contemporary travel writing —*The Global Politics of Contemporary Travel Writing*.

In the book, Debbie Lisle (2006) relates the abundance of travel writing titles in recent years to ‘the anxieties created by the late 20th-century globalization’ (p. 3), by which it is implied that narrating travels in faraway lands is a vehicle for taming the ontological insecurity produced by often too perplexing processes of globalisation. As this axiom is accepted in this analysis, it is also assumed that contemporary narratives of travels in Iran come out, more precisely, from the disquietude produced by the ‘Islamic’ revolution, and in this way become an arena for delineating, negotiating and revising the meaning of the new post-revolutionary Iran. But this analysis also bears in mind that travel writing contributed pivotally to the fabrication, in Europe, of a consciousness about the Orient. The chapter does not address the tradition as such, but tries to render visible that the narration of Oriental travels had a substantial impact on the formation of European subjectivity in the 18th and 19th centuries. In this vein, the chapter wonders whether the literary contemporary representation of Iran should be seen against the backdrop of Spain’s particular history of engagement with the ‘Muslim’ Orient, and in relation to the development of Orientalism in Europe.

6.2 Travel, Orientalism and the ‘Orient’

In his seminal book *Orientalism* (1978/2003), Edward W. Said argued that travel literature had played a major role in the fabrication of the idea of the Orient. Said also argued that, while discussions about Orientalism had paid extensive attention to the contribution of 19th-century intellectuals (Renan, Gobineau, Humboldt, Steinthal, etc.) and to the knowledge disseminated by learned societies such as the Société Asiatique, the Royal Asiatic Society and the American Oriental Society, little had been said about the ‘great contribution of imaginative and travel literature’ to the development of Orientalism (p. 99). In Said’s (1978/2003) view ‘[S]uch neglect would be incorrect since for the Islamic Orient this literature is especially rich and makes a significant contribution to building the Orientalist discourse’ (p. 99). Transcendentally, he noted, ‘[E]ven the most innocuous travel book’ can be regarded as a significant contribution ‘to the density of public awareness of the Orient’ (Said, 1978/2003, p. 192). In consonance with this, the current thesis engages the study of travel narratives of Iran also under the assumption that, even if books of travel might have the appearance of harmless texts, they do partipate in the construction of the meaning of modern Iran and her difference.

The significance of travel literature in the history of Europe-the Orient relations cannot be addressed here in a comprehensive manner, but it can at least be said that since 1750 and up to the second third of the 19th century, the Orient became a preferred destination for travellers eager to escape from the constraints of European bourgeois societies (Almarcegui, 2005, p. 116). Before Enlightenment, the main motivations which encouraged men to undertake journeys in the Orient were religious reasons (in the Middle Ages) and exploration (during the 16th century). Contrastingly, during the 17th and 18th centuries, travelling in the Orient became twined with scientific and commercial purposes. Importantly, the cultural life in advanced European societies was governed by the principles of rationalism and scientificism, and instruction played a significant in the constitution of the modern subjectivity. In this setting, travellers were encouraged to journey in faraway lands with the purpose of gathering evidence on the field that corroborated the descriptions of foreign lands they had had access to in books and treaties of science. Today, it is easy to see that travelling has become increasingly seen as an activity one does for leisure and pleasure. As will be discussed, for the most daring of contemporary travellers, journeying in distant places has become a matter of

searching for authentic experiences that alter the routine of their mundane and (too) modern everyday lives.

Now, it is important to bear in mind that during the 19th century, when the image of the Orient was forged as Europe's mirror image, the East was conceived of as a sort of empty space upon which the fears, the desires and the anxieties that hummed beneath European societies were projected. The Orient was a space available for consumption—a plain and distant scenario upon which Europe conferred home-made meanings and in relation to which Europe established its modern identity. The unfamiliarity of the places visited provided European men the chance to escape from the social constraints of their home societies, hence the argument that for 19th century Europeans the Orient represented 'a form of release' (Said, 1978/2003, p. 167) constructed around contradictory and shifting meanings. The Orient was admired and met with fascination to be loathed and despised at a later stage. The Orient was an idea with no real translation. As has been noted, '[P]aradoxically, the more travellers sought to mould their desire, the more their representations moved away from the real Orient. Desires and images, constructions of the imagination, revealed themselves incomplete and absent' (Almarcegui, 2004, p. 109). But which factors did favour the fabrication of the Orient?

One must mention science in the first place. Since the Orient had become a subject of scientific exploration, a great deal of theoretical and abstract knowledge was available for Europeans interested in this familiar yet distant area of the world. Europeans first learned about the Orient from what they had read in formal and informal publications. Journeying 'over there', therefore, was grasped as an opportunity to directly gaze upon objects which thus far lived only in people's imagination. This explains why '[T]ravellers sought to find in the foreign places traces of what they had read in books' (Almarcegui, 2005, p. 110), and why Orientalists adopted a 'textual attitude' towards the Orient:

the rapport between the Orientalist and the Orient was textual [...] When a learned Orientalist traveled in the country of his specialization, it was always with unshakeable abstract maxims about the 'civilization' he had studied; rarely were Orientalists interested in anything except proving the validity of these musty 'truths' by applying them, without great success to uncomprehending, hence degenerate natives (Said, 1978/2003, p. 52).

Such attitude had implications for both authors and readers. Authors represented an Orient suffused with the knowledge encoded in the scientific and literary texts of the Enlightenment. The Orient was an objective reality of exotic peoples, desertic landscapes and visual exuberance—a space where faith and tradition ruled over reason and progress. Concomitantly, their writing was constrained by the exigencies of readers, who expected to read the Orient through the familiar tropes disseminated in the texts available to them. On this issue, Said (1978/2003) suggestively noted that:

There is a rather complex dialectic of reinforcement by which the experiences of readers in reality are determined by what they have read, and this in turn influences writers to take up subjects defined in advance by readers' experiences (p. 94).

More generally, experts have noted the influence of scientific ideals in 19th-century travel narratives, especially as regards the emergence of novel forms of knowledge such as natural history. In a seminal book, *Imperial Eyes. Travel Writing and Transculturation*, Pratt (1992) explores the lasting impact of natural history in the development of travel and exploratory writing since the second half of the 18th century. Here, the argument is made that the publication of Carl Linné's *The System of Nature* (1735) revolutionised the scientific world with the establishment of a 'classificatory system designed to categorize all plant forms known and unknown to Europeans' (Pratt, 1992, p. 15). The emergence of a comprehensive system for categorising the natural world proved essential in setting up a new niche of formal knowledge—natural history, which became an instrument that facilitated the *ordering* of the world, and thereby, the assertion of scientific authority beyond the narrow realm of 'science', as well as Northern Europe as the centre of civilisation (Pratt, 1992, p. 10).

These scientific achievements ran parallel to Europe's political and economic expansion around 1750 (Pratt, 1992, p. 4), which means that travelling around those years was coupled with Europe's colonial enterprise around the world—specifically, with movements toward interior exploration (Pratt, 1992, p. 9). In this setting, curiously, commercial travels had a different status than scientific travels, with the former seen as evidence of Europe's imperialist greed and the latter disguised in a purported 'disinterestedness'; yet, as has been noted, both science and commerce were practices of Empire (Pratt, 1992, p. 34) that contributed to the formation of Europe's 'planetary consciousness' (Pratt, 1992, p. 5).

The concomitancy of developments in scientific and imperial practices had specific translations in travel writing. The popularisation of forms of knowledge linked to natural history brought about the convention of including descriptions of the flora and fauna of the foreign places in travel accounts (Pratt, 1992, p. 27), with major implications deriving from the use of classificatory methods in the description of also the foreign places and peoples. Arguably then, travel writing became a major contributor to the essentialisation of non-European and non-white peoples, thence presented as subjects of scientific reasoning and discourse on a par with objects of nature such as plants (Almarcegui, 2005, p. 107). By these means, and in the intersections between imperial plans and the absorption of scientific conventions by travel writers, Europe consolidated its position of authority becoming a dominant locus for the representation of the rest of the world.

The second major element that contributed to the fabrication of the Orient by Europe was the Ottoman Empire—a close enough cultural and geographical concern. A major geopolitical threat to the interests of Western European powers, the significance of the Ottoman Empire in Europe's identity formation during this period has been discussed in a multitude of works (Arjana, 2015; Neumann, 1999; Pocock, 1997; Said, 1978/2003, etc.). On this issue, it has been argued that the Turks became Europe's new Other, greatly managing to debunk Arabs in the embodiment of most representative forms of alterity (Almarcegui, 2005, pp. 113-114); and also that coming closer to that 'familiar Orient' (the Islamic Orient) permitted the establishment of dialogues with the European identity.

The Orient, arrested in time as it was, confronted Europeans with their historicity—the awareness of having once been less bourgeois, less modern and less sophisticated (Almarcegui, 2005, p. 115). Since the East was grasped as the place where Europe's civilisational origins dwelled and the cradle of the three monotheistic religions (Hobson, 2004), it was almost impossible to ignore its role in the fabrication of Europe's cultural and religious identity—yet on an enduringly problematic basis because, in the European/Western mindset, the Orient had remained stuck in a primitive past, untouched by Modernity and its spin-offs; while the Occident lived in the present tense and marched towards the future. This seeming contradiction tapped directly into the paradoxes of Europe-the Orient relations for, at the same time that the Occident

sought, discursively, to unhinge from its Eastern counterpart, Europe's subjectivity revealed itself stubbornly attached to imaginings of the East.

Chapter Five made the argument that, during the 19th century, Spain held a scarcely influential position in the Middle East, except for in the North of Africa, especially in Morocco, where Spain's military involvement was significant. This got a reflection on the cultural world with the development of 'Arabism' and with the constitution of Morocco and Moroccans as subjects for representation in literary works (i.e. the books of Benito Pérez Galdós, Pedro Antonio de Alarcón or Isaac Muñoz), in the plastic arts (i.e. the Orientalist painting of Mariano Fortuny and Mariano Bertuchi) and in periodicals (i.e. *La Lectura, Blanco y Negro*) (Litvak, 1985; Martin-Márquez, 2008; Morales Lezcano, 1992, 1993). United around the common theme of the colonial encounter, this artistic and intellectual production served to give substance to the asymmetrical relation between the metropolitan Spanish and the colonial Moroccan subject.

But the truth is that, as a consequence of the geopolitical and domestic constraints to Spain's international performance at the turn of the 19th century, Spanish Arabism remained largely a form of Spanish 'Moroccanism', for it was predominantly around Morocco that the Spanish imagination of the Arab-Muslim world and the Orient spinned. As for the relationship between Spanish Moroccanism and European Orientalism (French, British, German) —largely investigated by Said (1978/2003)—, it has been crucially argued that it was rather marginal (López García, 1990). A subproduct of 18th-century cultural and political trends bound up with European romanticism (López García, 1990, p. 6), a most striking difference between Spanish Arabism and 'mainstream' Orientalism was that while Spanish Arabism contributed feebly to the legitimisation of colonialism, the British and French Orientalist traditions were overtly aimed to do so (López García, 1990, p. 14); and the scarce circulation of works written by Spanish Arabist attests to this (López García, 1990).

In tune with this, it has been noted that since 1837 International Conferences on Orientalism were celebrated to discuss the most pressing issues concerning the Orient, but with little participation of Spanish intellectuals was scant, hence the little chances for cross-fertilisation. As well, it has been pointed out that the lack of institutional support for the Granada and Madrid schools of Arabists —the two leading centres in the

study of Arab affairs at the time— broadened the marginality of Spanish intellectual developments in this field (López García, 1990, p. 15). Overall then, the general lack of institutional endorsement for the dissemination of knowledge about the Orient (Asian societies, schools of Oriental languages, specialised libraries and publications) deepened Spain's 'self-absorption' with the study of a narrow area of the Orient —our 'domestic Orient' centred around Al-Andalus—, with prevalent attention paid to the history of Muslim Spain (López García, 1990, p. 21; Morales Lezcano, 1993).

Another important issue concerns the kind of visions of the Orient fostered by Spanish Arabists in the final decades of the 19th century. In the aftermath of the War of Africa (1859-60), intellectuals reengaged with the discourse of the 'Three Cultures Spain', thus enabling positive readings of the history of Christians, Arabs and Jews *convivencia* in the Iberian Peninsula throughout the Middle Ages (Morales Lezcano, 1993, p. 63; see also Martin-Márquez, 2005, pp. 302-307). Since the 15th century, the myth of *convivencia* had been under constant attack, gradually overrun by images of 'violent', 'greedy', 'filthy' Moors and Jews (Morales Lezcano, 1993, p. 61). Saturated with negative stereotyping, public discourses that stressed the necessity for whitening/christening the Iberian Peninsula became dominant. As of today, these frameworks for interpretation have not been fully abandoned and highly contested ideas such as 'the Reconquista' continue to be revisited in debates on the history of Arabs in Spain or Spain's Muslim history (Rubiera Mata & De Epalza, 2007, p. 271).

By the end of the 19th century, the cultural debate was structured around two major positions. Arabism which, through academic and essayist production, advocated gentler and more inclusive readings of Spain's rapport with its Arab Other and the Semitic Self; and the position represented by the Restoration historiographical school, which propagated the myth of the moral, racial and territorial superiority of Christian Spain over Semitic races (Lopez García, 1990, p. 6). And while it is recognised that Arabism did some major accomplishments, with the outbreak of conflict between Spanish troops in the territories of the colonies and Moroccan insurgents early in the 20th century, the work of Arabists became severely discredited. The military defeats taking place between 1909 and 1927 had a lasting impact on the morale of the conservative political, cultural and military circles of Spanish elites, thus giving way to a renewed tendency to vilify the Others across the Strait of Gibraltar.

Most important for the purposes of this dissertation is to realise that as ‘We’ orientalised ‘Them’, for the nations of Northern Europe in the lead of the territorial, cultural and commercial appropriation of the Orient beyond the Mediterranean, Spain remained the Orient ‘at home’ (a ‘domestic Orient’). Seduced by the myth of the ‘Three Cultures Spain’, European observers, travellers and intellectuals in the 18th and 19th centuries looked to the Iberian Peninsula —especially to its Southern fringe— in search for the traces of the medieval coexistence between Christians, Muslims and Jews. Within this cartography, Andalusia —with its iconic architectural remnants (above all, the Alhambra)— was viewed as the scenario where Spain’s Oriental identity became observable and tangible; where the Orient could be smelled, heard and tasted. The cultural production of foreign writers, travellers and artists such as Washington Irving, René Chateaubriand or Baron Taylor contributed decisively to this —the exoticisation of Spain and her constitution as an either Oriental or half-Oriental subject, but certainly not completely European. These cultural happenings, in short, ended up nourishing a logic of difference production that featured Northern European subjects as rationalistic, enlightened and advanced; and Southern peoples as emotional, traditionalist and arrested in time.

For Litvak (1985), ‘Muslim exociticism’ —as the fascination for the Muslim, Oriental and exotic world came to be called in Europe and Spain— was more than a simple literary and artistic phenomenon cherished by European observers of the non-European world. Rather, Muslim exoticism suffused the European *fin-de-siècle* sensitivity in a comprehensive manner, influencing not only the themes of novels and paintings, but also the customs, tastes and ways of life of the European populations that imagined the Orient as a place where there was still room for daydreaming —thus a *milieu* for experiencing the spiritual and non-rationalistic dimensions of life (Litvak, 1985, p. 15).

Based on an extensive survey of literary, artistic and journalistic production in Spain between 1880 and 1913, Litvak (1985) catalogues the themes recurrently elaborated in representations of the Orient: the scenarios of Muslim architecture such as the Alhambra; archeological sites and desertic landscapes; exotic objects, jewels and treasures; sensations; human figures (men and women of the Orient); chaos, cruelty and violence; decadence, death and destiny; religion and rites. Coming at close quarters with

the Oriental imaginings of Isaac Muñoz, Blasco Ibáñez, Mariano Fortuny or Benito Pérez Galdós, Litvak (1985) argues compellingly that the elaboration of these themes in artistic and intellectual representations pursued to underscore the alterity between ‘Us’ and ‘Them’. Based on this, Litvak (1985) concluded that:

The point is not to underline the great religious, aesthetic and philosophical differences, but to show that the power of alterity percolates the descriptions of little details, attitudes, gestures of daily life and incidents in the street. For instance, the description of a scene in an Oriental market does not aim to focus on the humility of life, but on the difference that permits their reality to be richer, more exotic, more variegated and more fabulous than the European (p. 26).

And so, it is striking that, as one author (Martin-Márquez, 2008) notes, despite Orientalism’s ‘fundamental importance to the modern trajectory of identity formations in Spain’ has been scarcely used as a ‘theoretical lense’ in the ‘reading of Spanish cultural practices and texts’ (p. 8). It is striking and surprising because Spain constitutes a ‘unique’ case—a paradoxical subject which is at once Orientalised and Orientalising; a subject that lives ‘on both “sides” of Orientalism as simultaneously “self” and “other”’ (Martin-Márquez, 2008, p. 9). This would suggest that Spanish cultural representations of the Orient might ‘depart from the rigorously differentialist logic of ostensibly Western constructions of subjectivity’ (Martin-Márquez, 2008, p. 9).

In what follows, the chapter offers an introduction to the journeys and travel tales written by Spanish travellers in Persia/Iran in modern and contemporary times. My aim is to give record of the inventory of texts from the Spanish literary tradition that feature Iran as a subject of travel tales. To that end, we are forced to hark back to the 15th century, when the first written records of journeys across Persia are dated, and move all the way through until 20th narrations of travels in Iran, where we pause and focus on the texts written by Ana María Briongos. The chapter aims to understand how Briongos’ works ‘translate’ the meaning of Iran for Spanish readerships.

6.3 Persia/Iran in the Spanish tradition of travel literature

6.3.1 Modern travellers in Persia.

6.3.1.1 Ruy González de Clavijo: fifteenth-century traveller.

Although evidences are not conclusive, Benjamín de Tudela (a 12th century pilgrim) was the first Spanish traveller in Persia. A rabbi from a Jewish community in Navarra, he set off for the Orient in search for his co-religionists and, why not, good commercial opportunities. In truth, scholars have been unemphatic as to whether Benjamín de Tudela really set foot in Persia or whether the descriptions of various Persian locations delivered in his *Sefer ha-Masa'ot* (Travels) were based on the accounts of third chroniclers (Córdoba Zoilo, 2001, p. 3).

By contrast, the figure of Ruy González de Clavijo arouses less uncertainty. *La Embajada a Tamorlán* [Embassy to Tamerlane] features as the first travel book of Spanish literature. The text was compiled in 1406, upon Clavijo's return to Castile after a three-year journey across Central Asia³². The expedition commanded by Clavijo set off to Tamerlane's court with the aim of creating an alliance against the Ottoman Empire. Tamerlane, who was one of the greatest (and most feared) conquerors of the time and an avowed enemy of the Ottoman Sultan, had founded the Timurid Empire across Central Asia, Persia, the Caucasus, the sub-Indian continent, Mesopotamia and surrounding lands.

Concerned about a rising Ottoman power, King Henry III, sent a tentative mission of two 'ambassadors'³³ to explore the situation East of the Mediterranean. When the two ambassadors arrived in the scenario of battles between the Turks and the Central Asian armies, Tamerlane provided them with a courteous and benevolent treatment, so much so that, on their return trip to Castile, they were joined in by one of Tamerlane's emissaries (Muhammad al-Kazi). Al-Kazi did not return to Samarkand unaccompanied. The Castilian King organised a diplomatic mission of more than a dozen men. In his capacity as Royal Chamberlain, Ruy González de Clavijo commanded the group. Friar Alonso Páez de Santamaría, a theologian well-versed in faith issues; and Gómez de Salazar, a man-at-arms, who died during the journey, joined

³² Gonzalo Argote de Molina undertook the first edition of the book in 1582 (Joaquín M^a Córdoba, p. 11, Prologue to Escribano, 2008).

³³ López Estrada (2005) notes that this is the first time that royal envoys are named by the title of 'ambassadors' (p. 518). Ever since, it became common currency in diplomatic jargon.

in. Fourteen other men assisted the ambassadors. Some of them were scribes, whose main duty was to take note of all the relevant information about the places and peoples visited, the ambassadors' observations and commentaries. Those travel notes and sketches were later used for the elaboration of the memoir that Clavijo presented to the King once the mission had been completed³⁴.

La Embajada registered the very long and costly voyage to Samarkand —by sea up until Constantinople, and by land up until the heart of Asia³⁵. The passage through Persia commenced more than a year after their departure from the port of San Lúcar (1403). Part VI and VII of the book (in the schema proposed by López Estrada) describe the expedition's entrance in Tabriz (Tauris) on June 11, 1404, where they stayed for several days before setting off for the commercial city of Soltaniyeh. In Soltaniyeh, the ambassadors encounter Tamerlane's son. The book continues to recount that, a few days later, on 6 July, they arrived in Tehran, where some members of the mission decide to stay. The weather conditions of intense heat made the journey particularly harsh for these men whom, on many occasions, travelled by night to escape from the high temperatures. Gómez de Salazar did not resist the conditions and perished *en route* from Tehran to Samarkand (López Estrada, 2005, pp. 523-524). Tamerlane died shortly after the Castilians left Samarkand. The alliance against the Turks never materialised.

6.3.1.2 *Don García de Silva y Figueroa: seventeenth-century traveller.*

Two centuries later, the Turks continued to be a source of concern for the potentates of territories neighbouring the Ottoman Empire on its Western and Eastern flanks. This explains why, in the course of the 17th century, the exchange of visits between representatives of the Hispanic kingdoms and Safavid Persia was intense and fluid

³⁴ It is interesting to realise that the question of authorship in *La Embajada* is ambiguous. In his thorough study, López Estrada (2005) points out that it is not hundred per cent possible to assert that Clavijo was the only author of the book (a well-founded suspicion considering the presence of scribes in the mission), although he was the most probable narrator. The ambiguity is accentuated by the fact that, most of the times, the narration employs a grammatical subject in the plural form –‘the ambassadors’– and a few times the first person singular (López Estrada, 2005, p. 520). Thus, after all, it was Clavijo's historical significance (he authored other literary texts as well) what contributed to spread the belief that he was the book's author.

³⁵ López Estrada (2005) divides up the narration of the journey in ten parts: I) From Sanlúcar to Rhodes; II) From Rhodes to Constantinople; III) The city of Constantinople; IV) From Pera to Trebizond; V) From Trebizond to Erzincan; VI) From Erzincan to Soltaniyeh; VII) From Soltaniyeh to Samarkand; VIII) Samarkand; IX) From Samarkand to Trebizond; X) From Trebizond to Alcalá de Henares (p. 521).

(Escribano Martín, 1999, p. 95). Don García de Silva y Figueroa stands out as the most important of these visitors³⁶ —and so does the narrative of his travel in Persia since 1617. Before I deal with Don García and his book, let me say something about the contextual factors that surrounded the mission for they are decisive in understanding the power politics of the time.

Between the years 1580 and 1640, the Crown of Castile extended its sway over the kingdoms of Portugal and Aragon forming a political union —the Iberian Union— that, in principle, pursued a common foreign policy. In practice, the dominant positioning of Castile within this partnership was a constant source of tension, which affected the relation with the Portuguese. This is an important factor to bear in mind because, as long as Portugal was under the authority of Castile, their imperial possessions were legally bound to the Hispanic Monarchy. The Portuguese Empire stretched over the Indian Ocean on the borders with the Persian Empire. From the port city of Goa, Portugal exerted control over commercial flows in and out the sub-Indian continent. From Ormuz, where they had set up a garrison in 1507, the Portuguese monitored traffic flows in and out the Persian Gulf. Over the course of the years, Persians became increasingly wary of Portuguese presence and expelled them from their area of influence.

Historical studies have brought to the fore the role of the Papacy and of various religious orders (the Carmelites, the Augustinians and the Jesuits) in this intricate geopolitical context. Since the 16th century, the military alliance against the Turks was a strategic goal shared by various potentates in the Christian world, not only by the Hispanic monarchy (García Hernán, 2010, p. 214). In this era, the spatial division of the world was based on the religious identity of territories (Christian or Muslim), and war and conquest were waged in the name of religion. Therefore, if one wants to understand the power politics of the time, it becomes necessary to bear in mind the sensitive combination between geo-strategic interests and religious allure.

When the Persian monarch signed a truce with the Turks in 1606 (García Hernán, 2010, p. 217), it became evident that, despite all efforts, Christians failed to

³⁶ The specialised literature mentions other travellers such as Pedro Teixeira (b. in Portugal) and Pedro Cubero Sebastián. They are not so well-known due to the less significant impact of their writing and their less political relevance (Córdoba Zoilo, 2001, pp. 4-5; Escribano Martín, 1999, pp. 112-115).

convince the Persians about the opportunity to wrestle together against the Ottoman Empire. European powers —with the special participation of the Holy See— had believed they could reap benefits from playing the religious card with the Persians. One reason for this was that Christian communities of Armenian and Syrian origin were important groups in Safavid Persia and, crucially too, the fact that Shah Abbas I was married to a Christian woman. Missionaries expected the King's conversion to the Christian faith, something which would in turn pave the way for combating the leading power of the Islamic world: the Ottoman Empire.

All in all, many were hopeful that the apostolic missions commanded by the European religious orders would bear fruit in Persia. However, if the whole enterprise was ruined, it was because neither the various religious orders nor the Castilians and the Portuguese were able to act together towards a common end. These circumstances led to the gradual deterioration of the situation for Christian communities and missionaries in Persia, whom ultimately would be forced to give up on their apostolic activities. The death blow to their religious-strategic enterprise came when, assisted by the British and the Dutch, the Shah took over Ormuz in 1622 (García Hernán, 2010, pp. 239-240; see also Kavanagh, 2010, p. 135).

Around a decade before the Portuguese had been forced out from Ormuz, the Court in Castile decided to send an official mission to Persia. The man designated for that mission was a soldier of noble origin, Don García de Silva y Figueroa, who departed from Lisbon in April 1614 destination Isfahan —the capital city of Safavid Persia. After an arduous voyage by sea, Don García arrived to the port of Bandar Abbas on October 12, 1617. From the Persian Gulf coast, he continued his journey on land. The Castilian King, Phillip III, asked de Silva to document Persian expansionism across the Gulf for it was seen as menacing Portuguese control over the region; to watch over the British —whose sway in the area was on the rise—; and, of course, to explore the possibilities for the much desired alliance against the Turks.

The ensemble of travel and personal notes, letters and fragments compiled by Don García in the course of his long Persian sojourn were, on its earliest form, gathered together under the name of *Totius legationis suae et Indicarum rerum Perdisque commentarii*. A key issue is that, what we now read as a 'book' was not conceived of as such by the author. The work of several editors has provided consistency to a formerly

disperse collection of texts and has rendered de Silva's writings more accessible for a broader readership and for research.

The first edition of the book appeared in French. A Dutch, Monsieur De Wicqfort, took care of the translation which came out in 1667 under the title of *L'Ambassade de D. García de Silva Figueroa en Perse*. The first Spanish edition came as late as early in the 20th century. Manuel Serrano y Sanz authored a complete version of de Silva's narrations appearing in two volumes (1903 and 1905) (Córdoba Zoilo, 2005, pp. 646 and 665): *Comentarios de Don García de Silva y Figueroa de la embaxada que de parte del rey de España Don Felipe III hizo al Rey Xa Abas de Persia* [Comments on the mission undertaken by Don García de Silva y Figueroa to the court of Shah Abbas of Persia on behalf of King Phillip III of Spain]³⁷. Silva's text provides descriptions of the journey to and from Persia, of life conditions at the Court of Shah Abbas, and with information regarding the primary motive of his mission: to convince the Persian King for warring together against the Turks.

True, he did not succeed in the latter respect, but he became the first Westerner who understood that, in the city of Chilminara, the ruins of *Takht-e Jamshid* indicated the location of the ancient city of Persepolis (the capital of the glorious Achaemenid Empire). Additionally, his book contained a detailed description of cuneiform characters, which preceded the better-known description of the Italian traveller Pietro della Valle. He died at sea affected by scurvy on his return trip to Castile. On a written note at the end of the original handwritten copy kept at Spain's National Library, someone had the courtesy to keep register of his epic end in a passage written in beautiful Golden Age Spanish (Escribano Martín, 1999, p. 108):

Fue continuando Don García estos sus Comentarios diurnos aun por otros tres libros, y dando particulares noticias de los sucessos de aquel tiempo en Oriente, y de su negociación con aquel Rey, de su buelta á Goa y ambarcación para España, con los acontecimientos de cada un día, y casi hasta el de su muerte, que sucedió en su buelta a España, á 22 de Julio de 1624, á las ocho horas de la noche, del mal de Loanda, en 35 grados de Norte, ciento y diez leguas de las islas de Flores y Cuervo. Hecharon su cuerpo á la mar, en un caxón cargado de piedras, y andó en calmerias alrededor de la nao dos días.

³⁷ A 1989 edition by Luis Gil was published under the name *García de Silva y Figueroa. Epistolario Diplomático*, which includes a long and detailed study of Hispano-Persian political relations at the time.

6.3.1.3 Adolfo Rivadeneyra: nineteenth-century traveller.

Already in the second half of the 19th century, a young diplomat, traveller and intellectual, Adolfo Rivadeneyra (b. Valparaíso, Chile, 1841), undertook the last of the late modern adventures to Persia. Rivadeneyra recounted his journey in *Viaje al interior de Persia*³⁸ (first published in 1880). Unlike his two predecessors, Rivadeneyra registered his travel experience in full awareness that the text would one day be published. Therefore, since its inception, the text owned a defined narrative structure. Interestingly for us, Rivadeneyra's attitude during the journey has been described as 'that of an attentive observer and spectator who seeks to understand and not to judge, to describe and not to interpret; someone who seeks to belong to that part of the world' (Escribano, 2008, p. 20).

Early in his career, Rivadeneyra acted as a *joven de lenguas* (diplomatic interpreter) in Beirut, for he was fluent in Arabic. Over time, he became the Chief of Mission in his dreamed destination: Persia. Under the provisory government of the Spanish First Republic, he was appointed Deputy Consul General to Persia (14 December 1873) and took office on 11 April 1874. The purposes of his mission were to explore the possibilities of setting up a permanent mission in Tehran and fostering commerce, to protect the interests of Spain and its residents in the Asian country. He was also commissioned to elaborate reports for the government in Madrid (Escribano Martín, 2008, pp. 31-32). Disrupting the trend initiated by Clavijo and de Silva, Rivadeneyra's mission in Persia did not entrench any military purpose.

When he arrived in the country, he stayed in Tehran for five months, busy with the study of Farsi and the gathering of information for his reports. Aware that the life in the capital could offer him only a limited picture of Persia's situation, he undertook a long voyage across the country. Due to a sick leave, on 1 October 1875, he commenced his return journey to Madrid, in the course of which he learnt of his mother's death in Krakow. Political changes in Spain, where the Bourbons were restored in the throne, hastened the suppression of the Spanish Vice-Consulate to Persia and dashed the opportunity of establishing solid ties with the Asian country (Escribano Martín, 2008).

³⁸ Trans.: *Journey in Inner Persia*.

The narrative of his travel is organised in three volumes. The first volume includes studies and preparatory work done before his departure from Madrid, information concerning the trip's plan and two monographs titled 'Tehran' and 'History of Persia'. References to the two important missions that preceded his —Clavijo's and de Silva's— are also included (Escribano Martín, 2008, p. 48). His editor highlights that Rivadeneyra was committed to the elaboration of a text that could be used for practical purposes —for traders and industrialists interested in developing economic activities in Persia. For this reason, his account was full of technical information, but also of personal and subjective reactions to the surrounding reality. Rivadeneyra registered his sensations and feelings during the journey and shared knowledge of Persia's history and culture. He aimed to introduce the knowledge of the Orient in Spain (Escribano Martín, 2008, p. 39). It is believed that, had Spanish Orientalism consolidated, Rivadeneyra and his Sanskrit teacher and mentor, Francisco García Ayuso, would have led the field.

The description of the actual journey in Persia commences in the book's second volume. Therein, Rivadeneyra recounts the beginning of his trip in the French capital where he encounters the Persian diplomatic representative in Paris, General Nazar Aga. From this meeting, he expects to obtain valuable information and recommendation letters that can assist him during the trip. His editor stresses the significance of Rivadeneyra's views on Britain's increasing influence in the area. British intervention in helping deter pirates was regarded with positive eyes yet, at the same, time it became apparent that Britain was a great power with long-term aspirations in the region.

The final chapters in the third and final volume deserve a specific mention. Written in Madrid, chapter seven ('Return') describes Rivadeneyra's return journey from Tehran to Krakow, where he attends his mother's funeral (Escribano, 2008, p. 70). Chapter eight ('Reflections') was written from Rivadeneyra's last diplomatic destination, Mogador (Morocco). At this point, the writing of this intrepid diplomat gains special profundity, most probably benefitting from the sense of detachment that geographical and temporal distance from Persia provided. Drawing on geographical and sociological insights, Rivadeneyra sees Persia in a historical perspective. He was utterly pessimistic about the practical relations between Spain and Persia for he believed that the right conditions were not met for the establishment of flourishing relations between

the two nations. But more interestingly, he held the belief that Persia was a country mired in backwardness. He saw Persian civilisation as having gone through several youth stages, but never really reached maturity.

6.3.2 Contemporary travellers in Iran.

The books that will be reviewed next are contemporary; perhaps too contemporary to have been seriously considered in either historical or literary research (and so the men and women, contemporary travellers in Iran, who produced them). Between the year 1880 (the year of publication of *Viaje al Interior de Persia*) and the aftermath of the Islamic revolution, evidence is not found of any travel tales in the Asian country (except for *Cartas Persas*, the book of letters written by the Spanish diplomat Emilio Beladíez in the early 1960s). This long hiatus seems like a long void. The curiosity of visitors and writers for Iran was renewed in the aftermath of 1979, which is perhaps little surprising given the magnitude of the event and its worldwide reverberations.

The first Spanish traveller wanting to register the world's bafflement with the Islamic revolution was José María Gironella, a supporter of the Francoist regime and best-seller writer who won widespread popularity with a trilogy about the Civil War. *El Escándalo del Islam*³⁹ [The Scandal of Islam] came out in 1982. The book narrates the writer's (and his wife's) long trip to Egypt, Iran and Kuwait. The stated aim of the voyage was to document the ongoing and vibrant phenomenon of Islam's renaissance in the last third of the 20th century (Gironella, 1982, p. 15). The account of the journey unfolds throughout 526 pages. For a little bit more than a third (around two hundred pages), the book describes the couple's passage through the newly-born and 'enigmatic' Islamic Republic of Iran. *El Escándalo del Islam* represents a decided attempt to, as declared by the author, 'get to the heart of the matter' (Gironella, 1982, p. 15).

A long period of silence ensued between this publication and Ana María Briongos' first Iranian travelogue: *Negro sobre Negro* [Black over Black (1996/2000)]. Her second Iranian travelogue —*La Cueva de Alí Babá* [Ali Baba's Cave]— came out

³⁹ In the prologue to the book, the author provides lengthy explanations about why he chose to put the word 'scandal' in the title. Unconvincingly, I believe, Gironella (1982) asserts that he had no intention of fostering a derogative representation of the Islamic world, as the word 'scandal' might suggest. By contrast, his aim was to capture the commotion and surprise of Western observers of the Muslim world before the turmoil caused by the rise of Islam in the region (p. 14).

in 2002. Since the analysis of these texts will be presented at length in the following section, no further comments will be made now. But, more generally, about Ana María Briongos, it can be said that she has specialised in the narration of travels in the Indo-Persian world. In addition to the two Iranian travelogues, she has published the titles *Un invierno en Kandahar: Afganistán antes de los talibanes* [A Winter in Kandahar: Afghanistan before the Taliban (2003)] and *¡Esto es Calcuta!* [This is Kolkata! (2006)].

Also in the year 2002, two Catalan travellers (Santi Riera and Mònica Baró) presented the account of their journey in Iran —*L'opi que fa oblidar. Un viatge a l'Iran, país de poetes i mul·las* [Opium to forget. A journey in Iran, country of poets and mullahs] (in Catalan). On the inside flap of the book, a brief biographical note states that Riera is a PhD in Geography and History, and researcher at the Pre-History Department, Universitat de Barcelona; Baró is B.A. in Geography and History, major in the History of Art, and keenly interested in the politics of the Arab world and the Mediterranean.

After these came *El Chador Azul* [The Blue Chador] by Beatriz Pitarch (2009), *El Jardín del Fin. Un Viaje por el Irán de ayer y hoy* [Fin's Garden. A journey across past and present Iran] by Ángela Rodicio (2011), and *El País Esquizofrénico. Un Retrato de Irán* [Iran: Portray of a schizophrenic country] by Jordi Pérez Colomé (2012). The authors of these books are all journalists. Especially renowned is Ángela Rodicio who became known in the 1990s for her work as a reporter for Spanish state television (TVE), and as war correspondent during the Bosnian war. In Iran she covered the 1997 presidential election. Ever since, she became an attentive observer of Iranian affairs. Rodicio's book reflects the accumulation knowledge of the history, the politics and the society of Iran gained over years of observation, analysis and visits to the country.

A most recent story, *Escuchar Irán* [Listening to Iran], came out in April 2016. The writer, Patricia Almarcegui, is Lecturer in Compared Literature and has travelled extensively across the 'Muslim' world. Some of her publications on the subject of travel literature and European travellers in the Orient are cited in this investigation. *Escuchar Irán* is her first travelogue. I find her double role as travel writer and critic of this genre of works particularly thought-provoking.

All in all, the fact that these narratives came out in a span of time of around three decades *versus* the three books in four centuries of the modern and late modern era suggests that far-reaching transformations in the conditions of production of this genre of texts have been taking place. Assuredly, since the second half of the 20th century, travelling has become accessible on a mass level —with travel writing also becoming a more democratic activity than in the past. Changes in the background and social status of travellers are also striking. And so, we find that rather than at the hands of adventurous soldiers and diplomats in pursuance of ambitious missions for the Hispanic Monarchy or the Republic, travel writing is nowadays at the hands of journalists, university professors and writers of other literary genres. In this way, one could say that travel writing today does not have a political agenda (in a conventional sense). Yet, this does not amount to saying that contemporary travel stories are not worthy of political interpretations or, what is more important for us, informed by the discourses which dominate the narration of world politics. Other than this, the general shift in the background of writers shall be construed as a sign of generic aperture with important repercussions for how contemporary travel narratives elaborate knowledge and establish authority.

My last point concerns the three criteria that orient the selection of the books that form the empirical basis of this chapter: the two books of travel written by Ana María Briogons:

- 1) *Generic adequateness*. Travel writing has been defined as ‘a strange collection of other genres (fiction, autobiography, memoir and history)’ (Lisle, 2006, p. 23). The books authored by Briogons fit adequately within this definition and, in fact, strike a good balance between fiction, autobiography, memoir and history. This appreciation nevertheless remains pretty subjective and does not imply that the rest of titles that form the Spanish tradition of books of travel in Iran do not fit the definition.
- 2) *Experiential density*. A distinct feature in *Negro sobre Negro* and *La Cueva de Alí Babá* is that they are densely grounded on the extensive experience on the ground of the author, Ana María Briogons, who has been a regular visitor in the country since the early 1970s. This is relevant because references to earlier visits in Iran and meditations on how life was in Iran was before and

after the revolution are frequent in the two books. On this issue, my point is this large experience provides her stories with a dense substance, thus rendering her work a unique case within the Spanish tradition of tales of travel in Iran.

- 3) *Expertise*. Today, Briongos is recognised as an Iran ‘expert’. The author’s expert status owes a lot to her record as writer of travel tales. In her capacity of expert, she has participated in roundtables to discuss Iranian affairs and also specifically the experience of travelling in Iran. Also, she runs a blog — *Pasión Viajera*— where the content of her posts often includes comments on Iran’s politics, society, culture or traditions. (True, Iran is not her only focus; there are also posts on India and Afghanistan). These things considered, it is assumed that her contribution to the debate on the meaning of modern Iran is substantial and worthy of critical revision.

6.4 Travel writing and the scripting of the world

6.4.1 Travellers, readers and Others.

Investigating the representation of Iran in travel narratives demands that we look at how dominant (geopolitical) discourses distribute subject positions in travel tales. As a general pattern, there are two subject positions made available by discourses: i) the position of the travel writer (and readers), and ii) the position of the Other (foreign place and people). This premise engenders two further assumptions.

Within the narration, writers adopt an active stance because they are the subjects who do the journey and who recount it for readers; whilst Others occupy a passive position—they are the objects seen, featured and arranged by travellers in their stories. If writers and readers can be analysed within the same subject position, it is due to the fact that they, presumably, share similar visions of the world, cultural assumptions and expectations. Todorov (1995) illustrates this by positing that a white European traveller in Sub-Saharan Africa would offer a narration of a journey ‘over there’ in such a way that it would resonate with a readership sharing pre-existing ideas about the African continent, the Europe/Africa civilisational divide, the white/black racial division and a

long list of unspoken and intersubjective meanings about ‘us’ and ‘them’. Travel books, in conclusion, are written for intended audiences, hence:

[i]n addition to the first relation of alterity —the one that exists between the narrator and the object of his narrative— there exists another, less obvious no doubt, between reader and narrator, who must not share the same ideological framework. The narrator’s discovery of the other, his object, is repeated in miniature by the reader in relation to the narrator himself; the process of reading imitates to a certain extent the content of the narrative: it is a journey within the book [...] the narrator must be different from us, but not too different, not, in any case, as different as the people who are the subject of his narrative (Todorov, 1995, pp. 68-69).

6.4.2 Empire, difference and discourse.

In *The Global Politics of Contemporary Travel Writing* (2006), Debbie Lisle undertakes a Foucauldian analysis of contemporary travel writing following the assumption that four discourses dominate the production of this genre of texts: i) the discourse of literary genre, ii) the discourse of cosmopolitanism, iii) the discourse of modern cartography, and iv) the discourse of nostalgia. Since this framework for interpretation informs largely my analysis of Ana María Briongos’ books, each of these discourses will now be addressed in order to lay bare how they tend to locate travellers and Others within the narrative of travels in faraway places.

The assumption that travel writing is genealogically bound with Empire pervades Lisle’s (2006) insights into the genre and the discourses that shape it, hence the argument that ‘contemporary travel writing reproduces the logic of Empire through a colonial vision’ (p. 3). A cognate idea was formulated by Todorov (1995) as he mulled over the participation of travel writers in the structure and practice of Empire:

Who are the authors of these narratives? They are conquering warriors, merchants, missionaries, that is, the representatives of three forms of colonialism: military, commercial, and spiritual. Or they are explorers who put themselves in the service of one or the other of these three categories [...] In order to ensure the tension necessary to the travel narrative, the specific position of the colonizer is required: curious about the other, and secure in his own superiority (p. 69).

Travel writing is premised on difference. Difference is not something travel writers can choose to write about. The encounter between worlds (‘home’ and ‘elsewhere’), in-between which travellers consciously position themselves and mediate, gives substance to the production of travel narratives. Travel writing is about inscribing difference into

narratives through the recreation of complementary subject positions ‘travellers’/ ‘Others’, ‘home’/ ‘elsewhere’, ‘here’/ ‘there’, ‘familiar’/ ‘unfamiliar’ and the like.

This being a framework common to all travel narratives, the key issue is to disentangle how contemporary travel narratives assume and reproduce the whole ontological edifice of colonialism —that which locates colonisers and the colonised along racial, religious, gender and territorial hierarchies that ensure the subordination of the latter by the former. This would explain why the strategies of difference utilised by contemporary travel narratives do not differ greatly from those exhibited (without shame) in colonial travel narratives. In this regard, ‘travel writing remains popular because it feeds on images of otherness utilised by colonial writers and [...] provides a sanctuary for contemporary “politically correct” attitudes about race, gender, sexuality and class’ (Lisle, 2006, p. 19).

6.4.2.1 Negotiating the generic boundaries of travel writing.

The discourse of literary genre pivots around the question of ‘what is and what is not a travelogue’ (Lisle, 2006, p. 23). Viewed as ‘a strange collection of other genres (fiction, autobiography, memoir and history)’ (Lisle, 2006, p. 23), the proximity of travel writing to other genres such as the novel or the guidebook needs to be born in mind in order to underscore the widespread assumption that travel books are ‘inferior to the novel, but more sophisticated than the travel guidebook’ (Lisle, 2006, p. 30). Another important issue is how travel books negotiate authority in relation to fact and fiction. The subtending concern is whether travel books are to be read not only as the personal experiences of travellers in foreign lands but also as *true* accounts of the places and the peoples visited. The issue is not as simple as it seems for at the same time that travel writing is defined as ‘a form of literary non-fiction’ (Hansen, 2006, p. 68) —travel narratives seem at first glance to recount facts, facts and more facts—, the use of fiction is not entirely excluded from the description of journeys —‘[T]ravelogues use fictional means to interpret facts’ (Lisle, 2006, p. 39).

Awareness of this tension is important for analytical reasons because, as will be seen, travel narratives engage in practices that tend to buttress the genre’s identity in association with the premise that travelogues are ‘based-on-real-facts’ stories. (Unlike

novels which are overtly fictional, but also unlike travel guidebooks for these are plainly factual disembodied descriptions of places more commonly addressed to the average tourist). Presumably then, when in the role of travel writers, travellers construct the places and the peoples they visit as ‘foreign’, ‘distant’ and ‘different’ but, above all, as ‘real’ places. This secures the position of travel writers as narrators of non-fictional accounts. Also, this explains why the use of fiction shall be regarded as a means to attain ‘aesthetic’ effects—to make stories more attractive or entertaining—and not, importantly, to make stories less real.

In this vein, it has been contended that when travel writers cross-refer sources such as other (perhaps classical) pieces of travel writing, history or anthropology books, social and political studies; they aim to provide density, authority and veracity to their own subjective descriptions. In the narratives of contemporary Spanish travellers in Iran, it is not uncommon to find references to the texts of modern travellers (Clavijo, de Silva and Rivadeneyra), as well as to reknown foreign travellers in Persia (Robert Byron’s *The Road to Oxiana* (1937) is a case in point) and the pioneering travels of female writers such as Annemarie Schwarzenbach or Vita Sackville-West.

The adoption of a scientist attitude towards the whole experience of travel is a strategy also used to secure the identification of travel writing as a non-fiction genre:

The non-fictitious status of travelogues allows them to employ strategies and methodologies similar to those used in the natural and social sciences. In this sense, travelogues assume a ‘real’ world that can be known and accessed via proper methods of investigation (Lisle, 2006, p. 38).

The impact of *The System of Nature* (Carl Linné, 1735) on the shaping of such an attitude—by which Enlightenment traveller-scientists increasingly approached the Others in the world beyond Europe as if these were objects of nature—has been previously explored and continues to inform the genre as of today.

6.4.2.2 *Contending visions of cosmopolitan/colonial worlds.*

Another important discourse that permeates contemporary travel narratives is the discourse of cosmopolitanism which, generally, enables positive portrayals of the differences across people and places. Thus, cosmopolitanism is strongly linked with how contemporary travellers position themselves before the Others, the foreigners and

the exotic peoples, thus enabling ‘moments of empathy, recognitions of difference, realizations of equality and insights into shared values’ (Lisle, 2006, p. 4). Yet, at the same time, contemporary travel narratives are unable to dislodge the racial, religious, territorial, gender hierarchies inherited from the colonial world. For this reason, Lisle (2006) sees cosmopolitanism as a recast version of liberal modern subjectivity and, ultimately, as a ‘reconstructed framework of colonialism and patriarchy’ (p. 70). Importantly for us, Lisle (2006, 1999) argues that the performance of cosmopolitanism engenders implications in two senses: as regards the essential differentiation between travellers and tourists; also, the negotiation of gender identity, especially in the case of female travellers.

Contemporary travel narratives do not spare efforts at making visible the gulf that separates travellers from tourists. They work on the assumption that travellers are sophisticated tourists; subjects attracted by a genuine interest in the places and the peoples they ‘discover’. By contrast, contemporary travel tales picture tourists as passive visitors who relate with foreign destinations as if these were objects of consumption doomed to be used up following pre-established schemas. Enabled by the discourse of cosmopolitanism, therefore, contemporary travel narratives construct these two ideal types of visitors: the exemplary conscious ‘traveller’ and the brute and superficial ‘tourist’. This implies that, while authentic travellers are particularly well-gifted for handling cultural difference and cultural Others, ordinary tourists are not. On this issue Lisle (2006) remarks that ‘[B]y disparaging the behavior of tourists, travel writers assume that there is a more authentic way to engage with cultural difference’ (p. 78).

The other argument concerns how prevailing ideas about masculinity and femininity shape the positions of Self and Others in contemporary travelogues and, in this way, contribute to the production of difference. Inspecting the construction of gendered identities in contemporary travel writing can be illuminating for two reasons. In the first place, it would help raise awareness of how discourses of masculinity and femininity are performed in travel stories; secondly, it would allow the possibility of observing how dominant discourses of masculinity and femininity are resisted (Lisle, 1999, p. 68). Indeed, drawing on Judith Butler’s formulation of the so-called ‘gender

core' (*Gender Trouble*, 1990), Lisle (1999) makes the point that stories of travellers in faraway lands script subject positions over not quite stable gender identities.

One purpose in this analysis is to look at some length at the kind of gender identity inscribed in the position of Spanish female traveller, and how this influences the construction of the Iranian subject. To this end, we must first be aware of the fact that travel writing's genealogy is androcentric. Traditionally, the vantage point that prevailed over stories of faraway lands was 'masculine, rational and aggressive' (Lisle, 2006, p. 95). Men travelled, men discovered the globe, men wrote stories of their journeys, and men (and their manliness) disseminated visions about 'us', Others and the world, under an assumption of objectivity. Indeed, colonial travel narratives are a fertile ground for the observation of how travel writing constructed itself as a site of representation that conferred imperial powers and colonisers 'masculine' attributes, at the same time that it feminised colonised lands and people. The question is: what happens when, in the age of mass tourism, women start to travel and become narrators of their experiences in distant places? For Lisle (1999), when the genre opens up for female narrators, women travel writers are forced to either 'inhabit the masculine hero role' or 'revert into feminine domesticity and irrelevancy' (p. 74).

Since the first option prevailed, women struggled to live up to the expectation that they could equal males in their capacity to undertake journeys, cope with the difficulties of being away from home and, concomitantly, be accepted as legitimate narrators of this genre of stories. The interesting point is to see how, through these different engagements, women travel writers operate disruptions on the male/female ontology and, ultimately, on hegemonic discourses about masculinity and femininity. Lisle's further argument is that gender is evacuated from particular subjects or places and displaced somewhere else when travel narratives silence the gender identity of women writers and relocate it onto Others, thereby producing 'genderless narrators' but 'gendered others' (Lisle, 1999, p. 76).

Other times, what we have is that women travel writers disrupt the stability of the male/female dichotomy by straddling both sides (Lisle, 1999, p. 80). This strategy comes into when narratives script women travel writers as neither masculine nor feminine, or simultaneously both, thus locating women in a special position —that of 'honorary men'. This kind of negotiation emerges in 'uneasy moments' when women

travellers face difficulty and hostility derived from the reading of their bodies as feminine (Lisle, 1999, p. 79). Inhabiting the position of the ‘honorary man’, therefore, alleviates the disadvantages of being a woman in places where a male-dominated order imposes restrictions or prohibitions on female behaviour or appearance, or else imposes a pattern of male-female relations that clashes with the traveller’s gender assumptions. Since female travellers in the ‘Muslim’ world are often portrayed as having to cope with this kind of difficult scenarios, we will see how, by situating the traveller in the position of the ‘honorary man’, Briongos’ stories manage to flexibilise the female-femininity connection and, by these means, eschew the inconveniencies of being a woman in Iran.

6.4.2.3 Travel into the heart of danger.

Contemporary travel writing is also peculiar for enabling a discourse of modern cartography which draws on the distinction between ‘safe homes’ and ‘dangerous destinations’. From this, it follows that ‘travelogues can be understood as texts of security in an insecure world’ for ‘they reassure readers that their civilised homes are contrasted to (and must be protected from) various foreign places that cannot peacefully govern their own territory’ (Lisle, 2006, p. 151). The identification of foreign places as dangerous is consonant with the logic that modern cartography imposes: a logic that needs to locate alterity ‘elsewhere’ —in a territory that is not ‘ours’. ‘Elsewhere’ acts a counter-model that helps intensify the identification of ‘home’ as the safe-haven to which travellers (and by extension readers) will eventually return. Home is the safe-haven in which ‘we’ can take refuge from the danger (uncertainty, insecurity, risks) that pervades over the others’ cartography. In short, the discourse of modern cartography scripts subjects around a familiar binary geography of ‘safe’ and ‘civilised’ *versus* ‘dangerous’ and ‘barbaric’ places and proves itself resilient to the mounting evidence that shows its otherwise weak foundations.

Now, it could be argued that there exists a seeming contradiction in accepting that cultural representations construct foreign places as ‘dangerous’ at the same time that their difference is celebrated. In this regard, it has been pointed out that the discourse of cosmopolitanism belittles the conflictual side of diversity. One should however try to see how travellers reconcile in practice their cosmopolitan vision with the ‘safety’/ ‘danger’ duality that nourishes the discourse of modern cartography. In

Lisle's (2006) view, travel narratives enable this reconciliation by positioning Others in narratives that grant them the possibility of coming closer to the identity of travellers (modernity, democracy, gender equality, secularism). This positioning demands that contemporary travellers be presented as 'modern-day missionaries' able to 'open up "uncivilised" spaces and make them available (and receptive) to the evangelising forces of liberal democracy —whether those forces are welcome or not' (Lisle, 2006, p. 152). In this way, what distinguishes the cosmopolitan from the colonial vision is the fact that the latter is openly at ease with the 'civilised'/ 'barbaric', 'safe'/ 'dangerous' hierarchy that underpins modern cartography, whilst the festive spirit of difference fostered by cosmopolitanism makes it politically incorrect to label others 'uncivilised', 'primitive', 'uneducated' or 'dangerous'. In practice, however, Empire's colonial vision continues to percolate and frame the narratives of contemporary travel writers.

6.4.2.4 *Travel back to the beginning of time and towards utopia.*

Contemporary travel narratives are also predominantly shaped by a discourse of nostalgia which awards different temporal identities to Selves and Others. Nostalgia locates travellers (and 'home') in the present tense and the future, and Others (and 'elsewhere') in the past. As Lisle (2006) wryly notes, 'travel writers do not choose their destinations simply because the landscape is different, or because it is located on the other side of the world, they choose destinations that will allow them to *go back in time* as well as faraway' (p. 204). In sum, this means that contemporary travel narratives are affected by a basic operation of the modern geopolitical imagination, which Agnew (1998/2003) describes as 'the turning of time into space'.

Against this general background, Lisle (2006) argues that the stories of contemporary travellers make two kinds of temporal projections. One projection is oriented towards the past, the other towards the future. A past-oriented projection can be sensed when stories give preference to 'nostalgic memories of innocent and uncorrupted destinations' (Lisle, 2006, p. 207). On those occasions, narratives tend to recreate a former idyllic time when men and women led pristine lives. When this projection prevails, authors might perform a discourse of heartfelt longing for an imagined past Golden Age that allows them to deliver romanticised representations of foreigners' primitiveness under the assumption that their underdevelopment keeps them protected

from the evils of (our) Modernity. The nostalgic elaboration of Others' 'backwardness'/ 'primitiveness' enables, in turn, the positioning of travellers ahead of the foreign peoples.

Alternatively, stories might tend to lean towards the future making available dreams of a 'multicultural future utopia'. Utopia renders possible the reconciliation of difference and, henceforth, the dissolution of Selves and Others into one single being: a conflictless multicultural humanity. It is the utopia of liberal subjectivity, which presents itself as capable of handling the diversity of multicultural societies through the intervention of modern political institutions. This rationale lies behind the belief that liberal democracy guarantees the representation (or, at least, the possibility of representation) of the myriad different groups that integrate advanced and complex societies in the West.

In the non-West, the tendency is to negate subaltern and minority groups a share in the public arena that would enable the managing of difference, which renders these societies 'backward', 'primitive' and 'underdeveloped'. Here, the multicultural utopia is much harder to attain. 'Backward' people are urged to undertake modernisation so that they can become like 'us'. They are blamed for their inability to catch up with the political, social and economic adjustments that modern societies demand and for not taking responsibility of their advancement. Under these premises, the discourse of nostalgia scripts contemporary travellers (and the hyper-modern world they represent) as the normative horizon towards which the lesser peoples (and their 'backward' world) must head for —and, yet, it is precisely this temporal gap what nourishes the utopia.

6.5 Ana María Briongos' Iranian travelogues

6.5.1 Introduction.

Ana María Briongos started travelling to Iran in the late 1960s when she was a young student of Physics at Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. At the beginning, Iran was only a stopover in her route to Afghanistan, a sort of nirvana for the May 1968 generation. Back then, Iran seemed totally unappealing. A country ruled by an authoritarian Shah reminded too much of the country from which she wanted to take a

break: Francoist Spain. Iran started to look different when she was granted the possibility —a scholarship— to learn the Persian language in Tehran⁴⁰. Thanks to financial aid of the Iranian Ministry of Education, Briongos became a student of the Masters Programme in Persian Language and Literature at University of Tehran. She lived in Iran during the school year 1973-1974. After that, her professional duties took her back to Iran on many occasions. Her first Iranian story, *Negro sobre negro* (1996/2000), came out more than two decades after her first encounter with Iran. Only six years later (in 2002) she wrote her second Iranian travel book, *La Cueva de Alí Babá*. Traces of her long-standing love affair with the country are recognisable throughout both texts.

Negro sobre Negro came out in 1996 after Briongos' last trip in Iran in the year 1994. The book is that sort of travelogue that takes readers on a tour across the country. In this way, it is pretty 'standard'. The book's structure is nonetheless more complex than the basic 'home-away-home' sequence (Lisle, 2006, p. 27), because while it is the 1994 trip that inspires the book, the account dovetails with memories, stories and experiences of the author's past experiences in Iran. This circumstance enables the writer to deliver rich and insightful descriptions of Iran and its people, as she moves from one place to another across the country. In this story, Tehran is the epicentre of the journey from which she moves across the country, but also the place where a good deal of the narrative action develops.

The second book narrates a less orthodox and more 'static' journey. *La Cueva de Alí Babá* recounts the traveller's sojourn in Isfahan in the summer of 2001. The story deals with a journey in which, one could say, the traveller went on a quest for a more authentic experience of the foreign place and its people; a journey in the course of which the traveller rehearses a look onto Iran from an insider perspective. For that purpose, she lives as a guest in the house of a local family from Isfahan and spends most of her time also as a guest in a carpet shop at the bazaar. As she herself explains:

I realised that living for a period in a place where there are hundreds, thousands of carpets, ought to be fascinating and didn't give up until I got a formal invitation. In Ali

⁴⁰ Persian is spoken in Iran, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and other territories belonging to the Persianate world. The Afghan variety of Persian is called 'Dari'.

Baba's cave I'd be hosted for some time, and here I am, *ready to savour another aspect of Iran's mysteries* —the most traditional bazaar (Briongos, 2002, p. 29)⁴¹.

Whether Iran is approached from a mobile vantage point (the traveller's gaze as she moves across space) or from a static perspective (the traveller's gaze as she contemplates Iran from a carpet shop in the bazaar of Isfahan), there is no doubt that Iran is constructed as a 'foreign' place —a place with which the traveller sets up a relation based on difference.

6.5.2 Authorship and authority in non-fiction texts.

Was it not because travel writing produces images of a 'true' world, the question of its reputation within the literary universe would be irrelevant. Seen predominantly as a non-fiction genre, the use of fictional means by authors of travel accounts is not completely absent from the narration of journeys, as pointed out before.

The issue of non-fictionality engenders important consequences for how narrators position themselves before the events, the situations and the people who get featured in their stories; and, in sum, for how this genre of texts establish 'expert'/'experiential' authority. In accord with Lisle's (2006) argumentation, this analysis assumes that, within travel narratives, the vantage point of the writer is hegemonic (p. 76) —readers get access to the world 'over there' only through the subjective experience of the writer. Thus, when narratives locate subjects in the position of travel writers, they grant them the power to recount the places and the peoples 'over there' from the point of view of their individual experience. The resultant texts shall be read as subjective, yet at the same time as faithful portrayals of foreigners. The writer/traveller acts as a sovereign I/eye.

With this in mind, it important to notice that both in *Negro sobre Negro* and *La Cueva de Alí Babá* claims are made regarding which purpose the author seeks and how she would like readers to receive the texts:

Negro sobre Negro is not a guidebook. It is a travel book whose sole intention is to show Iran *the way I see it, the way I feel it* —that is, *the way I've experienced it*—, so that people whose only references of the country are newspaper and TV reporting have

⁴¹ Emphases in the excerpts from the books are all mine.

more information at their disposal and get to know *a different point of view* (Briongos, 2000, p. 11).

Further:

By writing this book I want to offer a general overview of what Iran is today. The Iranian question is complex, and *many Western approximations are simplistic and flawed*. My only aim is *to take the country closer to the readers*, offering them *my vision* of Iran's pulse at the turn of the third millennium so that *anyone can come to their conclusions* (Briongos, 2002, Author's note, para. 1).

The assertion that '*Negro sobre Negro* is not a guidebook' engages directly the discussion on the generic boundaries of travel writing, aiming to secure the status of travel books over travel guides. The implicit question here is precisely the establishment of the book's authority; and what can be read as the writer's attempt to ensure her position as an author of literary but non-fictional texts, thus searching to reconcile, both in *Negro sobre Negro* and *Ali Baba's Cave*, literary aspirations with the purpose of delivering a faithful and thorough description of the places and the peoples visited.

This is not tantamount to saying that the writer pursues to deliver an objective account of her encounter with the foreign place and people. When Briongos claims that she wants to show Iran 'the way she sees it, the way she feels it, the way she has experienced' it and, in sum, 'offer her vision', she acknowledges that the point of view in the narratives does not come from nowhere. The writer's vantage point conditions decisively how texts capture the traveller's experience in faraway lands and, thus, how readers get access to the narration of the Other's discovery. For this reason, we shall see travel writing as a sustained process of reconciliation, within the limits of the text, between the subjective experience of the traveller and the writer's intervention in the composition of the text.

I shall briefly discuss the use of the first person singular as a linguistic strategy through which such reconciliation is accomplished. The first person singular is the means by which the sovereign I/eye of the writer/traveller leaks through the narratives and enables two identifications: i) between the very writer and the traveller, and ii) between the writer and intended readers. The first identification functions to reassure that readers recognise the writer as the traveller who has been 'over there' in the foreign (exotic, dangerous, faraway) destination, and the subject who produces credible and compelling travel tales. The second identification sets out to interpellate readers

inhabiting the position of the travel writer —readers who are *as* European, *as* Western and *as* modern as the subject undertaking the journey in faraway lands (Todorov, 1995, pp. 68-69, quoted before). Otherwise, the identity/difference framework within which travel narratives operate could be destabilised. And since the construction of Self in fact requires the projection of difference onto Others, the recourse to the first person singular serves also to reassure the differentiation between the *I* (writer, traveller) and the outside world (Iran) over which she writes.

By raising criticism against the representations that Western global media make of Iran, Briongos seeks to buttress further the legitimacy of her position. In the Author's Note in *La Cueva de Alí Babá* (see above), it is for instance emphasised that 'many Western approximations to Iran are simplistic and flawed'. In another passage (see above) the author regrets that many people only have references of the country through newspaper and TV reporting. Arguably, railing against global media for offering slanted pictures of Iran based on negative stereotyping and prejudicing lends value to the authors' 'vision', her 'different point of view', and her wish 'to take the country closer to the reader'. In conclusion, the kind of accounts offered by Briongos is necessary for delivering alternative representations of Iran.

But note the possible contradiction. For one thing, the writer describes dominant representations of Iran as 'simplistic' and 'flawed', which is to judge these representations as unsophisticated and mistaken. Yet, she then allows readerships to decide which representations they find more compelling: 'anyone can come to their conclusions'. The underlying assumption seems to be that there is a 'real Iran' which 'Western approximations' do not capture properly; thence the implication that the author's vision can compensate for possible failures of representation. In turn, this is premised on the idea that there is an extra-discursive 'reality' which some are not able to capture, but some other people —better-equipped observers— are able to discern in its right terms. It follows from this that the traveller which comes out of these narratives is capable of denting the long-standing trend of wrong representations of Iran in the West. The narratives, therefore, grant Briongos the power to orient the readers' vision of Iran into a better direction.

In a similar fashion, when the writer notes that *Negro sobre Negro* became 'a reference book to people interested in the country' (below), she expresses satisfaction

for having to disseminate across a broad audience a picture of Iran and its people not so readily available in sites of representation such as media:

Negro sobre Negro appeared at a moment when Iran began to show signs of aperture and ceased to be, to a certain extent, the world's boogeyman. Ever since *Negro sobre Negro* has become a reference book to people interested in the country (Briongos, 2000, p. 11).

Yet, it is highly paradoxical that as the travel tales pursue to establish authority in the way shown above, the author reveals—in the closing sections of *Negro sobre Negro*—that some elements in this narrative might be fabulous: '[M]any things in the book are true, others are not but they could have been; some of the names are fictitious too' (Briongos, 2000, p. 169). This begs the question of who readers should handle the revelation that, within this overall true story, some elements happen to be untrue.

To the very least, this shows the puissance of the *I/eye* to funnel what needs to be shown of the foreign land and the people. Under the assumption of being a non-fiction author, our author unseals herself as the powerful narrator that handles the representation of Iran straddling the boundaries between fact and fiction. The power to pepper stories with events that never took place, of recounting situations that never happened and of interacting with invented characters could be seen as a fraud. (The use of fictitious names is widespread in contexts when people wish to safeguard anonymity and thus to a certain extent understandable). But the fact of the matter is that this 'soft fraud' does not achieve to challenge travel writing's status as a non-fiction genre for, at the end of the day, the key issue is how travel tales resonate with the dominant discourses that script global politics, and with the structurally dense regimes of truth that ensure the making of Selves and Others. Like other 'geopolitical texts' (Falah et al., 2006), travel narratives are anchored in epistemologies that offer the Self an ontological safe-haven against Others.

6.5.3 Cosmopolitanism and the journey in Iran.

6.5.3.1 A traveller is not a tourist.

It has been previously argued that travel narratives perform the discourse of cosmopolitanism by differencing the identity of travellers from tourists'. Sometimes

this is accomplished through very explicit forms; other times, it comes about through subtler strategies of differentiation. The repertoire of strategies used for such purposes can be wide and complex. We find examples of how both options work out in Briongos' texts.

In the passage below, the narrator describes a scene in which a tourist bargains the price of a carpet with a seller in the bazaar. The traveller stands as an observer of the scene. The description captures her dislike for the behaviour of the tourist and the feelings of solidarity and respect for the work of the carpet seller which grow inside her:

For an ancient white-bearded carpet seller who recites Omar Khayyam as he unfolds silk pieces, *the tourist* only interested in getting a 10 *rial* discount on his purchase must be intolerable. The situation breaks the spell and ruins the seller's mood, who next time will double the prize of his commodity. *For so many years the absence of tourists kept Iran away from exasperation* and people were concentrated on their own business (Briongos, 2000, pp. 87-88).

On close examination, what we find here is open disapproval for the commodisation of places which thus far have remained excluded from the routes of mass tourism. Since 1979, Westerners have been scarcely interested in visiting Iran. True, how the global media have tended to feature life in the Islamic Republic has not helped to nurture the idea that Iran can be a tourist destination. Whereas changes in this consciousness could be under way, non-Muslim and non-Middle Eastern or Asian visitors in Iran continue to be rare.

In this setting, I suggest that two factors configure the traveller's awareness. One is the consciousness of being a rare visitor in Iran which eases the argumentation that visiting Iran is already an accomplishment. Another is the constitution of the subject 'traveller' in opposition to the 'tourist'. As the previous description shows, tourists' inability to appreciate the exceptionality of Persian carpets causes profound irritation in the traveller. She judges the tourist's interest in getting a discount for the purchase of a carpet offensive because it entails a lack of appreciation for the work of carpet-weavers and carpet-sellers. Congratulating Iran for not falling prey to mass tourism ('For so many years the absence of tourists kept Iran away from exasperation') is thus in consonance with the prevailing idea that tourists spoil the authenticity of places that have managed to keep away from processes of globalisation.

The ethical differencing between travellers and tourists thus becomes apparent with the narrative laying bare that a real, respectful and committed traveller (i.e. the Spanish visitor) would never behave like a tourist. My point though is that a patronising attitude subtends this attempted show of respect for others. The distinctly ‘Oriental’ condition that defines both the commodity (carpet) and the carpet-seller grants them a special status in the travellers’ imagination. The carpet-seller portrayed in the scene is not just any man: he is an ‘ancient’ and ‘white-bearded’ subject who ‘recites Omar Khayyam as he unfolds silk pieces’. Thereby, the narration exhibits an incorrupted Oriental subject. This is not so different from what Litvak (1985) had observed in her exploration of Muslim exoticism in 19th c. literary, artistic and journalistic pieces in Spain, where ‘the peoples of the Islamic world were aesthetically appreciated figures that conveyed not only physical but also certain moral qualities’ (p. 84). In the current example, it becomes clear that the romanticisation of the carpet-seller exemplifies how the traveller’s cosmopolitan vision projects Western stereotyping onto Iranian Others, at the same time that the Self/Other relationship is inscribed in a spatio-temporal West/Orient framework.

The idea that travellers (unlike tourists) are subjects driven by the profound impulse to pursue a life mission becomes apparent as Briongos’ stories unfold. (This sort of identification is also important for the establishment of differences between travellers and tourists). In the following passage from *Negro sobre Negro*, the narrator describes a scene where the traveller gets her fortune told in the company of Iranians:

Bahram’s mother brings the big book of Hafez’s poetry and gives it to me. I open it. *The poem will tell my fortune*. Someone reads it out loud. The poem says I’ll share with the poor and the wanderers the scent of wine and Golestan roses, and that *my heart will never quench the thirst of faraway lands* (Briongos, 2000, p. 65).

Poetry in Iran is an extremely popular genre. The great poets of Persian literature are widely admired, and their poems are recited with enthusiasm by Iranians from all walks of life. Iranians’ relation with their rich and refined poetic tradition is fluid and intense and this, generally, leaves a deep impression on foreign observers. The poems gathered together within the *Diwan* (‘the big book of Hafez’s poetry’) were written by the famous poet from Shiraz in the 14th century.

Randomly picked up from the book, Hafez's poems are scrutinised in search for hidden messages about the destiny of a given person. The ritual is performed on special occasions such as *Nowruz* (the Persian New Year) when family members and friends get together to celebrate, or when foreign guests visit a local house as in the scene described.

The significance of this passage is tied up with the theme of 'destiny', thus with the strong implication that the traveller's journey in Iran is not the result of a rational choice but of predestination —as if she had to travel 'over there' to meet a fate she cannot rebel against. Under this light, the poem becomes a powerful device by which the narrative constructs travelling not as an ordinary act, but as a transcendental deed. In short, the theme of 'destiny' allows the narrator to place the traveller in a humble position; the traveller cannot run against what Life or the Almighty have catered for her —travelling is her mission. Three implications derive from this.

The first implication concerns the 'traveller'/ 'tourist' duality and the widening gulf between tourists as 'by-products of globalization' who have a 'herd-like mentality' (Lisle, 2006, p. 78) and the cosmopolitan traveller, presented here as the subject who accomplishes a 'life mission'. The second implication is that, by picturing the journey in Iran as a product of destiny, the narrative presents the traveller's presence in Iran as a fact of nature and, in turn, it almost exonerates her from the conscious engagement in the decision of constructing a traveller identity. Thirdly, conferring the traveller a missionary status pursues to satisfy the writer's longing for transcendence because transferring the event from the plane of the experiential (the journey) to the plane of the textual (the narrative of the journey) locates the traveller's mission on a transcendental path that goes from the individual to the collective —from the intimacy of the personal experience to the collective scrutiny of readers.

The mystic force that pushes the traveller to undertake the journey in Iran continues to be elaborated in this passage from *La Cueva de Alí Babá*:

On these occasions, I realise it is not only *my anthropological curiosity* what takes me to faraway lands, but the necessity to drink from people's wisdom, to get to know what they know and how they feel, to partake in what this vast world offers us, and share, give and receive (Briongos, 2002, pp. 156-157).

The reference to ‘anthropological curiosity’ performs a service similar to the image of ‘destiny’, suggesting that the traveller is guided by some kind of primitive impulse that resides deep inside her. The discourse of cosmopolitanism enables the interpretation of such impulse as a constitutive feature of travellers’ identity (and not certainly of tourists’). This is the sort of impulse that pushes travellers onto the path of exploration (hence ‘the necessity to drink from people’s wisdom, to get to know what they know and how they feel’); it is the whim that ultimately fosters the traveller disposition to celebrate difference —‘to partake in what this vast world offers us, and to share, give and receive’— and engage with the recognition of the Other.

The representation of cosmopolitan travellers as subjects in search for an authentic experience of the Other is in tune with the construction of the cosmopolitan subjectivity thus far. It conceals nonetheless a certain paradox: tangled with the expectation that the journey in Iran shall be ‘an experience of great profundity’ and a ‘spiritual cure’, the narrative forces a construal of the journey in terms of ‘radical life change’ —also seen as ‘a way of taking a break’. In this manner, the story presents the quest for authenticity (genuineness, depth) in Iran as an exceptional moment in the life of the traveller:

My trip is not going to resemble a tourist excursion, but *an experience of greater profundity*. I’m excited and nervous since I foresee that such *radical life change* is going to be like *a spiritual cure, a way of taking a break* from the tension imposed by *the hectic life in a big European city*. I am determined to live in *Isfahan* following the Asian saying which has it that *haste is a devil’s invention* (Briongos, 2002, p. 16).

The movement inherent to the act of travelling enables the transitory rupture with one’s place of origin in Europe (‘home’), so much so that by the time the traveller has been in Iran for several days and weeks, the experience of losing consciousness storms in, as this short passage attests to:

I haven’t been able to know which day I live, but my intuition says this trip is coming to an end. I’m happy to realise that, absorbed by this country’s spider web *I have forgotten that the rest of my world exists* (Briongos, 2000, p. 137).

Such rupture eases the proximity to the places and people she comes across and sharpens the traveller’s appreciation for their authenticity. Since only *real* travellers are able to establish this kind of connection with the places they visit, we understand why

cosmopolitan travellers do not embark upon ‘tourist excursions’, but on journeys of ‘great profundity’.

Many would agree that by constructing the journey in Iran as an ‘Asian ’(qua ‘Oriental’) experience the narrative calls upon the tradition of European travel tales that eased the construction of the Orient as a ‘form of release’, hence the easiness in seeing Iran as a place where one can ‘take a break’. There is no escaping the fact that it is the very imagination of the Orient that enables the identification of the journey as ‘an experience of greater profundity’ and ‘a spiritual cure’. The visualisation of Isfahan through its ‘Asianness’, as in the above passage, corroborates this idea⁴². And the representation of Europe as a place where people lead ‘hectic lives’, where ‘haste is a devil’s invention’, confirms that the distribution of Self/Other positions is attuned in the stories with the spatio-ethical configuration of the modern world.

6.5.3.2 Noble people, ancient wisdom.

Ana María Briongos was a young college student when she undertook her first travels in the Orient⁴³. The political situation at home and in Iran was in the 1960s very different than in the late 1990s or 2000s. In the late 1960s, more than two decades into the Franco regime, Spain was a country mired in backwardness and ‘the West’, the beacon of hope for nations that aspired to become modern (including Spain), exerted its ideological leadership through the spread of freedom, liberal democracy and market economy. The cost of this enterprise proved heavy, with the Vietnam War as the epitome of Cold War ravages. Young leftists in Europe and North America who longed for love, peace and freedom, turned to the Orient searching for an eventual release from the pressures of market capitalism and cruel militarism. The ‘Islamic threat’ was still absent from global politics narratives, and so, it was easy to project onto Afghanistan, India, Nepal...etc images of a ‘gentle’ Orient, with Orientals embodying an ideal of poverty and spirituality that served as a source of inspiration for generations of hippies in the U.S.

⁴² It is of significance that, shortly before this, the travel writer describes Isfahan (together with Samarkand and Timbuktu) as ‘a mythical city whose name conjures up worlds of fantasy’ (Briongos, 2002, p. 15).

⁴³ For Spanish standards in the final 1960s women travellers (women who journeyed solo in Afghanistan and Iran!) were extremely avant-garde. This leads me into thinking that our author’s upbringing was rather unconventional. From one of the books we learn that in one of her car trips to Afghanistan she travelled with her brother and other male friends —an extremely uncommon experience for a woman at that time!

and Europe. The Orient enthused dreams of a less corrupt world and of human reconciliation.

In this setting, the visualisation of the West as the precursor of negative cultural, economic and political trends causing imbalances on a global scale enables the positioning of the non-Western world (and within it, the Orient) in the role of victim. This logic of difference subtends the scripting of Others as ‘wise’, ‘noble’, ‘incorrupt’ and ‘pristine’ subjects —such identifications, it can be argued, help the Western subject to compensate for the harm ‘We’ have inflicted upon ‘Them’.

The construction of Self/Other relations in these terms, in turn, bolsters the framing of the journey in the non-Western world —in the Orient— as an experience of profound learning that allows Westerners/Europeans to reengage with their once lost innocence. The underlying premise is that since, as of today, Orientals continue to gaze upon the world in full innocence; they shall be regarded as a pure source of humanistic learning and knowledge. By pushing forward the metaphor that the world is a ‘school’, the stories of travel in Iran bear upon an idealised type of traveller who is ready to expand his perspective on life and become a better human being, as the following passage attests to:

It’s not from the forests, the seas, the rivers, the deserts, the roads, and the sunrises; neither from the monuments nor the museums —it’s from the men and the women and the children who live *by these roads and in these deserts* that we learn. Travelling at a young age is important —light baggage, empty pockets, and a heart like a sponge. *The roads of the world are a school for the spirit, tolerance and solidarity.* One learns to give and receive, to leave the house door and spirit open and, above all, to share. One learns to enjoy the little things, to value what one has, to *relish austerity*, as well as to celebrate abundance. One learns to listen, to observe, and to love. *Young people from rich countries should spend one year of their lives as backpackers, walking the roads of the world, from town to town, from village to village, before family and professional obligations tie them up to a place* (Briongos, 2000, p. 22).

The first significant element to note is that when the writer imagines the young (European/Western) travellers having ‘a heart like a sponge’, she constructs them as permeable subjects with a disposition to absorb the lessons Others will teach them. This conceptualisation of travellers bears the recognition of Others —‘the men, the women and the children’ of Iran— as unquenchable sources of vital experiences and knowledge. Generally, the positive readings of the people the traveller encounters while

journeying in Iran outweigh by far moments of non-admiration, although there are still some. The writer's disappointment with Iranians is more visible when they are seen as subjects of the Islamic Republic. For instance, '[T]hey are basijis, young war volunteers. I look at them, and I realise that here, as anywhere else, fear and ignorance put on uniforms as soon as they can' (Briongos, 2002, p. 55). Although really scarce, when travel stories address the 'Question of the Islamic Republic' (Adib-Moghaddam, 2008), the discourse that celebrates difference gets suspended.

This distribution of subject positions would not be as effective if it was not because the narrative rests on the assumption that global space is split up into 'privileged' and 'non-privileged' territories. The narrative locates the men, the women and the children of Iran 'by these roads and in the deserts' (and not, possibly, in green residential areas with WI-FI connection of which there are many in the northern Tehran, by the way). Next comes the assertion that '[Y]oung people from rich countries should spend one year of their lives as backpackers, walking the roads of the world' for they will learn to 'relish austerity'. These descriptions sketch out a colonial cartography of travel which rests on an asymmetrical distribution of roles: it is the young men and women from the rich Western world (the 'privileged' world) who travel in the poor world, and not the other way round. Travelling 'over there' will bring about only positive things to their lives, since it is 'over there' where they will learn what tolerance, generosity, respect, austerity and humility mean. Indeed, it is the people 'over there' who will teach them these invaluable lessons. The connection between the less privileged lives of Others and their nobility and wisdom becomes thus apparent; and what is more important, by foregrounding the others' generosity, good heart, and acumen, the narrative manages to appease the moral trouble that arises from the contemplation of material scarcity.

The formation of the traveller's identity around the 'you travel, you learn' premise—as the attitude thus far described can be defined—is based on a contradictory dialogue with difference. The contradiction lies in that, on the one hand, writers engage unashamedly in the production of difference. They feel entitled to make claims about 'Us' and 'Them' in order to underscore 'Their' difference. In fact, an attitude that is celebratory with difference prevails even when criticism against Others' differential features is raised, because it is raised 'in the right spirit' (Lisle, 2006, p. 71). On the

other hand, travel writers interpellate our common human condition to construct an ‘inclusive we’ that acts as a solvent of differences. In *La Cueva de Alí Babá*, the description of a visit to the Zagros Mountains in the Iranian region of Chaharmahal-e Bakhtiari provides the occasion to see how the production of an inclusive identity around the idea of ‘humanity’ plays out.

Located on the border with the Isfahan province, the Chaharmahal-e Bakhtiari region is home to one of the most important tribal groups in Iran: the *bakhtiaris*. Known for their warrior spirit, bakhtiaris used to be nomadic pastoralists. Over the last few decades, bakhtiaris and other nomadic tribes gradually abandoned their itinerant lifestyle or became semi-sedentary albeit, as of today, some groups continue to practice some form of nomadism.

The recounting of the visit to this off-the-beaten-track spot reveals the traveller’s excitement for the precious moment about to come. In the preparation of the excursion, the Spanish visitor is assisted by a young male friend from Isfahan, Ali, who used to be a school teacher for the children of the bakhtiari community. The man volunteers to guide her across the area, for he is familiar with the roads, the villages and some of the families which live in camps. His wife, Fatma, a young woman from Isfahan who has never been in the area before, joins them on the trip. It is conspicuous that, from the point of view of the traveller, this Iranian woman of urban upbringing feels as much estrangement for nomadic life as herself — ‘[A]t this moment she [Fatma] feels closer to me than to these people who live only three hundred kilometers away from her city and who practice her religion’ (Briongos, 2002, p. 128). This indicates, importantly, that the Iranian subject constructed in Briongos’ travel tales is not monolithic, but on the contrary plural and paradoxical.

At this point, it is the ‘nomadic’/ ‘sedentary’ binary that orders the positioning of subjects in the story. What does nomadism represent if not an unmodern pattern of human territoriality acting as a counter-model of ‘normalized’ forms of dwelling (sedentariness)? Essentially then, nomads cannot be seen as any more than Others with acute, distinctive features. For this reason, the featuring of nomads in the story allows the writer to lay bare that differences, in fact, exist between sedentary Iranians — especially those of urban upbringing— and the minority of nomadic Iranians living

mobile lives in areas such as the Zagros Mountains. This is how difference becomes a matter of degree rather than of kind: representation permits different degrees of alterity (not only radical Otherness). Compared to the alterity embodied by nomads, the distance between Ana María (the traveller) and Zahra (the woman from Isfahan) becomes negligible.

This approach is also adopted in the descriptions of the families who live in the camp —the men, the women and the children—, their flocks of goats and sheep, and their housing conditions. Nomadic women are featured as those who are in charge of most breeding tasks: making the cheese and the bread, taking care of the house and the children, and the traditional weaving of carpets. (The selling of hand-made carpets to vendors who will re-sell them in other market places is an important source of income for these families). The attire of women is foregrounded to evince the striking contrast between the colourful garments of the nomadic women and the dullness of the clothes and black *chadors* which most women in Iranian cities and villages wear (Briongos, 2002, p. 122) —a further reason for underscoring the difference between nomadic and urban (female) Iranians.

Overall, the account discloses Briongos' curiosity for the new perspective of life which the nomadic camp offers without, in fact, indulging in excess of romanticism. The frigid temperatures during the night and the icy wind that leaks through the tent where the guests (Ali, Zahra and Ana María) stay overnight makes it hard for the writer to deliver too romantic accounts of the nomadic lifestyle. Still, by praising the simplicity of nomadic life and nomads' strong connection with nature, the story offers an overall positive portrayal of the group. It is at this point that we get to the question of the 'inclusive we'.

Due to their itinerant lifestyle, children from the community do not attend a proper school, but still education is regarded as a precious asset. The writer recounts the morning routine of the disciplined children of different ages who get clean and ready to attend their lessons in an improvised open-air school. Many of them walk down the mountains from faraway camps in the freezing morning hours. The narration captures the dignity of these children in the early stages of their lives, and creates the conditions to dissolve the differences between the urban visitors and the nomadic children into one single category: 'humanity'

When I look at them standing in front of two open-mouthed kids, when I realise of our insignificance compared to this breathtaking scenery, when I listen to myself explaining who I am, where I come from and why I want to meet them; *I feel I am relishing an extraordinary, unique moment, where nothing is important except recounting our realities, our unimportant and humble but in the end deeply human stories* (Briongos, 2002, p. 120).

It is interesting to note how the narrative accentuates the ‘uniqueness’ —the ‘out of ordinariness’— of the moment thus expanding on the idea that the journey is an extraordinary experience in the traveller’s life. And from this assumption, the author rehearses to create an inclusive identity by which ‘Us’ and ‘Them’ can recognise each other as belonging to the the same community of human souls (‘nothing is important except recounting our realities, our unimportant and humble but in the end deeply human stories’).

Remarkably though, the discourse of a common humanity where differences across people turn insignificant is built upon a striking fiction: the suppression of difference is an impractical possibility that would deprive travel writing of its fundamental mission. Thus, far from destabilising the Self/Other relation, the positive appraisal of the life conditions of nomads, intolerable by our standards —itinerant living, no school facilities and lack of heating—, places Others’ difference under a totally bright light. This triggers the implication that the harsh living conditions of nomadic children are ‘acceptable’ because, after all, this is how things are for children in the ‘underprivileged’ world. On this issue, my point is that the adoption of a politically correct attitude allows the story to make the best of nomads’ difference, and almost inevitably link to this the emergence of deep fraternal feelings.

When the question of genre was discussed a few pages ago, it was said that the author of these books of travel is generally critical of how Iran been portrayed in the West because most representations are ‘simplistic’ and ‘flawed’. Offering, in stead of these, positive readings of Iranians’ identity shall be read as the author’s attempt to compensate for the ‘misrepresentations’ affecting Iran and Iranians. *Negro sobre Negro* contains more examples of this purpose. For example, upon the description of the traveller’s encounter with a Kurd who owns a hotel in Kashan —the historical town in the Isfahan province—, in which she stays overnight with the friends that journey with

her. The occasion is perfect for conversing with the man. The dialogue leaves a deep impression on the traveller, who registers the following afterthoughts:

I come to the conclusion that, irrespective of Islamic or non-Islamic universities, these people own some *ancestral wisdom* —an inborn knowledge. We bid a fond farewell. A *sense of brotherhood* unites us, and we thank Allah for the gift of his company. Many more times we will enjoy *this soft, intimate, stark and respectful aspect of Iran*, where time goes by like a curtain of fresh air, where the scant shadows feel cosier, sweeter the fruits of oases and more stunning the carefully arranged mosaics over clay ruins. This is *the sweetest side of Islam*, not featured in newspapers —*the silent realm of good-willed men and women* (Briongos, 2000, p. 86).

Bestowing upon foreigners the virtue of ‘ancestral wisdom’ prompts the emergence of a ‘sense of brotherhood’ between the traveller and foreigners which, I shall argue, lays bare the writer’s attempts to foster an inclusive reading of identities. In this regard, it is probably right to say that inclusive readings of the Self and Other can be more easily be promoted when narratives construct a complex and multilayered Other. Of the multiple layers of identity, some are visible and easily apprehensible, whilst others are buried beneath negative stereotyping, or under heavy misconceptions. Accentuating ‘this soft, intimate, stark and respectful side of Iran’, ‘the sweetest side of Islam’ and the ‘good-willed men and women’ stands as evidence that the cosmopolitan traveller is able to see beyond the surface, pierce through layers of meaning, and retrieve dimensions of the Others’ identity often occluded to casual observers.

Timidly, these practices raise a critique against the prevailing visions of, what we can call, ‘masculine geopolitics’. Masculine geopolitics spreads the message that ‘their’ world is swarming with terrorists, authoritarianism and veiled women; and that ‘we’ need to combat these malaises. Masculine geopolitics has no interest in showing that, as a matter of fact, ‘we’ are equally human and that our shared human condition shall be a reason for celebration. True, Briongos’ books take a different direction, as in the previous description of the traveller’s encounter with the Kurdish hotel owner in terms of total blessing: not unimportantly, she thanks Allah ‘for the gift of his company’. Does this mean that these travel tales are not informed by liberal subjectivity?

My point is that, since these representations unfold within the discursive space that liberal subjectivity makes available, the narrative can hardly accomplish any

displacement of identity formations beyond it. Some elements in the above description attest to this. For instance, from the positive elaboration of others ('ancestral wisdom', the 'soft, intimate, stark and respectful side of Iran'), the story jumps into the conclusion that this is 'the sweetest side of Islam' and 'the silent realm of good-willed men and women' with whom global audiences are not familiar. Implicitly, the narrative assumes that 'Islam' deploys bitterer sides and that there exist 'over there' bad-faith men and women —the kind of men and women that get pictured in global media stories. In this way, Islam is given prominence as an interpretive theme that participates in the construction of the Iranian subject, and with mighty implications because it shows that this genre of stories fails to reverse the logic of the 'West'/ 'Islam' divide.

6.5.3.3 Distinguished guest.

In contemporary stories of travels in Iran written by Spanish travellers, the theme of 'women in Iran' is never left untackled. The question is discussed in relation to women and gender relations in Iran, but also in relation to Western female visitors and their 'transformation' to adjust, from the point of view of behaviour and appearance, to the exigencies of the Islamic Republic. Broadly speaking, we can argue that dominant visions about the life of women in societies where Islam is the dominant cult and the issue of Islamic dress determine the way in which male and female Others are written over in stories of Westerners who travel in Muslim lands. This section argues that the discourse on what it means to be a female traveller in Iran is of relevance for the discussion about Iran's meaning.

I start off from the premise that Iran is popularly and widely perceived by casual observers as a 'women-unfriendly country'. The most obvious reason is the obligation for every woman, local or foreign, to wear the Islamic veil in public spaces (and to cover up arms and legs). From this the conviction usually follows that Western women who decide, on a voluntary basis, to travel 'over there' are not quite right in their heads. Many do not see why one would like to travel in a country ('the country of ayatollahs') where women face this sort of impositions if 'here' —in the Western world— we are free to put on whatever clothes we want and, most importantly, if 'We' do not force 'Them' to wear any particular piece of clothing. Following from this, it could be said that Briongos' stories generate the narrative of her, in her capacity of female European

traveller, being able to escape unscathed from a country in which women are second class citizens and victims of men's medieval mentality. Was this the dominant reasoning in Briongos' writing, we can expect to see the traveller slipping into the position of the masculine hero able to cope with and domesticate difference.

Surveying the intersections between gender and travel writing led Lisle (1999) to observe that the irruption of women travellers and female authors of travel tales in the genre brought about the dissemination of the narrative that 'even women can travel' (p. 73). One issue to be elucidated is whether travel books written by women portray female travellers acting like men, like women, or whose gender performance is somewhere in-between. If the mixed option was prevalent, we can say that through their practices, women travel writers somehow destabilise the canonical 'male'/'female' ontology. In Briongos' texts the narrative of 'even women can travel' becomes the discourse of 'even women can travel solo *in the Muslim world*'. Consider this:

A woman who travels solo needs to know how to take care of herself and be respected, for which she needs to pay attention to her dress and, simply, make use of common sense. *Women who travel solo have access to places men could never enter* (Briongos, 2000, p. 24).

Dominant constructions of femininity and masculinity subtend assertions like '[W]omen who travel solo have access to places men could never enter'. Lurking behind it, we can recognise the widespread belief that, since the spatial segregation of sexes is a frequent practice in 'Muslim' countries, male travellers 'over there' will have access to spaces where only 'men' can enter—the same for 'women' visitors and 'only female' spaces. These kind of assumptions exemplify how stable gender alignments such as 'man'='male' and 'woman'='female' inform our visions of the Muslim world. But, what would happen if 'women' travellers 'over there' had access to 'male' spaces? Which kind of gender identity would travel tales confer on female travellers then? This discussion is germane because, throughout Briongos' texts, the discourse of cosmopolitanism enables unorthodox readings of gender that impinge on how representational practices script the traveller's 'female' identity. This becomes especially visible when the issue of Islamic dress interferes in the experience of the journey.

Like all Iranian women, female travellers in Iran are required to observe the Islamic dress code in force since shortly after the 1979 revolution. Discussions over 'the

veil' prompt polarised reactions by supporters and detractors, men and women, Islamic and Western feminists, 'here' and 'there'. As for the stories of female travellers in Iran, they are usually pervaded with impressions, comments and opinions that register authors' personal views on the matter —what it means for women of different ages, backgrounds and political alignments and how 'Western women' feel about taking up the practice of veiling. In regards to Briongos' stories, my argument is that the issue of Islamic dress functions to reproduce the 'male'/ 'female' divide as much as the 'familiar'/ 'foreign' division. The following passage is illuminating in this regard:

An inconvenience for Western women is the obligation to cover themselves from head to toe. This clothing is uncomfortable, but it facilitates the relationship with the people. If one has an open mind, one can even see the allure of the situation (Briongos, 2000, p. 173).

An exceptional marker of difference, when the Muslim veil is taken up in the narration of visits to Iran, the cosmopolitan subject emerges to display her tolerance and respect for this Islamic tradition; even if the obligation to wear *hejab* entails that she relinquishes her own freedom of choice. The expected cosmopolitanism attitude ('open mind') prefers to underscore the circumstance that Islamic dress 'facilitates the relationship with the people' than to insist on the nuisance for 'Western women' — hence the possibility that wearing *hejab* might be viewed as 'alluring'.

Still, it is essential to realise that, despite the lack of open discomformity with this local practice, the narrative produces alterity by underlining that 'Western women' might find the practice inconvenient. Underneath the discourse of respect for difference, the narrative establishes a hierarchisation between Western women —tolerant subjects who are able to adjust to the local customs— and the Iranian/Muslim subject —men and women who either impose, encourage or simply *are used to* the practice of veiling. Through these means, the story rather obviously grants Islamic dress the quality of 'foreign'. This engenders consequences in terms of gender construction since by not calling into question —essentially— the practice of veiling, the traveller can be said to adjust to the reading of the identities associated to masculinity and femininity in Iran.

Representations that enhance the advantageous aspect of veiling for women travellers secure their construction as cosmopolitan subjects, and simultaneously enable the projection of difference onto Others. As I will show next, there are occasions in

which Briongos' stories award Islamic dress something like 'superpowers' —as if being *khoob hejabi* (properly observing the obligation of wearing *hejab*) granted the Spanish traveller privileges other women in her position would not enjoy. We shall see this sort of extraordinary representation as aiming to underscore the vision that the traveller is sincerely committed with the Others' way of life. *La Cueva de Alí Babá* registers one such occasion with significant implications:

For instance, *I*, in the cave, *don't get rid of my overcoat and scarf*; I'd never think of taking them off, even if the cave doors were closed and the authorities could not enter; because if I did, *the spell would be broken* and I'd be treated as a *nosy anthropologist* who passes judgement on the 'natives', and no longer as a *distinguished guest* (Briongos, 2002, p. 161).

The scripting of the traveller's cosmopolitan subjectivity —'distinguished guest'— against its opposite —'nosy anthropologist' is pivotal in this passage. As I see it, within the 'distinguished guest'/'nosy anthropologist' binary, processes of identification/differentiation very much like in the 'traveller'/'tourist' binary are at play. 'Distinguished guest' and 'nosy anthropologist' are two opposing subject positions that the Self might inhabit; what determines whether the traveller enacts one position or the other is how the subject relates to 'Islamic dress'. The passage strongly suggests that being a 'distinguished guest' entails the observance of the local Islamic dress code: she 'in the cave, don't (*sic*) get rid of my (*sic*) overcoat and scarf' because if she did, she would no longer be treated as a 'distinguished guest'. Now, why is distinction such a precious asset?

Grasping the real significance of the traveller's avowed longing for distinction entails familiarity with the social and cultural conventions of Iran. As noted before, *La Cueva de Alí Babá* —Briongos' second Iranian travelogue— pursued to register Briongos' experience of travel during one month-long sojourn in Isfahan: Iran's second largest city and former capital of the country under the Safavids. A good deal of the story concentrates on the descriptions of the traveller's visits to the city's great bazaar (and to the Ali Baba's cave, the carpet shop) where she spends long hours over the weeks. In this scenario, the interaction between the 'female' traveller and 'male' carpet sellers is particularly intense.

Iranian bazaars are predominantly male spaces. A universe of tradition vertebrating Iran's economic life, the bazaar is also a male-dominated institution. The

story could have featured it as a potentially difficult scenario for the female traveller who intends to spend long hours in the bazaar and not just be a casual shopper. How the story actually gives account of the traveller's involvement in the activity of the cave runs counter this expectation —indeed, the narrative foregrounds the traveller's determination to establish a strong connection with the place and the group of *bazaaris* she fraternises with day after day. Yet, this does not make less certain the idea that, under 'normal' circumstances, a woman would not be allowed either to partake in the activity of the carpet shop or enter this space of male intimacy. Interestingly, the story accomplishes to avoid the problematisation of the situation in spite of the gender trouble. This, I believe, is possible because the story negotiates the traveller's female identity and because, as I would like to argue, in *La Cueva de Alí Babá* the female visitor performs the 'honorary man'.

Being neither Iranian nor Muslim, she is not heavily constrained by the constructions of masculinity and femininity that apply to male and female Iranians. But also, the question of age (she is a middle-aged woman) and marital status (married) are crucial in making possible the traveller's camaraderie with the Ali Baba's team. The traveller's awareness on this circumstance is overtly admitted:

My age has been an advantage this time. I am older than any of the men who work at the shop except for the ancient Hajji Baba and, therefore, it is as if I was their mother. Thanks to this, over time, I have been able to establish a close relationship without causing embarrassing situations or uncomfortable suspicions (Briongos, 2002, p. 39).

Similar concerns are voiced in this short dialogue with the owner of a stationary, in whose shop she often stops by:

'What does my husband opine?' 'I am staying in the house of an Iranian family'. When I explain this to him, he seems to find the situation appropriate.

- 'So your husband knows them'.

'Yes, he does' —I answer, and I can see how he takes on another aspect.

He feels even more relaxed when I confess that I am over fifty and do no longer have many family obligations. We bid each other farewell with a light bow of the body, the right hand on the chest and *khoda hafez*. Everything makes more sense to him now. I am no longer *haram* —forbidden. I have happily entered the world of *halal* —of things permitted by Islamic law (Briongos, 2002, p. 81).

By these means, the narration registers the traveller's relief with the tacit understanding that she is not available for emotional or sexual intercourse with any men. Disclosing

this awareness functions to silence (a conventional reading of) the traveller's femininity as well as to facilitate the performance of a gender identity that is, of course, not masculine but neither —so to say—wholly feminine. As it seems, the narrative ultimate purpose is to play down the disadvantages of being a woman traveller in Iran in order to, first, not be regarded with mistrust by men and, secondly, to get access to places and social situations that, was it not because her gender identity is strategically reworked, would not be accessible for her.

The narrative placing of the traveller in the position of the 'honorary man' can thus be regarded as a strategy for maintaining her status of 'distinguished guest'. But the key issue is that, ultimately, this is not a mechanism to defy the prevalent male/female order in Iran, but rather a strategy in the service of revising her foreignness in the face of Others. In this way, the traveller's ultimate goal is not to cease to be regarded as a woman, but to be accepted as a legitimate observer of what goes on 'over there'; a non-intruder (not a 'nosy anthropologist'). Attempts to mitigate her foreignness shall then ease her acceptance among male Others.

The remark that the 'spell would be broken' if she got rid of her scarf and overcoat needs to be interpreted under this light. The traveller's unveiling would cast doubts on the extent to which she respects Others' difference and on the very assumption of her *distinction* ('distinguished guest'). Since the story wants to avoid allegations that the traveller 'passes judgement on the "natives"', as long as the visitor keeps her *hejab* in place, the visitor's cosmopolitan commitment with Others and with the quest for authenticity is also well-kept and unaltered. The veil then serves to cover up the traveller's head, but also the overall colonial impulse that subtends the writer's standpoint, whereby she lives up to the expectation of living through difference, perhaps domesticating it, and offering it to a non-Muslim readership with heads uncovered. But let us not delude ourselves, because the real safeguard for Briongos in the male-dominated world of the bazaar in Isfahan is not her determination to respect Islamic dress; but rather, the inescapable moment of being read as a European middle-aged married lady —perhaps not a 'nosy anthropologist' but certainly an outsider.

6.5.4 Mapping Iran's complex cartography.

When inspecting narrations of travels, it is important to become aware of *where* travel narratives locate travellers and foreigners (Lisle, 2006, p. 137) and, generally, the kind of places that get featured in the stories. As anticipated, the discourse of modern cartography plays an important part in enabling the production of difference. It does by establishing two divisions. In the first place, the basic spatial division between 'home' and 'elsewhere' ('away'). Insofar as the act of travelling engenders the forging of a symbolic connection between two geographically distant points, the 'home'/'elsewhere' metaphor becomes pivotal for the structuring of journeys and their narratives. The second mechanism works out through the mapping of 'safe'/'dangerous', 'civilised'/'barbaric', 'developed'/'underdeveloped' places. The modern cartography discourse secures the identification of 'homes' as 'safe', 'civilised' and 'developed' places and 'elsewheres' as 'dangerous', 'barbaric' and 'underdeveloped'. This explains why contemporary travel writing predominantly generates stories of Western travellers who leave their safe homes in the developed First world and set off for unknown destinations in the distant, exotic and dangerous areas of the Third World.

Interestingly though, my argument is that Briongos' stories do not generally feature Iran as a dangerous place. It is no less true nonetheless that the 'home' and 'away' in Briongos' stories are not equally safe. Given this, my suggestion is that we concentrate on how these narratives fuel the production of difference by constructing 'home' as a familiar, ordinary, civilised and modern place; and 'elsewhere' as unfamiliar, exotic, less civilised and less modern. My premise is that while the traveller is a mobile subject across the safe-danger (ordinary-exotic, civilised-barbaric) continuum, 'home' never ceases to be the geographical and emotional standpoint from which travellers envision the foreign destination (Lisle, 2006, p. 137). For the duration of their journeys/narratives, travellers never leave 'home', as 'home' is the subjective grid from which they make sense of the outside world.

In what follows, I look at how the discourse of modern cartography informs Ana María Briongos' travelogues. First, I deal with how narratives produce Iran as a 'foreign' destination. Next, I will contend that the 'East'/'West' spatial division is deeply embedded in Briongos' narratives. It follows from this that her travelogues can

be read as stories of a Western traveller in the Orient. Furthermore, I pursue to show that, rather than stable constructions of the Others' geography, Briongos' stories unpack resistances to the dominant discourse of modern cartography. My discussion of the place awarded to Tehran in the writer's imaginative geography of Iran illustrates that spatial difference can also be contradictory and paradoxical.

6.5.4.1 *Iran is a distant country.*

It might sound truistic, and still, it is important to realise that Ana María Briongos' books narrate a 'foreign' and 'distant' country. By locating Iran 'over there' in the distant outside world, these narratives enable the enhanced sense of alterity that travel writing needs in order to secure the mobile subjectivity of the traveller in the age of globalisation. In these accounts, the Spanish visitor is the subject who brings 'home' to Iran and who, in so doing, is responsible for the construction of 'elsewhere' as different from her place of origin.

An example will help us see how this works out in practice. The situation is one where the traveller bumps into a Spanish male traveller in the streets of Tehran. It happened some years before the revolution, at a time when popular unrest over the Shah's policies started to be felt and the whereabouts of the University of Tehran were a hotspot of student and popular protests. An unexpected spectator of the budding revolutionary process (even though back then, the awareness of a revolution was not formed, and the Shah's overthrow could not be glimpsed), Briongos bears witness to the violent repression of protestors at the hands of the Shah's police. In the midst of this tense situation, the visitor spots a Western young man among the masses:

The blond young man happened to be a sailor and a globetrotter from Asturias. We spoke the same language, and after so long away from home *it felt good to get lost with somebody who reacted similarly to Tehran's stimuli*. [...] We didn't know each other; we didn't know what we were doing in such distant country (Briongos, 2000, p. 19).

The story's suggestion that the random encounter led to some form of more intense emotional involvement between Briongos and the man is not extremely relevant. The interesting point instead is that the depiction of this encounter helps reinforce the 'home'/'away' spatial division. The statement '[i]t felt good to get lost with somebody

who reacted similarly to Tehran's stimuli' reveals that the narrator's subjectivity is anchored at 'home'. 'Home' is the standpoint from which she deploys her gaze, registers and appropriates the experience of the foreign destination. The accidental running into a subject of her 'species' —someone who has similar reactions to Tehran's stimuli— is featured as a relevant event that unleashes the differentiation between the two Spanish travellers and the Others. Speaking the 'same language' that the 'young blond man' helps to signposting a gulf from Iranians.

6.5.4.2 *Disappointed by the Orient.*

The implications of locating travellers in the Orient are great. In the 19th century, the Orient represented Europe's mirror image —an empty scenario waiting to be filled up with the desires, the illusions and the expectations, but also with the fears and the anxieties of the white European Christian men. As such, the Orient was nowhere to be found other than in the imaginative geography of Europeans and Westerners. Interestingly, journeys in the Orient became twined with the paradox of having travellers face the unexpected revelation that the Orient recreated in literary works and paintings was nowhere to be found 'in reality'. Researchers of Orientalism have shown that when Europeans/Westerners thought they had arrived in the Orient, the Orient vanished, and feelings of deception emerged. The following passage from *Negro sobre Negro* suggests that, now as in the past, the disjuncture between the expectation and the experience of the Orient informs narratives of journeys 'over there':

We are now in the real, stark and sober Iran —a reality that distances itself greatly from the tales in *One Thousand and One Nights*. Persia does not exceed in the exhibition of colours. Women and men are dressed mostly in black, and the villages are the colour of the desert except in their domes and minarets, which not all of them deploy. Neither golden *babouches*, nor astounding *turbans*, neither *beads* nor colourful *fabrics* embroidered with gold thread are at sight. Only the nomadic women in the bazaars of Isfahan and Shiraz wear colourful clothes. One could think that those walls conceal harems wrapped up in a profusion of veils and luxurious fabrics. *Surprisingly, beyond those walls normal families live* (Briongos, 2000, p. 98).

Longing for an 'elsewhere' that does not exist discloses the contradictory and weak foundations of the Western travellers' enterprise in the Orient. In Briongos' stories, a major contradiction arises from the impossibility of matching the 'real' Iran with the 'expected'. The reference to the *One Thousand and One Nights* shows that mythical

visions nourish the traveller's imagination of the faraway lands, but the text discards very soon the common places that inhabit the Western imagination of the Orient: neither 'babouches', nor 'turbans', 'beads' and 'veils', nor explosions of colour and gold, or a myriad sensual women concealed in harems, are on display. In its stead, the narrative registers the traveller's astonishment when she realises that Iran —and much so Iran seen through the Shi'ite imagery— reveals itself 'sober' and 'stark'. The available landscape is rather tainted with dark and dull colours and with the dusty imprints of the desert, except for a few touches of colour in the garbs of nomadic (and Zoroastrian) women, and the turquoise that adorns the domes and the minarets of the mosques in the Persianate world.

The observation of the traveller's dashed expectations suggests that the actual enactment of the journey in the Orient is peppered with moments of fleeting disenchantment —descriptions that lay bare problematisations of the binary geographies that order the modern imagination of the world (principally, as regards the Orient). Yet, I shall contend that these moments of resistance are not powerful enough to enforce a radical revision of the subject positions made available by the definition of the journey in Iran as a journey *in the Orient*. Its prevalence explicates why travel writers wrestle to construct the Other through Oriental attributes —even if the Other resists such identification. Since the Orient requires constant construction and nourishment, the contribution of authors in writing over the Oriental Other proves pivotal.

Two strategies are used to reassure the prevalence of the 'West'/'Orient' spatial division. The first strategy consists in locating the traveller and Others in symbolic scenarios of Europe's imaginative geography of the Orient. The second strategy consists in accentuating that the Orient operates profound transmutations within travellers who embark on journeys 'over there'. 'The Orient' facilitates the traveller's inner voyage towards a state of communion with the world.

La Cueva de Alí Babá provides timely occasions to review the currency of Europe's imaginative geography of the Orient. As seen, the book narrates Briongos' sojourn in Isfahan for several weeks during the summer of 2001. For most of the time, the traveller lived in Isfahan hosted by a local family. The cave —the carpet shop located in the city's great bazaar— was the epicentre of her daily routine. Over there, she was hosted by a group of *bazaaris* (the 'Ali Baba's team'), with whom she sits and

chats, drinks tea and observes the surrounding hustle and bustle. The following passage captures what ‘the cave’ represents for her:

The cave is for me an open window on today’s Iran, the Iran of the reformist President Khatami. From this place, I observe and listen, try to understand family traditions, women’s interests, and the illusions and disappointments of the young people (Briongos, 2002, p. 39).

The representation of the cave as the place where the traveller comes at close quarters with present-day Iran is significant. It is the place where, through ‘observation’, ‘listening’ and ‘understanding’, the visitor can work on her social cartography of Iranians. A cave plentiful of carpets is stowed in the European mindset as the spatial embodiment of the real Orient. A cave is thus not *any* place. Persian carpets are a world-wide symbol of Iran’s millennial weaving tradition; carpet shops are iconic symbols of Iran’s cultural geography; and the bazaar conveys one of the most powerful images of the Orient. The centrality of ‘the cave’ in the story works as a reflection of Europe’s imaginative geography of the Orient, which is made of easily recognisable milestones: bazaars, carpet shops, baths, gardens, tea houses, etc. And thus, by awarding so much dramatic attention to this place, the narrative secures the construction of the travel as a journey in the Orient.

On how the journey in Iran transforms the Western visitor, it can should be stressed that, much like in the 19th century, in the second half of the 20th century, travelling ‘over there’ continues to be apprehended as a ‘form of release’ (Said, 1978/2003). In the process of fabrication, the Orient is represented as a place where travellers establish a strong connection with the elements of nature (mountains, trees, rivers, the sky and the wind, the rain, the sun, the snow) and with their senses. In Briongos’ stories, the traveller is represented as a hyper-sensitive subject whose five senses register sensations that impinge on the kind of rapport she establishes with the distinct scenarios of the journey. In turn, this identification eases the construction of the journey as a ‘sensory journey’:

Only a few steps in the bazaar and *the sensory journey* begins: the odour of fur as a I pass by the shoe sellers’ corner, the smell of honey when I pass by the pastry shop, the scent of elderberry and incense, and lost paradises; *a heady mix of exotic smells embraces me* when, already under the covered passage, I come close to the spices shop next to the cave (Briongos, 2002, p. 26).

‘Fur’, ‘honey’, ‘pastries’, ‘the scent of elderberry and incense’, ‘exotic smells’, ‘spices’... Looking at this display of elements, one can see how through scents and odours, the story makes available a sensory cartography of the Oriental bazaar, thus reaffirming the presentation of Iran as an ‘exotic’ destination. This is not too different from what Litvak (1985) had observed in relation to Muslim exoticism: ‘the perception of a colour, or a sound, the softness of a cloth, a smell —all of these awaken a haul of sensations and correspondences’ (p. 74). Remarkably, also Briongos’ stories put it that myriad smells and sensations alter inner state of the traveller and suggest, furthermore, that Oriental exoticism unleashes the possibility of losing one’s own mind is powerful. Otherwise, what could we make of the assertion that ‘a heady mix of exotic smells embraces me’?

Not only iconic places such as the bazaar give substance to the imagined Orient of these stories, but also human subjects and objects that attract the visitor’s attention. On an occasion she describes the physical appearance of her friend’s husband, an Iranian man, about whom she writes:

As I look at him I am thinking that he looks like a *Persian miniature like the ones which decorate ancient manuscripts* and I imagine him wearing a turban and a damask frock coat (Briongos, 2000, p. 15).

Said’s (1978/2003) insights into the Europeans’ ‘textual attitude’ on the Orient spring to mind as the story makes available the traveller’s textual fantasies: that an ordinary man (an Iranian though) resembles ‘a Persian miniature’ like the ones she has seen on ‘ancient manuscripts’ and, thus, it is perfectly legitimate to wonder how he dared come out without his ‘turban’ and ‘damask frock coat’.

The daydream attitude of our visitor is also observable in relation to objects. In her survey of the themes of Muslim exoticism, Litvak (1985) suggestively noted that the pervasive featuring of Oriental objects in Spanish Orientalist paintings or literary works performed a fantastic service in underscoring the Orient’s distance and its mystery, as well as the idea that such objects own some impenetrable quality, impossible to grasp by the European mindset (p. 63). Persian carpets incarnate the Oriental object *par excellence*:

As I wait sat on a pile of carpets with Hajji Baba sleeping in his couch and Reza arranging tea glasses by the samovar, I think again of *how difficult it must be for the*

pragmatic mentality of Westerners, used to disposable objects, to appreciate the real and immense value of carpets: the most valuable belonging of nomads; a beloved and permanent ground without which shepherds would be unable to move around and without which the tea ceremony would be senseless (Briongos, 2002, pp. 37-38).

As on previous occasions, in this passage, the sacralisation of carpets —‘the most valuable belonging for nomads’— allows the story to underscore the differences between the traveller and (although not explicitly said) the average Western tourist, on the one hand; and the traveller and Others, on the other. But it is important to note that while the narrative features ‘Them’ (the nomads who weave the carpets and the bazaaris who trade them) as different from ‘Us’, they are conferred upon a distinct moral quality that resonates powerfully with the myth of the ‘noble savage’.

My final argument is that there exists a strong connection between the awareness/exhibition of difference as has been examined thus far, and the presentation of the journey in Iran as an opportunity of taking a break from oneself and from home. Leaving one’s turf offers the possibility of making space and bringing to the light the aspects of the traveller’s identity which cannot possibly be disclosed when one is at home (in ‘the West’). Arguably, at home, Westerners are rationalistic and task-oriented persons; haste, family and professional obligations leave no time for the pleasures of life. When in the Orient, pressures are lifted up; one suddenly has time to look around and take notice of one’s inner state and the elements that nature or the Global South city puts on display:

I leave the house *overjoyed*. As I walk the sordid streets of Tehran early in the morning, before the scorching sun glues the scarf to my head, *life seems wonderful to me*. The fresh air of the mountains caresses my skin. Heading South, I walk the ex Pahlavi, ex Mossadeq and now Vali-e-Asr street and the trees seem greener and taller. Above them, the blue sky is brighter than in the Central Asian steppes, which is my favourite sky (Briongos, 2000, p. 104).

By bringing into focus the emotional state of the traveller (‘I leave the house overjoyed’, ‘life seems wonderful to me’) the narrative secures the construction of a hyper-sensitive traveller. A salient element in the above passage is that the inconveniences of life in Iran —in the vast and polluted Tehran! — (‘The sordid streets of Tehran’, ‘before the sun glues the scarf to my head’) are belittled. My point is that this is consonant with the expectation that a cosmopolitan traveller will seldom feel annoyed by the obstacles she encounters in the course of a journey for she (by analogy

with the ‘male hero’) is ready to deal with any unexpected annoyance. This would explain why Briongos’ description avoids concentrating on inconveniences and rather foregrounds how the elements of nature (‘the fresh air of the mountains’, ‘the trees seen greener and taller’, ‘the blue sky is brighter’) nourish her positive emotional state. Yet, since Tehran is not the kind of global city where life plays out smoothly (neither for visitors nor for locals), I am tempted to think that this romantic representation of the Iranian capital is inserted not only in the cosmopolitan logic of difference celebration, but also in the logic that underscores, by all means and in all circumstances, the rewarding aspect of journeying in faraway lands.

6.5.4.3 *Tehran and Iran’s ‘polarised identities’.*

Travel narratives resonate as well with the dominant vision that Tehran is a ‘paradox city’ (Bayat, 2011), the place where Iran’s contradictory identities merge and become more blatantly obvious for the foreign observer. As Bayat (2011) aptly puts:

Three decades into the Islamic revolution, Tehran remains a troubled and troubling city, wounded and yet defiant. It still retains the structure and architectural palimpsest of the Shah’s time, but this is overlaid with a veneer of post-revolutionary ideology, some significant redevelopment, and the footprints of globalization. More dramatically, it has been transformed from below by population growth, and informal development. Most of these processes are not peculiar to Tehran, of course; they are a feature of many other mega-cities of the global south (p. 120).

In accord with Bayat’s (2011) argumentation, Tehran resists easy classification as either ‘royal’ or ‘republican’, ‘local’ or ‘global’, ‘developed’ or ‘underdeveloped’, ‘modern’ or ‘traditional’, ‘secular’ or ‘religious’, etc.; and shall be rather approached as a space mired in paradox and contradiction —a place where Iran’s ‘polarised identities’ are brought together. More generally, the symbol of present-day Iran for global audiences, Tehran is inextricably linked to images of the revolution with protestors flocking towards Azadi Square and Khomeini supporters chanting *Marg-e bar Amerka!* (‘Death to America!’) outside the ill-fated U.S. embassy, but also to visions of a particularly young vibrant population whose concerns and complaints resemble those of the young generations in the West, as the post-2009 election events attest to.

Anyone familiar with Iran’s capital is aware of the social and economic gap between the city’s north and south. Although it was a process already under way, after

1979, the arrival of thousands of rural migrants and refugees (escaping from the Iran-Iraq war and from across the border with Afghanistan) accelerated the growth of this urban centre appointed capital of Persia at the end of the 18th century. Stricken by rapid development, the city's current spatial layout gives account of the strong social polarisation that characterises Iranian society; one of its most salient features being the localisation of 'Westernised' and accommodated social groups in Tehran's northern neighbourhoods, whereas the city's southern areas are inhabited by the poor and the lower strata of working people (Bayat, 2011).

The importance of Tehran's urban texture in the imaginative geography articulated by Briongos' stories is difficult to deny. Her narratives echo the dominant vision that the Iranian capital is a megalopolis split up into two halves (North and South), each of which represents the extremes in the continuum of Iran's social identities: 'modern' *versus* 'traditional'. This becomes particularly obvious when, in the course of her narrations, the travel writer addresses, albeit in passing, Tehranis' different engagements with the revolution and with Iran's revolutionary order. Tehran is thus a powerful discourse referent through which travel stories interpret present-day Iran and the life of Iranians.

The richest insights into the life and history of the Iranian capital are offered in the first of Briongos' travel tales —*Negro sobre Negro*— where many of the events narrated take place precisely in Tehran. Let me recall that this book deals with the author's journey in Iran in 1994, but that in the narration of the journey the memory of previous visits to the country throughout the 1970s are blatantly present and brought into the writing. This timeframe, the fresh memory of the revolution, and the fact that the book contains Briongos' first description of a journey in Iran would explicate why so much narrative attention concentrates on Tehran. *Negro sobre Negro* introduces readers to a city that has been the scenario of clashes between antithetical forces culminating in the outbreak of the revolution. The story is imbued in a dominant narrative of the revolution which construes that Iran before 1979 was living on an extremely fragile balance —the major reason being the masses' extreme alienation from the Pahlavi regime—; seized upon by religious fanatics to impose a theocratic order to counter Modernity and the West.

In the traveller's imagination of Tehran the political disjuncture is reflected on the spatial disjuncture between *bala-ye shahr* ("the upper city") and *paeen-e shahr* ("the lower city") (Bayat, 2011). In Briongos' stories 'the upper city' is usually referred to as 'the North' and 'the lower city' as 'the South'. Both referents are highly metaphorical. Now as in the past, the North stands as the symbol of political and economic power; the area in which the Pahlavis and Iran's most influential families used to live. This status continues as of today; the only difference being that the political and economic elites are now the Islamic Republic's. The South, by contrast, represents the spirit of resistance against the Iranian monarchy and Western imperialism. It tends to be imagined as the place where the Islamic revolution brewed.

This binary geography becomes palpable in statements such as 'the North was a dreams factory and the South a factory of hatred' (Briongos, 2000, p. 29), constructed upon the assumption of an extreme polarised polity. The description of 'the North' as 'a dreams factory' and 'the South' as 'a factory of hatred' is exceptionally significant. As for the North, because it is consonant with the argument that over time the Pahlavi regime had lost touch with reality and turned a blind eye on the sorrows of a major part of the Iranian society instead concentrating on cherishing the dream of the modern, secular and pro-Western Iran. In the South, by contrast, only resentment against power abuse and the overall unjust order of things had flared up. Curiously however, the story construes that the opportunity to create a 'new' Iran:

was thwarted when *the poor majority, encouraged by the darkest clerics, left their impoverished and dirty neighbourhoods in the south of Tehran* and came up to the north of the city. Armies of miserable people occupied the university, the big avenues and the parks—in short: the city of the rich (Briongos, 2000, p. 146).

The identification of the South as 'poor' and the North as 'rich' is not the most contentious matter here, but the view that 'the poor majority' from the South emboldened 'by the darkest clerics' took over the North ('the city of the rich') lays bare the story's standpoint on how things played out in the days of the revolution. The story's stance on the revolution's outcome and the social forces that participated in the process are worthy of comment. My point is that presenting the opportunity to construct a 'new Iran' in terms of frustration is consonant with the normative framework of liberal subjectivity, one of whose tenets is the spread of liberal democracy. The 1978-1979

cycle of protest did certainly push forward a ‘new Iran’, yet not one that lived up to the expectation of Western democracies.

The second remarkable issue is that unless we understand the representation of the struggle between the ancient regime and the revolutionaries in extremely metaphorical terms, what can be said is that it offers an all too simplified picture of the late 1970s protests against the Shah. Representing this historical juncture as a simple clash between the ‘North’ and the ‘South’, the ‘rich’ and the ‘poor’, simplifies a rather more complex cartography of popular unrest, in which not only ‘the poor majority’ but also Islamic and secular intellectuals, leftists, and the middle classes partook (Farhi, 1988). Pinpointing ‘the darkest clerics’ as the ideological and material instigators of the North’s invasion by dwellers from the South is momentous especially because, thereby, the story presents an uneven distribution of ethical identities between the ‘rich’ and ‘civilised northerners’ (they had the symbol of secular intellectual production —the University of Tehran—, the parks and the big avenues), and the dirty, impoverished and miserable southerners —to be blamed because of their material scarcity and, presumably, their assured ignorance and fanaticism.

The interesting issue now is to explore how the traveller copes with Tehran’s convoluted cartography as she is on the field. The following passage records memories of the city’s social atmosphere back in the mid-1970s. The description of the social dynamics in the South is particularly illuminating:

The south of Tehran, where the revolution was brewing at the heart of mosques and traditional sport houses⁴⁴, where the mullahs were in charge, where the month of Ramadan was strictly observed, where nobody drank alcohol or ate pork, *where we relished the moment of getting lost day after day* (Briongos, 2000, p. 19).

Further:

For the people of the North, the South didn’t exist. Yet the South did exist. *I had seen it with my own eyes and it looked like a bomb about to go off* (Briongos, 2000, p. 30).

⁴⁴ Iranian sport houses known as ‘*zurkhaneh*’ (literally, ‘house of strength’) are sites for practicing a form of gymnastics with deep roots in pre-Islamic Iranian culture. Since the Islamisation of Iran, the practice has acquired religious and spiritual significance (taking elements from Shi’ism and Sufism). The houses are also known for being centres of vivid political discussion.

The current descriptions are notorious for how they disseminate the vision that, in Tehran, the condensation of popular disenchantment in the southern areas of the city triggered the rebellion of the less privileged Iranians; and that, in parallel, the North remained somehow alien to the happenings in ‘the lower city’, ultimately becoming the target of popular anger. Notably, as the revolution was cooking up in the South, the North remained ignorant to the sufferings of the *mostazafan*, so much so that even if the South was ‘a bomb about to go off’, nobody seemed to take notice. Thus the story constructs the North and South as radical Others at this historical juncture. This process of differentiation is further enabled because the South is pictured as a space of religious strictness. By bringing up familiar Western tropes of the Muslim religious practice (fasting, the prohibition of eating pork or drinking alcohol) into the description, the story secures the identification of the South as the spatial embodiment of religious strictness. Thereby, it fastens up the ontological connection between ‘Islam’ and the ‘revolution’ helping to crystallise the narrative of Iran’s ‘Islamic’ revolution and, therefore, occluding the revolution’s original pluralism.

It should be noted, finally, that being on the field —being a direct witness of Iran’s historical moments— adds immense zest to the traveller’s journey. We gather this from the confession that ‘getting lost day after day’ in the breeding ground of the revolution is an experience to be relished, and not to be feared or avoided. This, I believe, is in tune with the ideal of the cosmopolitan contemporary traveller who sets out for faraway lands, precisely, because she pursues to come at close quarters with the Other’s difference. In the wake of the revolution, the streets of Tehran’s southern quarters —with their mullahs swarming around, and mosques and *zurkhanehā* as loci of revolutionary/religious indoctrination— offer the alterity expected to be found ‘over there’; hence the description of these fleeting glimpses as precious moments of authenticity. Once more, the narrative focus on the traveller’s gaze —‘I had seen it with my own eyes’—, secures that the narrator is the *sovereign I/eye* of the story. And this, consequently, strengthens the traveller’s credentials, the authoritativeness of her voice and the truth claims which underwrite travel tales.

Tehran is a minor but still significant referent in Briongos’ second book. At some point in *La Cueva de Alí Babá*, the writer recounts her impressions about a flying visit from Isfahan to Tehran at the invitation of a friend who has organised a soiree at

her villa in the city's North. Like many visitors from the West, Briongos' acquaintances in Iran are middle-upper class persons who live in apartments or villas in the city's North. Many times, Western travellers are hosted by the friends living in these areas and get to know the city's life and history through them. This is how the Spanish guest reacts to the extremely 'ordinary' development of the soiree:

Imbued in this bubble of sophistication, *nobody would've said we were in the Islamic Republic of Iran*. Nobody actually bothered to lament on the situation. People simply enjoyed the conversation, their drinks and food, as if the outside world didn't exist; as if after this evening a new gloomy day would not ensue tomorrow (Briongos, 2002, pp. 175-176).

Through the metaphor 'bubble of sophistication' the narrative reinforces the socio-spatial division previously discussed here. But this, I believe, is underpinned by the suggestion that, what happens in the North of Tehran is a deviation from a dominant order of a completely different nature. The creation of an inside and outside the North of Tehran has important repercussions for the socio-spatial identification of the city's dwellers: for the northern residents in that the story renders them 'classy' subjects with a likely feeble connection with the reality outside their familiar world; for the southerners in that, by implication, they are pinpointed as the bearers of real alterity.

The statement '[N]obody would have said we were in the Islamic Republic' lays bare the glaring disjuncture between the aprioristic judgement of Iranians nurtured before the actual enactment of the journey and how 'they' are in reality. A touch of disappointment can be sensed in the acknowledgement that this gathering among friends does not match pre-existing ideas about life *in an Islamic Republic*, implicitly revealing the traveller's expectation that this class of people —presumably refined, modern and cultured— would act differently. The story constructs the lack of sorrow for living under a system that imposes restrictions on many areas of life (on freedom of expression, political association, dress, etc.) as a significant missing point. And, by contrast, it registers the traveller's amazement at how the gathering among friends unfolds: guests converse relaxedly, and seem to enjoy their food and drinks. We shall read this as an implicit lament that a soiree in a villa in northern Tehran does not differ much from cognate social situations in the West. By implicitly admitting that on this issue the difference between 'us' and 'them' cannot really be noticed, the narrative's resistance at

accepting that Others can be similar to ‘us’, or live shallowly under the Islamic Republic, becomes visible.

In short, my point is that the discourse of modern cartography shows difficulties in accommodating subjects (places, peoples and dramas) that do not conform to the Other of our imagination. With its polarised composition, Tehran urges the writer to revise her expectations and admit that the Other’s complex and contradictory identity might not just be an exception to the norm, but rather the norm.

6.5.5 A journey in time: from darkness to light.

The discourse of nostalgia offers a fruitful framework for the interpretation of how this genre of texts engages with the temporal identification of travellers and Others. My analysis will reveal that Briongos’ travel writing locates the construction of identities within the common ‘advanced’/ ‘backward’, ‘modern’/ ‘traditional’ framework, but also that Iran’s temporal identity is compoundly constructed across the two terms in these binaries —thus, neither fully ‘traditional’ or ‘backward’, nor fully ‘modern’ or ‘advanced’.

In parallel, I will argue that, rather than a happy Arcadia, Briongos’ stories depict a country laden with contradictions (hence the oft identification of Iran as a ‘schizophrenic country’ which also other texts underscore⁴⁵). The discourse of contradiction favours readings of Iran’s recent history in terms of a struggle between the ‘regime’ (which tends to be identified with the traditional religious forces) and the ‘people’ (roughly, the progressive secular forces). While the latter tend to be identified as pro-Western or pro-European, the former are believed to abhor ‘the West’ and its Modernity. Such identifications result in the prevalence of the ‘regime’/ ‘people’ framework throughout these texts.

A major consequence of such state of affairs is that, rather than ‘texts of nostalgia’ indulging in the romanticisation of Others’ backwardness, Briongos’ travel narratives shall instead be read as utopian texts that project the resolution of

⁴⁵ In Jordi Pérez Colomé’s travel book *Iran: Portray of a schizophrenic country* and in the interviews I conducted for this project.

contradictions towards the future. This view is consonant with the assumption that Iran stands at a considerable temporal distance from 'Us'. Already at the start of the 19th century, Adolfo Rivadeneyra wrote in his travelogue that the Persian civilisation had not yet reached maturity. Here, this idea is not formulated with as much clarity as in *Viaje al interior de Persia*, but certain textual cues indicate its enduring prevalence in the traveller's mind. As will be seen, with the experience of Spain's transition to democracy informing the writer's vantage point, the stories put forward a construction of Iran as an arrested Other which still owns the potency for transformation.

A premise in this investigation is that the 1979 events hold the status of a 'key event'. As we are now discussing the incidence of temporal visions on representations of Iran, it is important to realise that construals of the country's post-1979 identity are determined by how the pre-1979 period (Iran under the Pahlavis) tends to be imagined. Despite non-democratic and ruthless, for casual observers the Pahlavi monarchy owned a façade of 'progress' enhanced by Iran's geopolitical alliances with the West. By contrast, in the definition of Iran's identity under the regime of the Ayatollahs, the 'modern' identity marker vanishes almost completely from public discourse. More precisely, Iran is seen as having a contentious relation with Modernity as a result of which some people in the Islamic Republic have a modern mentality and lead modern lives, while others definitely do not.

Mainly, Briongos' stories portray a country that was on the path of progress until the outbreak of the revolution curbed its economic and social development. This line of reasoning permits the Shah's era to be seen as a time when stirrings of modernity, progress, and pro-Western attitudes could be glimpsed. Since 1979, a period commences when the revolutionary elites enforce a reversal in the political and social agenda of the country aiming to counter the negative effects of the modernisation/Westernisation processes set in motion by Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. This said, it is crucial to realise that while the vision that prevails over Briongos' travel stories is that pre-1979 Iran was 'modern' and became more and more 'traditional' after 1979, it would be too far-fetched to see hers as militant texts praising the virtues of any of the two periods.

From an economic perspective, the Shah's years are featured as a more prosperous time for Iran, while it is admitted that the distribution of the country's

wealth was uneven. The economic policies of the Shah brought benefits to a minority of the population helping disseminate the false image that Iranians enjoyed high standards of living and led Westernised lives. This vision co-exists with the awareness that for large sectors of the population, living conditions were unbearable. And thus, in seeking to explain Iranians' growing estrangement from the monarchy, at some point in her first travelogue, Briongos blames the Shah's excessive regard for reaping the benefits from the selling of oil (and his obsession with Iran's economic development) in lieu of attending people's demands of 'democracy' and the specificity of Iran's distinct 'cultural identity' (Briongos, 2000, p. 58).

The incidence of this general framework in Briongos' stories can be sensed on several occasions. In her first travelogue, *Negro sobre Negro*, the discourse that things were different (Iran was more modern) under the Shah emerges in the narration of the traveller's arrival at a hotel in Kashan.

The writer's descriptions make clear that the establishment (the Amir Kabir hotel), which used to be 'a sort of Hilton' back in the day, is in a pitiful state —'[T]he hotel's decadence is evident —stains of damp, chips on the wall and odd jobs all over the place'. This, added to the observation that toilet paper was not available either in the rooms or for purchase leads the writer to concede that '[D]uring the Shah's years, great efforts went into showing that the country was on a par with the most advanced world nations, but *now they are back in the Third World*' (Briongos, 2000, pp. 80-81).

Calling Iran a 'Third World country' is not frequent throughout the stories, as it adds a touch of disdain not fully compatible with the political correction prevailing over the attitude of the cosmopolitan traveller⁴⁶. But while the explicit positioning of Iran in the Third World is not frequent in these stories, it is no less true that the Third World allegation functions —in quite an effective manner— to secure Iran's 'backwardness', thus casting doubts as to her actual development and modernity. The description of the decadence on display at the Amir Kabir hotel is significant because it is based on a double process of differentiation which allows the narrative to mark off the subject position of the traveller from the Other's —because obviously the availability of toilet

⁴⁶ The other occasion registered comes in *Negro sobre Negro* when, after landing at the Imam Khomeini international airport in 1994, Briongos reemarks "I have found the airport more third-worldish than I remembered" (Briongos, 2000, p. 18).

paper in Western hotels assures our moral superiority over them—, but also to lay bare that Iran is the battleground of clashing temporalities: ‘the Shah’s years’ *versus* the Republic.

Such processes of temporal differentiation do not operate in isolation. If we consider, for instance, the assertion that ‘[S]oon I realised that, on the surface, Iran showed signs of Western modernity, but very close to the surface the deep Iran remained fiercely united’ (Briongos, 2000, p. 32), it becomes soon apparent that a strong association exists between the spatial notion —‘the West’— and the temporal notion —‘modernity’. Thereby, it can be inferred that below the surface ‘the deep Iran’ is less and less ‘Western’ and less and less ‘modern’ —thus, presumably, more ‘Oriental’ and ‘backward’. The following fragment from *La Cueva de Alí Babá* attests to how temporal and spatial identifications merge in the narrative:

Iran handles with difficulty the mixture between its ancient civilisation and the imported Islamic culture [...] there you have their rivalry with the Arabs [...] There you have their constant look to the West, despite the rupture during the first years of the revolution, and the difficult relation with their increasingly faint Orientalness. Iran, an effervescent country, with a vibrant social debate fuelled by renowned intellectuals; men and women with different outlooks, who search for *solutions that allow them to move forward without being subservient to the dictates of the West*. Iran is a country where clerics imposed a strict ideology through a unique revolution and managed, often in collusion with the support of the population, to keep it alive during twenty-three years. Iran is a land where millions of young people, very different from those who did the revolution, struggle to *leave behind the era of obscurantism...* by their means (Briongos, 2002, p. 199).

The strategy of locating the traveller and Others in different temporalities without actually conjuring up any clear temporal metaphor is salient here. In this way, rather than by temporal means, Iran’s ‘backwardness’ is reassured through the juxtaposition of spatial (‘West’/ ‘Orient’) and ethical (‘light’/ ‘darkness’)⁴⁷ identity markers.

First, it is easily recognisable that teleological readings of historical time subtend assertions like ‘intellectuals [...] search for solutions that allow them to *move forward* without being subservient to the dictates of the West’ and ‘millions of young people [...] struggle to *leave behind the era of obscurantism*’. The assumption that history unfolds following a linear pattern from past to future underpins the stories and, in so

⁴⁷ In the Judeo-Christian tradition, ‘light’ and ‘darkness’ are notions attached to respective notions of good and evil. The same consideration applies to Zoroastrianism —Iran’s pre-Islamic religion; hence my point that when discursive practices construct identities through the metaphors of ‘light’ and ‘darkness’, the author’s ethical vantage point prevails over representation.

doing, places Iran in the position of the ‘backward’ subject; unlike ‘Us’ who are in the lead of ‘sophistication’ and ‘progress’. In close connection with this, we owe the definition of Iran’s current historical time (the post-1979 era) as an ‘era of obscurantism’ to the revolution and the gradual establishment of an Islamic order in the country. And what is more important, by using the phrase ‘era of obscurantism’ the writer facilitates the location of representation within a ‘light’/ ‘darkness’ framework that conveys ethical notions of ‘good’ and ‘evil’.

Thereby, the narrative eases the negative association of Iran’s temporality with ‘darkness’. The conceptualisation which subtends the notion of ‘light’ then remains to be seen. It is easy to see that by inhabiting the position of ‘light’ allows the writer to locate the traveller in a historical time that is ahead of Others. This stage is at the peak of historical evolution and is governed by the discourse of liberalism in which faith in liberal democracy, market economy and secularism order the place of Self and Others. Since the liberal ethics is a luminous lighthouse and the beacon of humanity, political orders resting on alternative ideological arrangements —e.g. revolutionary or socialist *regimes*— can be nothing but Other political projects unable to deliver to the demands of complex multicultural societies.

This becomes evident when it is asserted that ‘clerics’ have enforced ‘a strict ideology through a unique revolution’. By these means, the story scripts Iran’s identity in the position of the subject that challenges the post-Cold War liberal order. It is no less true, however, that by admitting that Iran’s religious leadership acts ‘often in collusion with the support of the population’, the author lends recognition to the existence of a popular basis which endorses the *nezam* (system). But in all events the strongest inference is that it is the clerics whom, due to their ‘strict ideology’ and ‘unique revolution’, shall be held responsible for the ‘era of obscurantism’, which Iran has been plunged into since 1979. This formulation, ultimately, makes evident that the ‘regime’ embodies the Other more fully than the ‘people’.

In parallel to this, Briongos ascertains that Iranian intellectuals have long been discussing over the ‘solutions that allow them to *move forward*’. The implicit assumption is that while Iranians lag behind ‘Us’, they can still accomplish transformation by ‘moving forward’ towards the future where the ideal of Western sophistication lies. In this setting, Iranian clerics are installed in obscurity but

intellectuals represent a ray of light shining feebly in the darkness. The visibility of intellectuals and their critical work serves to offer a complex construal of Iran's body politic that allows the problematisation of the Other's identity. On this basis, we can contend that by putting forward the existence of these two groups ('clerics' and 'intellectuals'), the narrative concedes that progress will be attained in Iran when the forces of light —sharing the world vision of Western modernisers— outplay the forces of darkness —the representatives of 'the deep Iran'.

On close examination, it becomes evident that the narrative which pictures Iran as a potential 'forward-mover' strikes a sensitive chord. The issue concerns whether the 'movement forward' that a part of Iranian society claims (intellectuals and the generations for whom the revolution is a relic of the past) can be enacted 'without being subservient to the dictates of the West'. Awareness of the West's contentious role in Iran's political history percolates the narrative's representation. Whereas at first the writer foregrounds Iran's 'constant look to the West' without really framing it as a problem (by contrast, it frames the relationship between Iranians and Arabs in terms of rivalry), when the ghost of subservience is evoked, the writer lays bare her awareness that Iran's recent history is shaped in large measure by domestic conflict owing to its strained relations with the West (Tavakoli-Targhi, 2001). For this reason, it becomes necessary to examine how these narratives order the asymmetrical temporalisation of the Self and Other within the 'West'/'Orient' spatial framework.

In a nutshell, the underlying problem is whether 'moving forward' —i.e. modernising— is an act of Western confirmation; or, whether there is an indigenous way of becoming modern. What we see in these travel narratives is that the West is not unhinged from the normative horizon of modernisation. Rather, these tales reassure the West in the position of forerunner and moral guide for others who struggle to become modern.

But at the same time, it is important to note that, despite all, Briongos' narratives enable a complex representation of the Other society. Far from offering a monolithic description of Iran's society, the narrative hints to the existence of a complex political body in which the desires of intellectuals and the younger generations are in cahoots with the actions of the clerical elite. In her writing, a striking contrast is established between the intellectuals who have different outlooks and hold vibrant social debates,

and millions of young people who struggle to get out of darkness; and the clerical elite which spearheaded a ‘unique revolution’ and now exerts its dominion through the imposition of their ‘strict vision’ of society, politics and religion.

This results in the strong suggestion of ‘divorce’ between the political-religious elites of Iran and the people. Insofar as the ‘regime’ (‘clerical elite’) is seen as an obstacle for progress and the ‘people’ (‘intellectuals and the younger generations’) as those who push forward for change, the identification of the first as the embodiment of a failed political experiment, and the second as the subjects who carry on the seed for a brighter future will remain untouched. This is tantamount to saying that the narrative anchors the ‘regime’ in the past tense of primitive (traditional) politics, whilst it locates the ‘people’ on the launch pad that looks into a possibly democratic future.

Two important implications derive from the latent division ‘regime’/ ‘people’. First, the identification of the ‘people’ as a potentially progressive force eases the approximation between the positions of the traveller and the Iranian people. This partial identification ushers in the second implication: when the narrative naturalises the ‘divorce’ within the political body of the Iranian nation, it becomes relatively easy for ‘us’ to construct Others as in need of a helping hand that can assist their transformation. And when this idea takes hold in our minds and hearts, we will be ready to sell them the magic formula for transformation: transition to democracy.

The theme of ‘transition’ is directly engaged in the passage below. The temporalisation of identities through the familiar trope of transitioning—which in this context is a synonym for ‘moving forward’—reassures the situatedness of the writer’s vantage point:

I would love to be a carpet seller at the bazaar of Isfahan, and *a witness of Iran’s transition to democracy*. After all, *Iran today reminds me of Spain at the end of the dictatorship* [...] Back then in Spain we hoped that the death of the dictator would unclench transformations, but in Iran if the Supreme Leader dies, the Council of the Revolution will appoint a new one (Briongos, 2002, p. 200).

When Briongos visited Iran in the spring of 2001, the country was in the run-up to the presidential election in the summer that year. Hopes were high that the then president of the Republic, Mohammad Khatami, would be appointed for a second mandate. After his 1997 landslide victory and despite the difficulties faced throughout his first term, for

many he still stood as a symbol of Iran's reform. A few times in *La Cueva de Alí Babá* the visitor bears witness to people's buoyant expectation that the reformist cleric would get re-elected. My point is that, in large measure, it is this context of situation that enables the writer to call upon a transition framework and to avow that she would like to be 'a witness of Iran's transition to democracy'. Had Khatami not been grasped by Western observers as a pro-reform president/candidate, the possibility of fantasizing Iran's transition to democracy would have been less likely.

There are, however, other issues worth looking at in this passage. One is that, as on previous occasions, the whim of becoming 'a witness of Iran's transition to democracy' engenders the adventurous act of reclaiming for oneself a privileged place from which to observe 'Their' historical progress. The appointment of such place works as a demonstration of the sovereign power of the *I/eye* whose legitimacy is grounded on the historical experience of Spain's transition to democracy which the author, born in the mid-1940s, experienced in the first person. It is, on these grounds, that the 'right' to desire/deserve to witness Iran's historical progress becomes natural.

Yet, notably, as the writer makes her best wishes for Iran's transitioning, she reveals herself pessimistic about the effective materialisation of Iran's transition to democracy. This is extremely significant because it reveals that, at the end of the day, the prevailing belief is that 'They' are trapped in a cursed destiny that cannot be changed for, as it seems, Westerners can make history and change history, but the Orientals' life shall be immobile, 'necrotised by an ancient and strange liturgy' (Litvak, 1985, p. 145). The narrative takes for granted that Iranians ('the people') are powerless because the Council of the Revolution will appoint a new Supreme Leader upon the death of the current one (Ali Khamenei). Also 19th-century discourse of the Orient had it that '[D]ay after day, they live a life that escapes them, as if it was already lived and couldn't be altered by the force of their will' (Litvak, 1985, p. 145).

In short, Ana María Briongos' stories do not fall within the category of narratives that engage in romantic elaborations of the Other through the performance of a nostalgia discourse. An uncritical discourse overlooking Iran's tortuous 20th-century history is definitely not available in her stories. Neither images of pre-1979 Iran, nor visions of post-1979 Iran allow the imagination of a Happy Arcadia where Western visitors go find shelter from the negative dynamics of globalisation. This possibility

being suppressed, it is far easier to see how Briongos' travel tales lean towards the future glimpsing at the possibility of a more just order for Iran and, by extension, for Iran-West relations. The discursive process for reaching out to that point entails, first, the recognition of the different temporal identities attached to pre- and post-1979 Iran. And second, the presentation of a complex cartography of the nation's body politic where 'modern', 'progressive' and 'secular' forces co-exist with the defenders of Iran's Islamic (*qua* backward, reactive...) order. Framing the struggle between 'modern' and 'traditional' forces as a combat between 'light' and 'darkness' helps make the argument that Iran's utopia awaits the moment that the forces of 'light' will have defeated the forces of 'darkness'. What remains unexplained is how victory can be accomplished if Iranians (the people) are after all seen as a mass deprived of enough power in the face of the powerful and wicked forces that run the 'system'.

6.6 Final remarks

In the Preface to the third edition of *Negro sobre Negro*, Ana María Briongos (2000) disserted about why she chose such phrase as a title for her first book of travel in Iran. She defended her choice by arguing that black is the colour of women's chadors, black is the colour of Iran's underground richness —oil— and of the much appreciated Iranian caviar. She also confessed that she was aware that many Iranians felt the title awakens the imagination of a sinister country, but defended its descriptive potency on the grounds that her early vision of Iran was trapped in the chromatic hegemony of black. Briongos' final thought on this was that the rest of Iran's colours are discovered over time and that, had she lived in Isfahan instead of Tehran, blue rather than black would have impregnated her gaze (pp. 11-12). Alas, the non-intended effects of speech acts are not predictable once uttered. At all events, it is not too difficult to figure out why the prominence of 'black' in the title of Briongos' first book establishes a particular orientation (to read the Islamic Republic as a dark place?), in the same way that the title of her second book —*Ali Baba's Cave*— locates the reader in the Orient.

Persia became an object of literary interest in the 15th century when the expedition commanded by Ruy González de Clavijo travelled across Europe and into the heart of Asia on a military-diplomatic mission. The narrative of this journey was presented under the title of *Embajada a Tamerlán* —the text which, furthermore, stands

as the first book of travel in the Spanish tradition of travel writing. Diplomatic motivations too underlay the writing of the second important text in the tradition of books of travel in Persia—in *Comentarios*, Don García de Silva y Figueroa gave full account of his journey in Safavid Persia and the futile attempts to forge a strategic alliance with Shah Abbas I against the Ottoman Empire. It was the 17th century and the Hispanic kingdom struggled to preserve its imperial leverage on the world. Adolfo Rivadeneyra's determination to become Spain's diplomatic envoy to Persia was rewarded with his appointment as Deputy Consul General (1873). Unlike his predecessors', Rivadeneyra's diplomatic mission was not urged by pressing geopolitical issues. The exploration of trade opportunities was somehow an excuse for this 19th-century diplomat and intellectual in pursuance of more elevated purposes: to widen the knowledge of Persia and the Persians. *Viaje al interior de Persia* was his literary legacy.

To be sure, the chapter did not set out to study the representation of Persia in modern texts of travel literature. Yet, two ideas come to mind that could be elaborated further in future investigations. One idea concerns the distinction between male and female authorship and, as suggestively noted by Lisle (1999), the changes—affecting the subjectivity of authors—brought about by the emergence of female authors in the tradition of travel literature. The Spanish case does not seem, at first glance, any different from the dominant pattern elsewhere, as we have three male writers (three 'founding fathers') of tales of travel throughout Persia during modern times (Clavijo, De Silva y Figueroa and Rivadeneyra) *versus* the emergence of a multitude of female writers in more recent years (Briongos, Rodicio, Pitarch, Almarcegui...). Another idea is more directly related to the thesis' discussion and concerns the understanding of travel writing as a popular geopolitics genre. The definition of travel writing as a popular genre might be an adequate assumption today, yet difficult to sustain when one realises that the authors of travel books in the 15th, 17th and 19th centuries were men (diplomats, soldiers, soldier-diplomats...) providing services to the Prince. This suggests that there is an epistemic-politics of genre whose historicity needs to be carefully handled, suggesting geneally that a genre cannot be ahistorically catalogued as a practical or a popular geopolitics type of text.

Another important point of departure in this chapter has been that contemporary travel writing sets out to cope with the anxiety produced by the imagination of a world

whose ontological certainties seem to be gobbled up by unstoppable processes of globalisation (Lisle, 2006). At times when the ‘monster of globalisation’ seems to be exerting an homogenising power, the little corners of the world which fight for their distinction become little precious jewels which one (the authentic traveller) would like to conquer silently, without drawing attention to oneself, in the privacy of one’s solitude, away from tourists. The chapter has inspected myriad moments in Briongos’ tales which confirm that Iran is envisioned as an off-the-beaten-track place and, therefore, an object of desire for authentic travellers. But one should note that, as things stand, Iran is that place—an off-the-way travel destination—precisely because of the Islamic Republic. Despite this not being a novel assertion, the revolutionary fact is a central condition of possibility of the Iranian subject in travel stories and, yet, the elaboration of Iran’s subjectivity cannot be reduced to this.

Literary discourse constructs an Iranian subject that is as much ‘revolutionary’ as it is ‘Oriental’; and this is relevant because the Orientalist discourse which, admittedly, colonises the representation of Iran in the stories plays a strategic role. My point is that, traversing the discourses proposed by Lisle (2006) for the study of contemporary travel writing, the Orientalist discourse helps the elaboration of stories that move the focus away from the revolutionary Iran (even if the revolutionary Iran is essential for the representation). This might be because, as long as Iran’s Orientalness can be experienced, the revolutionary Iran will be handled with greater ease. In turn, this option might have been chosen because, in a historical-discursive context (the post-revolutionary era, broadly speaking) where other sites of representation (the media and policy circles, in particular) are saturated by negative visions of the Islamic Republic, the Oriental Other in literary works is enabling of gentle, positive and sugary portrayals of the foreign Iran, somehow compensating the disquietude produced by the Islamic Republic. At all events, however, either as Oriental or revolutionary, travel stories never cease to make sure that the Iranian subject is sufficiently different from ‘Us’.

7. Humour and popular geopolitics. Media comedy, political cartoons and the laughable Other

7.1 Geopolitics and humour: introducing the field

For more than a decade, political geographers —international studies scholars more broadly— have looked at how popular culture dialogues with, joins the discussion of and in fact co-produces the international/global. Attention has been paid to different popular culture forms such as the literature (as the previous chapter attests to), film, media, art, and also humour (Dittmer, 2005, 2010; Dittmer & Dodds, 2008; Power & Crampton, 2005; Purcell et al., 2010; Sharp, 1996, 2000). The rising interest in the bond between popular culture and the narration of world politics suggests that the analysis of ‘culture’ —and specifically ‘humour’— is on a sure path towards losing its ‘non-important’ reputation for political debates; and ultimately towards its inclusion as a ‘proper’ site of identity/difference production. This chapter joins in the effort at showing that the study of popular culture products can make a definite contribution to the understanding that the ‘world is a text’, read and written through multiple and imaginative forms, some of which are transcendental beyond cynical laugh.

Political cartoon in particular has gripped the attention of many scholars working in the international studies field (Diamond, 2010; Dodds, 2007b; Hansen, 2011; Ridanpää, 2012, 2014b). In recent years, this scholarship has shown that ‘[H]umor is not set diametrically in opposition to seriousness’ but instead ‘can have serious implications and repercussions’ (Lockyer & Pickering, 2008, p. 809). The so-called ‘Mohammad cartoons crisis’ is a case in point. In September 2005, the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* printed a dozen political cartoons offering defamatory representations of Muslims and (possibly) of the Prophet Mohammad. The cartoons stirred a formal complaint to the Danish government by a group of ambassadors from Muslim-majority countries on mission in Denmark. The ambassadors resented the newspaper’s offensive treatment of Muslims and the promotion of negative stereotyping. One of the pictures, the so-called ‘bomb-cartoon’, showed an angry bearded man wearing a turban hosting a bomb. Many were led into thinking that the cartoon represented the Prophet Mohammad; yet, as Hansen’s (2011) insightful analysis of visual securitisation has shown, this argument cannot be unambiguously held, in the same way that, on close inspection, it is unclear whether the cartoons were aimed to

represent all Muslims or only a part of them —the more threatening ‘radical Muslims’ (p. 64).

In any event, the crux of the matter is that Muslim publics constituted the cartoons’ event as a grave offense and that the Danish government’s attitude did not help appease the anger: Rasmussen’s initial response was to invoke freedom of speech and refusal to meet the diplomats (Gad, 2010). The crisis then took on an international dimension with leaders and lay citizens in Muslim countries claiming for the offense to be repaired. Rallies were organised against Danish missions in several Western and Muslim countries and a boycott against Danish products was initiated in Saudi Arabia. Some two hundred people were reported to have perished in the rallies, and the crisis’ ramifications continued in later months and in different places (see Ridanpää, 2009 and 2012 for specific repercussions in Finland). It is often agreed that the Mohammad cartoons crisis became the most critical moment in Denmark’s international relations since the Second World War, which helps put forward the argument that humour is indeed a serious thing. Critical analysts of humour and geopolitics would agree that humour is indeed a serious thing because it is a social activity which performs boundary-drawing practices through naming ‘Selves’ and ‘Others’, and also ‘heres’ and ‘theres’.

The relevance of humour as a social (also spatial and discursive) practice that participates in the production of identity/difference seems to be out of question for authors such as Ridanpää who, in an illuminating review article (2014a), lists the four predominant approaches to the study of humour in geography. Ridanpää (2014a) first notes the prevalence of a ‘power-based approach’ which points out that humour is a social institution that projects asymmetries stemming from cultural, political or economic difference. In accord with this approach, humour reproduces certain distributions of social privilege. The second approach identified by Ridanpää (2014a) has to do with the ‘psychological benefits’ (p. 701) humour can bring about —a line of reasoning that becomes apparent in arguments such that stand-up comedy provides ‘a healthy release of tension, discomfort and anger (Koziski, 1984, p. 72). This so-called ‘psychological approach’ would argue that humour opens up an arena for the naming/revision of social taboos and sensitive matters in a given community. The third dominant perspective (the ‘sociological approach’) relates humour to the constitution of

societal difference around ‘in-group’ and ‘out-group’ identities. The fourth approach is visible in studies that use ‘incongruity theories’ to explain the functioning of humour. According to incongruity theories, comicality and laughter originate in the disjuncture between the ‘concepts’ to which audiences/readerships are exposed and the social expectations attached to those concepts. Ridanpää (2014a) also adverts to the importance of the semantic constitution of humour practices as a theme that threads its way through all approaches (pp. 701-702).

The chapter sets out to investigate the representation of Iran by humour discourse in a stand-up comedy sketch and in various political cartoons. The focus is on the constitution of the Iranian subject by satirical stories and the Self/Other engagement they foster. To fulfill these purposes, the chapter examines texts that parody (almost only) the Iranian ex President Mahmoud Ahamdinejad (2005-2013). Unlike in the Mohammad cartoons crisis, comical representations of Ahmadinejad in various Spanish media have not triggered a crisis, least so an international one. The absence of major repercussions nonetheless does not detract humour’s potency for intervening in the public debate on Iran’s meaning.

As previously argued, humour is a site of representation different from diplomacy and travel writing. In this way, the social and generic conventions that need to be taken into account for the interpretation of comic representations are also different. Three important arguments need to be mentioned in this regard. One is that humour texts build on an ‘informal’ modality of authority. This is related to the definition of comic genres as ‘performative’ and not ‘documentary’. Lene Hansen (2011), who has suggestively addressed this distinction in her study on visual securitisations is worth quoting at length:

The epistemic-political constitution of the visual concerns, first, the kind of claim the visual makes about its relationship to ‘the real’. Documentary genres such as press photography gain their epistemological —and political— authority from their claim to depict something that is actually happening, in the ‘real world’, to ‘real people’ (Campbell, 2003b). What we might call performative genres, like cartooning, gain their authority not from documenting an external reality, but through the productive force of the visual articulation itself: it does not transmit a situation, but acts on and into it, possibly with irony or satire. The difference in the relationship to the real implies in turn that each genre ‘plays’ on rather different ‘truth terrains’ (p. 60).

In short, while the primary purpose of documentary genres is to ‘tell the truth’ about a specific problem or crisis —thus offer a ‘serious’ account of such problem or crisis—, performative genres provide ‘critical narrations’ (Hansen, 2011, p. 60) of world politics dramas. Within the scope of this investigation, the distinction between performative and documentary genres permits to think critically about the epistemic-political claims humour stories make on Iran.

The second important argument concerning the constitution of comic genres is that they elaborate stories which are nourished by ‘mediated’ forms of knowledge. In particular as regards this thesis, it is assumed that humourists do not (necessarily) rely on the direct experience/observation of the Other, in contrast with diplomats and travel writers, of whom it can be said that are engaged in social practices essentially related to ground-level experiences of the ‘foreign’ places and people, and hence to ‘experiential’ forms of knowledge.

The third argument concerns the difference between ‘uni-‘ and ‘multimodal’ texts referred to earlier in this dissertation (Introduction and Chapter Four), and the important observation that humour texts are read, for the purposes of this analysis, as multimodal pieces. In what follows, Section 7.2 reflects upon the analytical significance of multimodality and the methodological challenge implicit in the recognition of the multi-semiotic nature of media comedy and political cartoon. Section 7.2 also offers an introductory note on the media platforms which host the humour texts that form the empirical basis of this chapter.

7.2 Multimodality, genre and media platforms

7.2.1 The modes of multimodality.

Multimodal texts differ from single-mode texts in that they convey meaning through the combination of different semiotic modes. ‘Mode’ comprises spoken or written language, image, music and sound, body language, kinesics, camerawork (O’Halloran, 2011, p. 127) or any other mode that contributes to the overall construction of meaning in a text. For analysts working in the tradition of Systemic Functional Linguistics (Baldry & Thibault, 2006; Kress & Leeuwen, 1996, 2001), Multimodal Discourse

Analysis (MDA) offers instructions as to how to inspect a text ‘in all its semiotic complexity and richness’ (Iedema, 2003, pp. 39-40).

Not all multimodal texts are equally complex. In this chapter two text types are considered: stand-up comedy and political cartoon⁴⁸; and, altogether, eight textual pieces: one TV comedy sketch and seven political cartoons. From a multimodal perspective, these text types are substantially different. Political cartoons are image-based texts accompanied by stretches of written text (often, a caption or a dialogue or though balloon)⁴⁹; whereas a TV sketch can be seen as a short film in which various semiotic modes come into play: i) spoken language, ii) kinesics (gaze, body posture, gesture), iii) camerawork, iv) music and areal affects, and v) the settings where the action takes place. All pieces except for one of the cartoons picturing a ‘Muslim’ cleric, tell stories about Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and about events/themes in which the Iranian ex president played an important role.

The analysis of the TV sketch (duration: 5:06’) showing a parody of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is the chapter’s backbone. It is supported by an annotated transcription (See Annex Four): an instrument devised by the discourse analyst to render the semiotic modes of the multimodal text accessible and exploitable (O’Halloran & Smith, 2013). Annotated transcriptions display a complete record of information concerning the text under scrutiny. However, one should note that, when dealing with complex audiovisual texts, annotated transcriptions might be forced to leave out from the record elements present in the source text. If the significance of these modes or modal aspects is deemed secondary for a given investigation, their non-inclusion will not engender a great loss. This speaks of the ‘difficulties of representing on the printed page the mass and complexity in detail involved in multimodal analysis’ (O’Halloran & Smith, 2013, p. 3), to which one should add the ‘loss’ of meaning derived from the translation of a text from an original source to a foreign language—in our case, this concerns the translation of the comedian’s speech from Spanish to English.

⁴⁸ Within this category, the thesis includes political cartoons (in a strict sense) and photomontages. It is assumed that both types of visual art produce meaning similarly, through the combination of two semiotic modes: images (drawings or pictures) and written text.

⁴⁹ Note that the term ‘text’ is used here to mean two different things: i) finished units of meaning (such a political cartoon, a comedy sketch, an interview...), and ii) the written or spoken projection of language in use (that is, a semiotic mode). In the first sense, ‘text’ is a countable noun; whereas in the second sense, it is not.

Annex Four in this dissertation contains the full annotated transcription with information regarding: i) spoken language, ii) descriptions concerning the comedian’s kinesics, iii) cinematography effects (visual frames), iv) music and sound effects, and v) the locations in which the action takes place (settings).

The transcription is divided into seven different columns. In Column 2, it highlights the film’s most salient frames, thus giving prominence to the sketch’s visual mode. Each visual frame is assigned a time-code in Column 1. Column 3 indicates the setting in which the action takes place. As will be seen, the places in which the story develops are of paramount importance for the overall construction of meaning in the sketch. Column 4 shows the transcription of the comedian’s speech. Now in the form of written text, the analysis of the comedian’s (sort of) monologue is a pivotal aspect in the analysis. Column 5 offers relevant information as refers to the comedian’s kinetic features (gaze, body posture and gesture), and Column 6 registers music and sound effects. In Column 7, the Annex provides the meta-functional interpretations I propose for each recognisable unit of meaning. The meta-functions of a text refer to the interactions between the text and semantic levels non-coded in the text. Pondering over a text’s meta-functions requires that attention be paid to the interaction between the semiotic modes available in the text and extra-textual meanings. This renders the political, historical, cultural and social embedding of stories a crucial aspect of meaning interpretation.

Table 7.1. Multimodal analysis of the sketch (Joaquín Reyes *feat.* ‘Mahud Jamadineyad’)

	Semiotic resources
Column 1	Time-codes
Column 2	Visual frames
Column 3	Settings
Column 4	Speech
Column 5	Kinetic features
Column 6	Music/sound effects

Column 7	Meta-functional interpretations
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In sum, the transcription aims to capture as many levels of meaning as possible, but falls short, for instance, to register prosodic elements (pitch, pace, intonation) in the comedian’s speech practice. This is significant in relation to this specific TV sketch (although it should be stressed that a rich analysis can be done anyways). One can entertain a more precise idea of why this is so in the next section.

7.2.2 Texts in production contexts: media platforms.

*7.2.2.1 Muchachada Nui*⁵⁰.

Muchachada Nui was a popular show broadcast for several years in Spanish state television (2007-2010). The show, known for its absurdist and surrealist humour, was a sequel of another show, *La Hora Chanante*⁵¹, screened on the Paramount Comedy channel (2002-2006). One of the most popular sections in the show was ‘Celebrities’, where the director and leading comedian, Joaquín Reyes, performed parodies of well-known figures (‘celebrities’) such as actors, singers and politicians⁵². Interestingly for the purposes of this dissertation, one of the parodied persons was the Iranian president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad⁵³.

Two issues stand out in Reyes’ general parody work. One is the overall introduction of cultural references (often very local ones) in his performances. This is perhaps not too surprising considering that humour is a culturally-embedded institution, but strikingly eye-catching when the target of humour is an international leader. And so it happens that Reyes’ caricaturist representation of the Iranian leader is brimming with absurdist gags, of which one can say that are targeted primarily to an intended audience:

⁵⁰ Translating the show’s name is not easy. *Muchachada* is a non-standard word referring to a group of young friends —most likely men. *Nui* stands for the French word ‘nuit’ (Eng. night). A possible translation is then: ‘Cronies’ night’.

⁵¹ Wikipedia suggests that the name *La Hora Chanante* be translated as ‘The Whamming Hour’ or ‘The Amazing Hour’.

⁵² Singers such as Madonna, Lady Gaga, Bono or Manu Chao; actors such as Macaulay Culkin, Steve MacQueen or John Travolta; film directors such as Lars von Trier, Pedro Almodóvar or Quentin Tarantino; and political leaders such as Kofi Annan, Kim Jong-II, Condolezza Rice or Vladimir Putin.

⁵³ RTVE [rtve.es] (2007, November 28) ‘Muchachada Nui 11, Celebrities, *Ahmadinejad*’ [Video file] Retrieved from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YuKU_eHado4

a local/national audience which is expected to have the capacity to decode the cultural meanings with which the comedian's practices resonate. This leads us to the general observation that, since humour practices touch upon the tacit knowledge, the belief systems and the emotional world of local audiences, attempts at reading off comedy as a potentially universal enterprise are probably futile.

The second issue is that Reyes and fellow comedians speak with a particular accent and use very peculiar idiomatic expressions. These distinct linguistic features are not ancillary elements, but rather important comic assests in the broader context of the show. In the show, each stand-up comedy piece (each 'celebrity' piece) is conceived of as an 'imitation' of a célèbre public figure where the imitation does not intend to be totally loyal. On the contrary, through various means, spectators are reminded that the character on the screen is a 'pretender'. One way in which this is acomplished is by never attempting to *speak like* the celebrities; by foregrounding instead the stark regional accent that seasons the comedian's speech and by using a wide range of idioms. This constrasts with the fact that the comedian does indeed try to mimick the aesthetic and physical features of the characters he mocks. He does so by using fine make-up and outfits inspired in the celebrities' appearance and style. Overall, however, the audience can notice the comedian's attempt at *looking like* —say— Ahmadinejad, Madonna or John Travolta, and thus stay conscious that they are being spectators of a playful identity game.

About the accent and idioms used by comedians in this show, it is important to note that they have got a particular social significance. Notably, they are associated with the language variety spoken in Albacete (one of the five provinces in La Mancha region). This variety stands out for the use of a very thick Manchego accent, which in turn conveys rustic and unsophisticated manners. Arguably, the humour shows (*Muchachada Nui* and *La Hora Chanante* before it) have served as a platform for the popularisation of this diatopic language variety, little known thus far on a national scale. And I argue that the shows have also promoted the resignification of *albaceteño*, conferring upon it new meanings and uses. Today, many features of the *chanante* jargon, such as local words and idiomatic expressions, intonation and accent, permeate the speech practices of many young people in Spain (especially in the South-Eastern

regions of the country), ultimately fostering the perception that adopting the *chanante* jargon is cool and jokey and a symbol of intra-generational recognition⁵⁴.

7.2.2.2 *El Jueves*⁵⁵.

El Jueves ('the magazine that comes out on Wednesdays') is a weekly satirical magazine edited in Barcelona since 27 May 1977 —the longest-standing of its genre in Spain. Throughout some 70-80 pages per issue, contributors to *El Jueves* —most of whom are reknown cartoonists, journalists and visual artists— offer satirical insights into the most outstanding affairs of the week. Social and cultural matters, domestic and international politics, almost any subject can become the target of *El Jueves*' irreverent humour stories.

The magazine is organised into several sections, including the traditional comic strips. The visual material selected for this analysis belongs to two of *El Jueves*' sections. One is the 'Teníamos más portadas'⁵⁶ section. This section features the array of covers produced for a given issue, but not finally considered to be the issue's official cover. Despite this, these covers are worth looking at because they usually engage with politically relevant stories or people. Glancing through these covers, one can get a sense of the cartoonists' wry visions on affairs, controversies and scandals occurred throughout the week. The second section is a 'short news' section of no specific name. It encompasses one photomontage and a short text. Together, the visual and textual work articulate satirical stories that can be read as (re)interpretations of 'real' media stories ran throughout the week in general mass media.

7.3 Mahmoud Ahmadinejad: Political context and narrative foundations

The temptation to say that the year 2009 was a watershed in the public image of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is strong. In June that year, Ahmadinejad was re-elected president of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Many at home and abroad suspected the vote had been rigged. This caused an important movement of popular contestation, upon

⁵⁴ I want to thank my colleague and friend María Reyes for her unexpected role as a linguistic anthropologist and cultural mediator, as well as for her valuable insights into Albacete's world visions.

⁵⁵ Trans.: 'Thursday'.

⁵⁶ Trans.: 'We had more covers'.

which Western media seized to run stories about Iranians' long-time longing for democracy and 'freedom deficit' (Ramazani, 2008). The stream of protest coalesced around what came to be known as the 'Green Movement' (Dabashi, 2010) —the platform that brought together supporters of the reformist candidates (Mir Hossein Mousavi and Mehdi Karroubi) who lost the election. Wearing green clothes, ribbons or pictures of Mousavi and Karroubi, protestors took to the streets in many cities of the country. The protests were suffocated harshly by the state's police and the *basiji* militia. Hundreds of people were injured, incarcerated or shot dead. The video of Neda Agha Soltan lying on the street in Tehran and her agony after having caught in fire went viral. She became the iconic embodiment of Iran's 2009 protests (Mortensen, 2011). To date, the leaders of the Green Movement have remained under house arrest. For global audiences, the symbol of Iran's repression was the after all electoral victor: Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

This might illustrate why the temptation to set the 2009 events as a landmark for orienting the current survey was strong. However, the current analysis' major focus — the TV sketch parodying Mahmoud Ahmadinejad— is a 2007 production. Obviously then, the possibility that the 2009 events influence the production of Ahmadinejad's parody needs to be discarded. Indeed, it is not possible to elucidate whether such events (having an overall negative effect on Westerners' perceptions of Iranian politics and its 'regime') would have been appropriated at all by the comedian and for which purposes. It is also not possible to know whether the construction of meaning in the sketch would have followed a different road, had it been produced in the aftermath of 2009. Would have it presented a more estranged vision of Ahmadinejad? What we know, by contrast, is that the 2009 are present in various forms in the political cartoons featured in the chapter. Except for one of the pieces, the rest of the cartoons are post-2009 elections' productions.

All of this would suggest that the Iranian president had begun to stimulate the imagination of Western observers a few years before the beginning of his second contested tenure. Ahmadinejad's first electoral victory dates back to 2005. Analysts pinpoint the exceptionality of this election, because it was the first time since 1979 that two rounds of voting were needed to appoint a president for the republic (Zaccara, 2009, p. 43). Significantly as well, Ahmadinejad won over the heavyweight politician and ex

president, Ali Akbar Rafsanjani (1989-1997). This civil engineer of humble origins had served as Mayor of Tehran since 2003, but global audiences did not become acquainted with him any time before the 2005 presidential election. He came to power after eight years of reformist governments led by the 'moderate' cleric, Mohammad Khatami. Khatami's popularity (especially amongst women, the youth and Western leaders) had been massive, especially during his first tenure, but reformism failed to deliver on domestic promises (concerning unemployment and inflation); neither was it able to change substantially the course of Iran-West relations. With Khatami still in the presidency, Bush delivered the famous 'axis of evil' speech (State of the Union Address, 2002), curtailing the possibilities of a rapprochement between the U.S. and Iran. For the regime's hardliners, Bush's words evinced that the 'Great Satan' was still alive (Beeman, 2005). Experts widely believed that, in addition to domestic matters, this international context facilitated Ahmadinejad's election (Takeyh, 2009; Zaccara, 2009).

Ahmadinejad's public image started to deteriorate quite soon, thus becoming an easy target for global media and governments in the West. Slowly but surely he earned a reputation as Iran's 'firebrand' president (Majd, 2010). This was closely related to how he was perceived to be managing a few important matters: i) the nuclear crisis, ii) Iran's involvement in Middle East conflict, iii) Iran's alliances with Global South states, and iv) democracy and human rights. Generally as well, Ahmadinejad provoked the West's alienation because of his overall inflammable rhetoric and peculiar political style.

With this backdrop in mind, the chapter argues that comic stories reproduce the 'rogue states' (-axis of evil) narrative. Despite never being explicitly revived (instances of manifest intertextuality are not found), the 'rogue states' story provides a semantic framework upon which comic stories draw to render Ahmadinejad (the Iranian subject) legible. Chapter Five elaborated that the narrative of rogue states had a long history going back to the Cold War days and to the strategic thinking of U.S. elites, trying to discern how to deal with non-aligned or badly-aligned states (Homolar, 2011). It was then noted that in the 1970s the label 'rogue state' was used to designate the domestic behaviour of 'repressive regimes', and that it was redefined over the 1980s and 1990s to describe the international behaviour of 'nuclear threats' and 'sponsors of terrorism'. In the end, both meanings merged and being a rogue state became equivalent

to being a state that pursued the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction, a sponsor of terrorism and a human rights violator (Homolar, 2011). My analysis shows that these elements are key to the constitution of the Iranian subject in humour stories. In addition to this, Ahmadinejad's vilification is accomplished by developing a cartographic discourse that places him 'There' in a world that is not 'Ours'.

7.3.1 Ahmadinejad in the cartography of danger.

Reyes' parodical sketch of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad conveys important information as to where 'We' imagine the Other. The performance of Ahmadinejad's parody takes place in three different settings: one indoor location that can be identified as a 'nuclear facility' and two outdoor locations in its surroundings: next to a 'wall' and in a 'rocky landscape'. As can be seen on the film (more noticeable there than on the transcription), the action moves from the inside to the outside locations at short intervals. As a result, the film's rhythm is notably lively. Everything happens in little more than five minutes.

By locating the action in these settings, the sketch narrows down the possible ways in which Ahmadinejad can be thought of spatially; it does so by establishing the (few) possible scenarios where the Iranian leader is allowed to be imagined. Together, these scenarios convey a 'cartography of danger' that locates the Other in a (potentially) 'threatening' world and secures the Self's position within a 'safe' geography. The discourse of humour, therefore, renders Ahmadinejad a subject that inhabits a world of subterranean obscure dealings, at the same time that it places Self in the position of the worried spectator, half unable to decipher the Iranian leader's behaviour and half willing to contain a threat whose contours are fuzzy.

Iran's nuclear programme —and Ahmadinejad's role in sponsoring it— is the story's pivotal theme. Crucially, the 'nuclear facility' setting is the first element in the sketch's narrative composition that conjures up the nuclear argument. Further, the nuclear facility can be seen as the parody's central stage, while the other two stages are either extensions of it or subordinated to what goes on inside 'there'. One needs, however, to be familiar with the international crisis context that enframes the development of the nuclear story to understand why ultimately the nuclear question is central in the comedian's imagination.

The sketch was released in 2007. Since 2002, Iran's relations with the West were mired in strain on account of Iran's nuclear programme. In August 2002, news broke that 'Iran had engaged in sensitive nuclear fuel cycle activities, including uranium enrichment and plutonium separation, without declaring them in a timely manner to the IAEA, as it was required to do under the terms of its full-scope safeguards agreement' (Kile 2005, quoted in Dupont, 2010, p. 100). As it seemed, the Iranian government was in the process of building two secret nuclear sites: a centrifuge-based uranium enrichment facility at Natanz and a heavy-water production plant at Arak (Dupont, 2010, p. 100). The news caused agitation within the EU. Since the early 1990s and much more since Khatami's election in 1997, the EU-Iran relations had been upgraded but risked to get stalled if Iran turned out not to be honouring its non-proliferation commitments (Sabet-Saeidi, 2008). After negotiations, the E3 (UK, Germany and France) and Iran reached an accord (The Tehran Agreement, 21 October 2003) by which Iran secured the temporal suspension of uranium enrichment, as well as its will to cooperate with the IAEA in all inspection activities. Iran also signed the NPT Additional Protocol on Nuclear Safeguards (18 December 2003). Despite this, the question was far from settled and the gulf between the EU's and the U.S.' Iran policy widened (Drenou, 2008).

Until 2005, when Ahmadinejad got elected president of Iran, the EU struggled to avoid extreme measures and kept on negotiating with Iran; while, contrastingly, the U.S. advocated for the strengthening of the sanctions policy (initiated in 1979) and urged the IAEA to refer Iran's violations to the UN Security Council. Throughout his campaign, Ahmadinejad had fervently defended Iran's nuclear programme (Drenou, 2008, p. 81). With him finally in office, the nuclear crisis did nothing but aggravate. A representative of the 'New Right' (Takeyh, 2009), Ahmadinejad (Iran's hardliners, for that matter) had been highly critical of the reformists' handling of negotiations with the EU. It is known that these political factions —'hardliners' and 'reformists'— hold different visions on a number of issues. In particular on the nuclear question, Takeyh (2009) underlines that '[W]hile the Rafsanjani and Khatami administrations looked at nuclear weapons as tools of deterrence, for the conservatives they are a critical means of solidifying Iran's preeminence in the region' (p. 248). This explains partly the much less cooperative attitude of the Ahmadinejad government with the demand for guarantees asked by the international community, especially after 2010 when the EU

joined the U.S.-policy of sanctions. As has been noted, '[A] decade of independent and imaginative EU policy ended with the passage of U.N. Resolution 1929 in June 2010' (Posch, 2016). Other rounds of UNSC sanctions had been imposed in 2006, 2007 and 2008. In 2012, the European Council approved another package of sanctions that included the suppression of oil imports. When Rouhani was elected president of Iran in 2013, all parties seemed to be ready to change the course of events; and, finally, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) was signed in July 2015.

7.3.3.1 Nuclear facility.

The sketch begins with Ahmadinejad addressing the audience from what can be interpreted as the interior of a nuclear facility —or the basement of a nuclear plant. Various visual elements are responsible for introducing the nuclear subject in the story. First the industrial equipment, whose presence in the scene contributes to creating a sort of desensitised technical-scientific atmosphere. Secondly, the light in the room: a greenish artificial illumination that gives the place an underground imprint. This sense is reinforced by a third element: the staircase suggesting that Ahmadinejad's likely obscure dealings take place in a 'downstairs' location. Why downstairs and not upstairs? It is not stated in any form, but it is a matter of tradition (a matter of religious culture?) to locate virtue above and vice below. These three elements combined bolster the idea that dodgy men who deal with dodgy issues need to hide themselves from public light, and that Ahmadinejad is certainly one of this kind.

The nuclear crisis context laid out above plays a pivotal role here. It is a basic pragmatic principle that language users' communicate more than they say and that communication is possible because speakers and listeners share two things: background knowledge and expectations about the others' communicative intentions, and the ability to interpret contextual information. With this in mind, my point is that the sketch's intended audience can read this scenario as a 'nuclear facility' —and not, for instance, a 'slaughterhouse'—, even if it is not referred to as such at any moment during the parody and the phrase 'nuclear energy' is not uttered until 3:23'. If the nuclear crisis story is in the audience's awareness (this is a reasonable expectation given the intense media focus on the matter in the years leading up to the parody's production), the possibility that the 'nuclear facility' scenario be read differently is less likely. In other words, one can

assume (probably the comedians responsible for the parody assumed this) that, even if not stated, a room with industrial equipment in it and lit by a greenish artificial light would unambiguously be understood as a nuclear facility. In the absence of a direct linguistic identification, the expectation is that the visual elements displayed in the scene suffice to activate the story about a nuclear Iran. Placing Ahmadinejad ‘there’ reduces possible ambiguities even more.

7.3.3.2 *Containment Wall.*

In the film’s second scenario, the most important element is a wall. It conveys several meanings. In this narrative context, albeit in fact in any possible situation, a wall is a solid structure that divides space in two. The parody places such wall in the story to mark off the perimeter of the ‘cartography of danger’, presided over by the nuclear facility described right above. My point, however, is that despite the nuclear facility being the ground zero of this evil world, the wall’s significance is major. The wall helps set up the imagination of a clear inside/outside the nuclear complex (i.e. the danger cartography). Significantly, the establishment of such division (inside/outside) resonates with the principle upon which modern theory and practice of world politics is based: the domestic/international division. In this way, the basic architecture of modern IR theory provides a discourse about the world anchored in the spatial structure of ‘a world of territorial states’ (Agnew, 1997/2003) which allows the story to have a framework for locating the Self/Other relation.

In this vein, the parody constitutes the space inside the wall’s perimeter as the world’s source of chaos and disorder; whereas the outside —where ‘we’ stand— represents a space of law and order. By locating the dramatic action within the wall’s perimeter (either in the outside location next to the wall or inside the nuclear facility), the sketch secures the identification of Ahmadinejad with nuclear energy. At a minimum, this renders Ahmadinejad a sponsor of nuclear energy or, in the worst case scenario, a sponsor of nuclear weapons. But, one can go a step further and say that, through Ahmadinejad, Iran is constituted as the great theater of operations where nuclear energy is produced *en masse* without the so-called ‘international community’ being fully aware of the precise state of Iran’s capabilities. And this, in turn, works to suggest that Iran is an ‘outlaw’ nation, and its president a ‘rogue’ leader. Giving

narrative prominence to the wall thus allows the film to convey that the Other shall be sealed off within a fixed space. Looked at from the Self's point of view, the wall is there to 'contain' a threat. A different interpretation is that the wall serves Ahmadinejad to 'conceal' his outlaw dealings.

In addition to what has been said, it is possible to see the story's wall as representative of other walls scattered through the cartography of danger. The wall signposts the lifeless and barren spaces typically invoked in representations of the Middle East —the kind of deserted and battered landscapes featured prominently in media stories, where it is naturalised that these violence and conflict scenarios are Middle Easterners' natural milieu: the landscapes in which 'they' dwell, circulate through and come up against on a daily basis. As in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the wall signals a line of separation between 'Us' and 'Them' —it plays sanitary containment functions and secures the ontological separation between legitimate and illegitimate populations and governments.

7.3.3.3 Rocky landscape.

The third scenario of Reyes' parody is a 'rocky landscape'. In several of the film's scenes, the story shows Ahmadinejad lounging on the top of a rock. Whether the rocky landscape is located inside the facility or beyond the wall, it is not possible to know. Yet, what can be argued is that this third scenario stands in consonance with the other two, as it conjures up meanings that strengthen the imaginative geography of an evil distant world. In particular, within this scenario, the rock which the comedian sits on constitutes a powerful symbol. Being placed there to function as Ahmadinejad's seat, the rock is the political platform that the story provides Ahmadinejad with for reaching out to global audiences —the platform from which he launches tirades against the enemies of the Islamic Republic. If this is not too an inappropriate place for him, it is because Ahmadinejad embodies the counter-model of the Western ideal type of political leader: he is not the sort of rational man of exquisite manners who addresses global audiences from the normatively accepted places where serious men do politics (the Oval Office, the UN headquarters, at international summits and parliaments). Not sharing the attributes of the liberal modern politician, Ahmadinejad can, without much effort, be imagined as part of a 'gang of outlaws' who defy the protocols of modern politics. This

way the rock setting becomes a critical element in providing coherence to the construction of meaning inside the text, but also beyond, working as the semantic link through which the representation connects humour's cartographic discourse (articulated around the binary geography of 'safe'/'dangerous' worlds) with an ethico-political discourse that points fingers at the threat of 'Islamic militants' (despite these not being characterised at length).

In the bare dehumanised and lifeless spaces of this cartography of danger, mountainous and rocky landscapes are part of the anti-Self geography. Since at least 9/11, images of Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda militants waging their mass-mediatised *jihad* from the stony Afghan mountains saturate Western imaginations of a militant Islamic world that awakens feelings of fear, insecurity and helplessness. With Al-Qaeda or ISIS, now as ever, media stories of 'Islamic terrorists' haunt the minds of global audiences as they grapple with situating Others far enough so as not be considered part of a domestic community that needs to be protected, yet close enough so as to be feared and acted upon. The sketch does not go as far as to confer Ahmadinejad a terrorist identity; yet, it locates him in the scenario of the 'evil' men, thus making him less civilised than 'Us'.

7.3.2 Ahmadinejad and the constitution of 'roguery'.

Thus far this work has interpreted the significance of the film's scenarios and has advanced ideas as to how the mode 'settings' contributes to the overall construction of meaning in the text. Now, we move to consider the importance of the rest of semiotic modes registered on the annotated transcription (see Annex Four). The focus of the analysis is on the comedian's speech (Column 4). Spoken language plays out mostly in the form of a monologue, with brief but notable instances of dialogue between the comedian and a voice-over. As will be shown, looking thoroughly at what is said on the film is a critical moment in the analysis. The lexico-grammatical level of representation carries on the potency to trigger implications on the text's meaning. Yet, as will be also seen, the comedian's 'kinetic features' (Column 5) and the 'music and sound effects' (Column 6) put to work in the story often play a pivotal role in orienting the text's sense towards particular ends. Given the humorous character of the sketch, it is important to

bear in mind that also irony and satire play a critical role in establishing the sense of representations.

My main argument is that Reyes' parody constructs Ahmadinejad as a 'rogue' leader. And it does so specifically by giving prominence to three aspects of Ahmadinejad's identity: his 'Orientalness', his 'Populism' and his 'Lunacy'. The character's most salient identity features are displayed in a sequence of three narrative units. Throughout the first part of the sketch (0:09' – 0:48') the story introduces Ahmadinejad, 'the Oriental', to the audience. The second part of the parody (0:49' – 3:22') deals with Ahmadinejad, 'The Populist'. To wrap this up, during the video's final minutes (3:23' – 5:06'), the film shows Ahmadinejad, 'The Lunatic'.

7.3.2.1 *The Oriental.*

The story's opening is unambiguous. It starts off by presenting (0:09' – 0:48') the 'celebrity' to the audience. The utterances 'I am the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran' (0:26') and "I was the Mayor of Tehran' (0:44') lay bare the identity of the person on screen —just in case the comedian's appearance has not been sufficiently eloquent. On the snapshot below (Figure 7.1), the comedian's effort at *looking like* Ahmadinejad can be appreciated. This is effectively accomplished thanks to i) an excellent make-up and hair-dress work; ii) the clothes (a tie-less outfit; a grayish suit imitating the cheaply-tailored suits the Iranian leader used to wear); and iii) the mimicking of Ahmadinejad's body language and gestures.

Figure 7.1 Ahmadinejad inside the nuclear facility, 0:26'



Source: *Muchachada Nui*, *Celebrity*, 'Ahmadinejad'.

The monologue starts with the comedian introducing himself as ‘Mahud Jamadineyad / —with an aspirated jay’ (0:09’; 0:16’) and then making jokes on his own name. For the Spanish ear, Persian language owns an unfamiliar musicality and most people would have problems at pronouncing the name ‘Ahmadinejad’. In this way, the comedian insistence on a wrong pronunciation [‘Jamadineyad! Jamadineyad! Jamadineyad’ (0:17’)] appears as a boundary-drawing practice whereby the parody pinpoints that Ahmadinejad’s language is weird, unintelligible, coming from the guts... —a language spoken by Orientals, a language ‘We’ are unable to pronounce/recognise (indeed, later on in the sketch it is referred to as ‘Arabic’) and a cultural marker around which it is easy to spot the Other’s difference.

The next gag focuses on the president’s abundant hair, portrayed as a ‘Persian carpet’ (0:33’). The joke mobilises one of the few things for which Iran is popularly known (and appreciated) around the world: Persian carpets. Yet, the humorous moment is aborted in the next scene when Ahmadinejad, looking directly into the camera, inquires the audience about their intentions when they look at his head (0:38’). One could spot here the story’s intention to present Ahmadinejad as someone who stands up to his ‘enemies’. The reason why is that, at this point, his gesture adopts a menacing look and his hands squeeze the air as if strangling someone (0:41’ – 0:42’). The line closing up the character’s presentation —‘I am outlandish’ (0:44’)— captures, succinctly, the gist of a dominant view on him: Ahmadinejad is, other than ‘outlaw’ and ‘firebrand’, a ‘foreign’, ‘bizarre’ and ‘eccentric’ political figure.

The parody thus far puts forward a political leader out of tune with the conventions followed by Western statesmen. It does so by showing glimpses of a (to an extent) funny joking guy who is not quite right in the head. This characterisation will be secured later on when the story displays unambiguously the vision that Ahmadinejad is actually a lunatic. But for the time being, the overall perception is that the Iranian president is a ridiculous second-class international leader about whom ‘We’ are uncertain. He makes blunders; he seems unpredictable and irrational; he practices a non-serious style of politics, etc. But, do ‘We’ believe him capable of jeopardising world stability?

Ahmadinejad’s presentation takes place on two of the scenarios previously described: inside the nuclear facility and in the wall scenario. Drawing on the arguments

previously made, it is assumed that such locations play an important role in marking off the Other's difference. It is perhaps not so easy to see that these are 'Oriental' scenarios, unless other semiotic modes are taken into account. In fact, music plays a pivotal role in doing this. As noted in the transcription, during much of the character's presentation, the parody plays a 'cheerful Oriental melody' capable of evoking a whole world of sensory elements through which spectators gather that Ahmadinejad is a culturally different subject—an Oriental Other that can be identified as obviously 'non-Western', generally 'foreign', somehow 'preposterous' and, above all, 'outlandish'.

7.3.2.2 *The Populist.*

After having been drawn as an Oriental subject, the parody moves on to constitute Ahmadinejad as a populist leader. This takes place in the sketch's second part (0:49' – 3:22').

Populism is a complex concept whose conceptual elaboration cannot be undertaken here. However, for the purposes of this analysis, it can be said that political parlance has popularised the idea that populism is liberal democracy's counter-model. Contrary to Western democratic leaders, 'populists' incarnate values such as anti-imperialism, anti-rule of law and non-moderation. Populists are non-responsible politicians: they adopt measures aimed to provide their governments with instant success and short-term legitimacy (for instance, in oil-rich countries, by dropping oil prices). They often legislate against the interest of multinational corporations and the geopolitical interests of countries in the North. And all of this is possible because, furthermore, populist leaders see themselves as bearers of a great revolutionary or spiritual mission. Ultimately, populist leaders hold the vision that they are the best-suited interpreters of popular will and that, in consequence, they can govern for the benefit of the masses (the wretched of the Earth, the *mostazafan*...) and against the interest of capital, finance and foreign oppression. In recent years, the accusation of populism has often been raised against leaders of the Global South such as Hugo Chávez or Evo Morales.

Several elements in the parody's script enable the interpretation that Ahmadinejad is widely grasped as a populist. At the beginning of the sketch's second

part, the comedian utters this: '[L]ook what little eyes I have. There is gleam. They are black because they are deep' (0:49'). The camera frame then closes up on his face. Momentarily, the comedian's face takes up the entire narrative attention. Next, the story describes Ahmadinejad's eyes as the mirror of 'old civilisations' (0:49'). Afterwards, the camera focus shifts towards the character's smile —'the smile of the people' and '[A] frank smile' (0:49').

This short but pivotal scene makes a critical contribution to the populist constitution of the character. The argument can be made that the story presents Ahmadinejad as an 'illuminee' who believes himself to be a Holy Envoy (an envoy with a mission). Several implications follow from the accentuation of the character's eyes. First, there is the subtending assumption that when someone looks at us in the eyes, it is because s/he is being honest. Given the humorous character of the text, the inference that shall be made is actually the contrary: one should be suspicious of Ahmadinejad — he is a populist and cannot be trusted. But also, the parody eases the establishment of the ontological connection between the individual Other subject —'Ahmadinejad'— and the collective Other —here: 'Iran' and her millennial civilisation. Meaningfully, the story does so by stating that Ahmadinejad's deep and gleaming eyes somehow reflect the glory of Iran's 'old civilisation'. Yet, one must also note that liberal discourse attacks populism by rendering the identification of the leader with the people (a civilisation, the masses...) an illegitimate one either because the leader has been elected by non-appropriate means, has seized power by force or has engaged in abusive practices of power.

This point is secured next when Ahmadinejad's smile is depicted as 'the smile of the people' and '[A] frank smile'. This can be used to interpret that Ahmadinejad longs for transcendence, and that transcendence is tied up to the accomplishment of a great mission for his people —a mission which the parody does not address through word, but can be intuited. One can see the subtle intervention of a mystic world of emotion and faith when one pays attention to the aural means mobilised in the film with the purpose of reinforcing Ahmadinejad's transcendental yearning. The voice of a *muezzin* calling on believers to pray is mostly responsible for the scene's effectiveness. Thereby, the missionary sense conferred upon Ahmadinejad gains intensity. And also, it is the first time that Ahmadinejad is constituted as a 'Muslim' subject. Irony prevails over the

scene as Reyes' parody unfolds, and the audience is impelled to interpret the text in exactly opposite terms. The paradox of humour is that, as it apparently pictures Ahmadinejad as an honest and frank man, the possibility of reading him under this light is totally suppressed.

Reyes' parody is not the only humour practice that portrays Ahmadinejad as an 'illuminee'. A cartoon (Figure 7.2) published by *El Jueves* in the aftermath of the 2009 election triggers similar inferences.

Figure 7.2 'Rigged elections in Iran?'



Source: *El Jueves*, 'We had more covers' (22/06/2009)

The image is presided over by a question (a headline) —'Rigged elections in Iran?'. The answer to the question shall be inferred from what is represented in the cartoon and the text within the dialogue balloons. The cartoon's focus is on the human figure representing Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, placed against a backdrop of red blots. Given the time of publication (and the textual cues), it is easy to interpret that the red blots stand for blood stains. Thereby, the question of the violent repression ensuing the contested 2009 vote is unambiguously introduced in the drawing. Further, the cartoonist represents Ahmadinejad saying: 'Why bother about people's opinion / If what I know, for certain, is Allah's opinion'.

The cartoon's point of view on Ahmadinejad is eloquent. The one most salient fact is that only Ahmadinejad is spotted as responsible for the election fraud and the human losses, although it could also be argued that the focus is on the Iranian leader

because he *represents* the Islamic Republic. (Both interpretations are actually valid and compatible). Another salient feature is how the cartoon constructs Ahmadinejad's response to the post-election violence. The story places Ahmadinejad in the position of the 'illuminee' who does not seek legitimacy in the ballot box, but in the spiritual connection with Allah. The argument, therefore, is that for Ahmadinejad God's opinion is worthier than the people's opinion and that, since sacred and popular opinion were not attuned in the 2009 election, Ahmadinejad felt he was entitled to disobey the people's mandate. In this way, the cartoon gives credit to the liberal tenet that politics is a public matter and religion a private one; and, by extension, to the deeply-rooted belief that such principle is systematically non-observed in the 'Muslim' world (less so in the Islamic Republic), while it is strictly honoured by Western democracies. It follows from this that Muslim nations are naturally incapable of coming to terms with democracy's basic principles and procedures.

This rationale is also at work in another of *El Jueves*' stories. The photomontage below features Ahmadinejad in the role of 'The Great Dictator' (Figure 7.3). The story's headline says: 'In Iran, peaceful protestors carry sticks'. In the news' body, the reformist leader Mousavi is reported to have declared that people will use all sorts of 'peaceful weapons' throughout the protests; Ahmadinejad is quoted as having recounted that when protestors saw his men, they chanted *There we go!* and then they were beaten to death, exactly as in hooligan riots.

Figure 7.3 'The Great Dictator'



Source: *El Jueves* (15/06/2009)

Coming out a few days after the 2009 contested election, by picturing Ahmadinejad as the Great Dictator, the montage linkens Ahmadinejad to Adolf Hitler and the Islamic Republic of Iran to Nazi Germany. The story's satirical tone is ensured in the interplay between the photomontage and the text; specifically, in the use of the 'peaceful weapons' oxymoron. Yet, overall, the story's effectiveness is secured because, as has been argued (Hansen, 2014), the Great Dictator's picture has the status of an 'international icon' —a 'freestanding image' which global publics can recognise as representative of exceptional historical events and relate to strong emotions. Widely circulated and massively reproduced (Hansen, 2014, p. 6), international icons provoke immediate reactions against the events, situations and people in whose intelligibility they intervene. Thus, by reappropriating Hitler's image for the Ahmadinejad post-2009 election stories, *El Jueves* appeals to the cultural-emotional world of readers without ambiguity. The vision of the Great Dictator is meant to produce little else than utter rejection for the events it comes to represent providing a cognitive shortcut that condenses the cartoon's stance on Ahmadinejad's implication in the post-election crisis. In the Iranian case, furthermore, there is no escaping the fact that the likening of the Islamic Republic to Nazi Germany is 'a central pillar of the neoconservative campaign [in the U.S./Israel] to demonize the country' (Adib-Moghaddam, 2008, p. 135).

In another of the post-2009 election satirical stories, the accusation of fraud is also targeted to the very Ahmadinejad (Figure 7.4).

Figure 7.4 'The electoral cheater'



Source: *El Jueves* (16/06/2009)

The photomontage shows two men, one of whom is the Iranian president cloaked under a black chador (a women-only piece of cloth). Clad as a *chadori*⁵⁷, Ahmadinejad is shown casting a vote in the ballot box. The other man is an electoral scrutineer who finds out that beneath the black chador is President Ahmadinejad. He then says to Ahmadinejad: ‘Hey, Sir, you’ve already voted’, while the president responds: ‘Take him away’. It is easy to see that the picture’s comicality resides in that Ahmadinejad uses the chador trick as a means to, allegedly, vote twice. It can be assumed that he has legally voted on a previous occasion. By comparison with the former two post-2009 election stories, the tone of the chador story is notably light-hearted. The story is nonetheless relevant because it also holds Ahmadinejad accountable for the electoral fraud and, what is perhaps more transcendent, exhibits the West’s suspicions on Iranian authorities and their respect for democratic procedures.

Back in the sketch, the argument can be made that indeed Ahmadinejad is appointed representative of the Iranian people. He is given the right to interpret and translate the Others for ‘Us’. This becomes visible at various moments throughout the short film; for instance, when Ahmadinejad avows that ‘[T]here are very cheerful people in Iran’, but ‘[P]erhaps they don’t show their emotions’ (1:03’). These utterances conjure up dominant perceptions in the West that, *in a place like Iran*, people cannot possibly experience feelings of joy, let alone demonstrate them in public. This projection fits comfortably within the imagination of the Muslim world as a place of martyrdom mired in a permanent state of mourning. Indeed, martyrdom and mourning are familiar tropes in the Iranian-Shi’ite cultural world. (This point would be difficult to deny). However, it is hard to see that this vision is grounded on expert knowledge on the matter. Rather, it can be argued that what urges the parody to constitute Iranians as doleful subjects are the extra-textual imaginings of a Muslim world saturated with images of conflict, violence, sorrow and death.

Right after this, the comedian concedes that in Iran ‘[T]here is just one TV channel’ (1:08’) and that, in consequence, ‘[T]here is no channel-hopping’ (1:09’). Naturally, the single TV channel gets ‘[S]hare. 100% share’ (1:12’). The dominant assumption here is that in non-democratic societies, the right to information and

⁵⁷ In Iran, women who wear chador.

freedom of speech are denied to the agency-less masses. In the ensuing string of gags, Ahmadinejad comments playfully on the late beginning of broadcasts in Iranian TV (1:16'), the short duration of shows and, in sum, a waning TV listing (1:18') —'music-news-test card'. All of this is to accentuate Iran's alleged troubled relationship with freedom of expression and of the press. Liberal discourse assumes that, in democratic societies, media play a critical role in ensuring democracies' quality standards because it is also assumed that media do their job under total freedom of speech and that the ultimate purpose of media organisations is to disseminate *true* stories. By contrast, it is also assumed that, *in places like Iran*, media are state-controlled and serve mainly propaganda purposes. It follows from this that citizens in democratic societies are critical consumers of media information whilst, *in places like Iran*, governments brainwash people and spoon-feed them with revolutionary and anti-Western propaganda. And this, after all, is also a powerful indicator of populism.

But, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is constituted as a populist by reference to two more themes: homosexuality and the U.S.-Iran's relations. Indeed, Reyes' parody grants special relevance to the question of homosexuality in Iran. The first evidence of this comes in a dialogue between Ahmadinejad and someone not featured in the film (a voice-over). The events recreated in the scene starting in 1:32' are based on real facts.

In 2007, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was invited to speak at a conference in Columbia University, New York. In the midst of generalised uneasiness for Iran's international behaviour, news of the conference hit media headlines. During the questions and answers session, the Iranian president made astounding statements denying the existence of homosexuals in Iran. His words went viral. In the sketch, at one of the few moments when monologue is interrupted, a satirical re-elaboration of the affair is offered (1:32' - 1:48'):

[Voice-over] What do you think of homosexuals? /

[Ahmadinejad] There aren't /

[Voice-over] Are you sure? /

[Ahmadinejad] There are no homosexuals in Iran. There are no fags /

 In fact, I've received a report from the Gay Studies Office /

 Zero per cent cucumber club members /

 And I asked: 'Have you searched for them in earnest?/'

There might be someone hiding in a cave. A cave man’.

The stir of protest caused by the president’s remarks at Columbia (satirically reelaborated by Reyes in his performance) did not go unnoticed to media, which carried out substantial coverage of the scandal. All of this fostered the identification of Iran as a ‘gay-unfriendly’ country, with Ahmadinejad in the lead.

In the parody, the absurdity of Ahmadinejad’s vision is accentuated through its presentation as not only a matter of personal opinion, but also as an objective and verifiable reality. The reference to a certain report from the ‘Gay Studies Office’ attests to this point. And while the conclusions of the stated report —‘[Z]ero per cent cucumber club members’— are self-explanatory, the suggestion that possibly gay men are hiding in caves needs further reflection. The assumption that homosexuality is a condition susceptible of being hidden is meaningful, but perhaps less so that the hiding needs to take place ‘in caves’. In the modern imagination, caves are places that evoke images of primitive men who barely deserve to be called ‘civilised’. Likewise, the imagination of caves prompts the remembrance of Al-Qaeda militants, whom are not only criminals, but also preachers of the return of Islamic fundamentalism and thus of a medieval way of life that is profoundly reactionary. In spite of the humour, such chain of associations ends up positioning Ahmadinejad (and with him, Iran) at the heart of the ‘unmodern’ and ‘non-free’ world.

The story then continues to elaborate the subject of homosexuality in Iran, but now from a different angle of vision. The representation now adopts a clearly culturally-specific lens. On the question of how gossip talk shows in Iran do without gays, Ahmadinejad readily replies ‘[T]hey finish earlier’ (1:57’). The Spanish audience would probably laugh at the joke because people are aware that for the last decade or fifteen years, TV shows have performed a pivotal service at promoting the visibility of homosexuality (especially of male homosexuals) and, by extension, its wide social acceptance. Since it is assumed that this cannot be the case in Iran where “there are no homosexuals”, the irony in the representation becomes evident. But, of course, this entails more serious implications because, by these means, the parody also manages to put forward the differentiation between societies and leaders who tolerate non-normative sexualities and accept their visibilisation (i.e., ‘free’ and ‘modern’ societies),

and *regimes* where homosexuals are legally and socially harassed (i.e. ‘intolerant’ and ‘backward’ societies). Since the story operates such distribution of subject positions, it becomes easy to foster the conclusion that Ahmadinejad is ‘a tyrant, a satrap, and a criminal...’ (2:37’).

Ahmadinejad’s intolerant attitude affects not only homosexuals; it affects also ‘infidels’. In 2:02’ the parody shows Ahmadinejad making this important assertion: ‘[Y]ou can count on me to prosecute unbelievers’. Later, in 2:50’, he is shown playing *Red Light / Green Light*⁵⁸. The comedian utters: ‘Where are you, infidels? You are hiding like rats’. He then looks around and spots one of the infidels —‘To Bush!’ (2:56’).

This scene is important because it is the one single time in which the U.S.-Iran standoff is indirectly referred to, albeit the American president is absent from the scene. This is accomplished by playfully recreating the Ahmadinejad-Bush’s antagonism in the framework of a children’s game, where children tease each other and compete for winning the game. The analogy with geopolitical rivalry games is notably evident. But since the comedian adopts the language of the ‘holy war’, the scene’s significance turns out to be even greater because, as can be argued, the story awards Ahmadinejad the position of the ‘referee’ or ‘judge’ and Bush the position of the ‘criminal’. Yet, this is not to suggest that the parody eases a true change in roles, because Ahmadinejad is not allowed to be a secular judge. In his capacity, a secular judge would sentence criminals to fair punishments. Ahmadinejad is not expected to do this, but instead to give chase to ‘rats’ and ‘infidels’. The suggestion that Ahmadinejad is a ‘prosecutor of infidels’ is a means by which the story raises up the specter of Shari’ah ensuring that Ahmadinejad is the bearer of alterity.

These inferences are fastened up in the next scene where Ahmadinejad is shown dancing ‘the infidels dance’ (2:58’). [‘The floor is burning under their feet because they

⁵⁸ The Spanish game featured in the story is *Un, dos, tres, palito inglés*. *Red Light / Green Light* is the closest correspondence I was able to find. Both games work similarly. Children line up on one side of a yard or pitch. When the person who plays the ‘it’ role shouts ‘Green Light!’, children have to run as fast as they can. When they hear ‘Red Light!’, they have to stop running; whoever does not stop is out of the game, and whoever is able to reach the other side of the yard wins the game. Nieboer, G. (1995, May 14) ‘Red Light/Green Light’ [Information on a page] Retrieved from http://www.gameskidsplay.net/games/sensing_games/rl_gl.htm

are sinners and they have to walk this way as if the beach sand was burning under their feet' (3:12')). References to 'fire' and 'burning' conjure up the vision of hell —the counter-representation of the Islamic and Christian paradise. Certainly, these semantic associations position Ahmadinejad within the discourse of Islamic militancy —which, in turn, resonates with 'medieval crusades'—, where paradise and martyrdom await heroic warriors, but only as long as they send infidels to hell.

7.3.2.3 *And the Lunatic.*

With the line of text '[R]ight now I'm like crazy with nuclear energy' (3:23'), the parody initiates the move towards closure. We can recognise in this utterance the suggestion that the Iranian president is, in fact, a 'lunatic'. The main reason for this is Iran's nuclear programme and Ahmadinejad's major sponsorship of it. Yet, other themes also elicit the identification of Ahmadinejad in such terms. The analysis also draws insights from political cartoons.

Beginning with the film's story, it fosters the inference that Iran's commitment with attaining nuclear capabilities is Ahmadinejad's whim —thus, experienced by him almost as a personal crusade. The parody also conveys that for Iranians time is a precious asset. By stating that in '[T]hree months' (3:25') Iran could be able to handle the whole nuclear fuel cycle, the parody registers the sense of urgency that surrounds the nuclear crisis story, both for Iran —in that, in the Western imagination, the government of Tehran appears to be unstoppably rushing for managing the nuclear fuel cycle— and for the Western nuclear negotiators —in that they are anxious for hampering Iran's nuclear race. This becomes apparent in the next scenes.

In frames 3:25' and 3:31', we see how the comedian manipulates a watch and smilingly shows it to the camera. He claims to have bought the gadget 'in Andorra'. This country, situated between Spain and France, being a popular destination for tax-free shopping, is a familiar trope in the Spanish imagination. Associating the Iranian leader with Andorra (and the purchase of cheap commodities) pursues to cause hilarity. The reference's cultural specificity is notorious and possibly then only local audiences can properly decode it. The key issue, in any case, is that by foregrounding the watch and the dead-line for the achievement of nuclear capabilities, the scene fabricates the

urgency mood of the nuclear story. The same holds true for the next scene, where Ahmadinejad interrogates a (most likely) nuclear engineer not present in the film (3:36' – 3:45'):

[Ahmadinejad] Splitting atoms ain't easy /
The energy, is it ready? /
[Voice-over] No, I ran out of time... /
[Ahmadinejad] Get the damned atoms split, for God's sake! /
Fission, fission, fission!

The scene's importance is paramount because it shows Ahmadinejad losing patience, getting irritated and exhausted. This portrayal underscores his determination to get the nuclear fuel cycle completed which, as was suggested before, is grasped as his personal crusade. But more generally, the scene captures the sense of urgency that nourished the nuclear story and simultaneously nurtured the vision that a nuclear Iran was around the corner —the sense of urgency most needed to grip the attention of global audiences and to make the case for possible actions to 'contain' Iran.

On the nuclear matter, one can actually make the argument that comic representations (both the parody and the political cartoons) echo the prevailing feeling in the West: that the Islamic Republic's handling of the nuclear issue was considerably ambiguous, with high-ranking officials making contradictory statements on the matter, with Iranian authorities making signs of good-will at the same time that worrying revelations about new capabilities were leaked, the back-and-forth attitude of the negotiating team, etc. In consequence, the global public imagination was saturated with hundreds of stories which predisposed an overall attitude of suspicion towards Iran's deeds and which, importantly, did not facilitate the reaching of conclusions on the scope of Iran's nuclear threat. My point is that, taken together, also the comic stories are inconclusive as regards Iran's nuclear threat and this might be by effect of the inconclusiveness mood that surrounded the nuclear question in the broader public debate.

The *El Jueves*' cover below (Figure 7.5) shows this headline: '[A]hmadinejad acting the big macho at the Revolution's 30th anniversary'. Below the headline, the

cartoonist draws the Iranian president, arms up in the air, and a gigantic nuclear mushroom cloud emanating from his private parts.

Figure 7.5 ‘The big macho’.



Source: *El Jueves*, ‘We had more covers’ (17/02/2010)

The cartoon is powerful and does not need to mobilise many resources, neither artistic nor textual, to be effective. The crux of the matter is the mushroom cloud substituting Ahmadinejad’s erect phallus. The story’s reference to the genitals situates the Iranian leader in the world of irrationality, emotion and impulse. Consequently, it is implied that, in the handling of the nuclear crisis (on the nuclear matter, more broadly), Ahmadinejad incarnates the opposite values of rationality, repose and good judgment. This inference is secured in the interaction with the headline, where it is unmistakably stated that Ahmadinejad is acting the ‘big macho’. In this way, the cartoon conveys that the nuclear question unleashes Ahmadinejad’s passion and instinct and also, by extension, that his defence of the nuclear programme is an ideological one. (In this regard, another working assumption is that ideology and reason are at odds with each other).

Part of this story is replicated in another story from 16 January 2012 (Figure 7.6). The cover’s heading says ‘Iran going nuclear by the day’. The cartoon shows an *ayatollah*⁵⁹ sitting at the table of negotiations. The Iranian flag signals that the man with the turban is Iran’s representative. (Possibly the Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei). At the other extreme of the table, the U.S. flag stands, but no interlocutor is in sight. The

⁵⁹ Popularly known as ‘the regime of ayatollahs’, a widespread belief in the West is that any turbaned man is an ayatollah, while as a matter of fact ‘ayatollah’ (sign of God) is the highest ranking title given to Shi’a clerics.

ayatollah's black turban adopts a mushroom-cloud shape. Inside the dialogue balloons it can be read: '[T]here you go! / I don't know why people think we want to construct a nuclear bomb and not use energy for medical purposes'.

Figure 7.6 'Iran going nuclear by the day'



Source: *El Jueves*, 'We had more covers' (16/01/2012).

One can read the headline's message as consonant with the West's prevailing view and feelings surrounding Iran and its nuclear programme —the perception that Iran was working hard for becoming nuclear. The headline therefore reflects a widespread suspicion in the West. The cartoon, by contrast, features the official Iranian argument speaking of the programme's civil purposes. The ayatollah's mushroom cloud-turban is there to make sure that the cartoon's irony is in place, and thus to state the cartoon's point of view: Iranians are 'not trustworthy'. Since this is happening at the negotiating table, it is implied that the Iranians are cheating on the Americans. It is significant that both this and the previous cartoon use the mushroom cloud sign to clear up the meaning of both stories. Therefore, it can be said that both stories are connected by means of intersemioticity.

But let us now go back to the stand-up comedy text and see how the question of Iran's nuclear programme continues to be handled there. In 3:48' the comedian states that '[T]he point is that this is for peaceful ends... for cooking and life... to help people muddle through'. The scene's irony is evident. Thus, far from meaning truly that Ahmadinejad is close to people's everyday problems, helping them out to overcome economic hardship, it is suggested that Ahmadinejad's saviour mask is a strategy for diverting attention from Iran's real nuclear purposes. Further, it can be said that the

allegation of populism subtends the representation because, after all, it is conveyed that Ahmadinejad deludes the poor Iranian people for the benefit of intangible revolutionary principle and an irrational and dangerous mission.

The next scene (visual frames 3:57' and 4:01': '[T]hen you see, the nuclear energy meter/ Is it here ma'am? In the larder? / You write it down... Nuclear energy consumed') shares a cognate purpose. Making Ahmadinejad speak of the nuclear energy issue as if it was a matter of household energy consumption is comical, but also a suggestion that he cannot be taken seriously. The scene triggers the implication that the Iranian leader does not take 'grave matters' seriously. The nuclear energy programme is something to be discussed with 'serious leaders' —not with housewives— and in 'serious settings'. Since Ahmadinejad does not seem to fit the standards of normal international politics, the 'peaceful ends' argument seems unconvincing.

The comedian's kinetic features reinforce the scene's ironical tone. Both hands raised to the level of the chest and palms turned outwards, his gesture seeks to reveal honesty (truly 'peaceful ends'), as well as the idea that the man has nothing to hide (visual frame 3:48'). Alas, the vision that persists is that Iranian leaders —Ahmadinejad above all— have been playing tricks on the West as regards the Islamic Republic's true nuclear intentions.

The widespread vision that Ahmadinejad is a distrustful leader is appropriated by cartoonists as well. By making Ahmadinejad play the role of the cardsharp (see Figure 7.7 below), *El Jueves*' story of 2 March 2009 deepens into the 'cheater' identity conferred upon him elsewhere (especially in the story illustrated by Figure 7.4). On its headline and subheading, the story ironically reports that the U.S. has reasonable doubts on Iran's ownership of nuclear weapons (headline). In response to the headline's statement, the subheading states that 'Iran insists in that enriched uranium will serve to feed the poor and a few other things'. The smiling president is featured on a montage above the caption: 'Where's the little bomb?'. The H bomb sticks out from the plastic cup on the right-side corner of the picture.

Figure 7.7 ‘The cardsharp’



Source: *El Jueves* (02/03/2009)

Of course, the satirist’s purpose is neither to engage in a serious discussion of nuclear proliferation nor of the Iran-West negotiations on the matter, despite these issues being at the background of the story. Rather, the purpose of the text is to reinforce the vision that Ahmadinejad is a ‘fool’, a ‘zealot’ and a ‘slimy’ leader.

Cognate visions hover over several subsequent scenes in Reyes’ parody, where the president is now presented as a cynic who plays dumb (visual frames 4:07’ and 4:11’). As the transcription shows, Ahmadinejad pretends to ignore the fact that nuclear energy can be used for the construction of a bomb: ‘Really? I didn’t know. See? I didn’t know... Can we make a bomb? What for?’. The president jumps to a totally compelling conclusion on his own: ‘*To kill!*’.

Right afterwards, he acknowledges that the Islamic Republic is building up a missile that is ten-meters long. (His peaceful intentions now being seriously called into question). Ahmadinejad’s playful attitude towards the missile, depicted almost as if it was a toy, is remarkable. The parody pinpoints Ahmadinejad’s fascination with the aesthetic properties of the missile —its smoothness and colour: ‘truly smooth and even, coz it’s been rasped with sandpaper... It got really smooth / and with a red tip; and then grey / it’s been painted with airbrush’ (visual frames 4:29’, 4:32’ and 4:35’). The whole scene develops in the poorly-lit and disembodied surroundings of the wall setting; and

the ‘epic melody’ playing, with irony, in the background does nothing but enhance Ahmadinejad’s anti-heroic aura.

The narrative attention then turns to the missile’s surface on which, as the comedian says, the word ‘Iran’ is emblazoned. Literally, ‘[A]nd then it’s written *Iran*, like this / Well, it’s written in Arabic [sic]. You know, our writing goes the other way round. Many times you’re writing, and without noticing, you’re making blots...’ (frames 4:38’ and 4:40’). Taking Persian for Arabic is a common mistake that reveals the force of the Orientalist discourse and its homogenising capacity. This said, the assumption that the Arabic language (this applies to Persian as well) is written ‘the other way round’ is noteworthy in that it functions as a mechanism for underscoring ‘their’ difference. Implicitly, the text draws on the premise that there is one normative writing system (‘ours’: left-to-right) and systems which deviate from the norm (‘theirs’: right-to-left). Stating that this is the reason why people make blots as they write is absurd and obviously seeks to make the audience laugh. But more importantly, it seeks to make Others distinctly different —speakers of ‘Oriental’ languages who write “the other way round” and who are, accordingly, ‘illegible’, ‘undecipherable’, and ‘unpierceable’.

The next scene is critical, with epic Oriental music helping build a ridiculously threatening atmosphere. Speaking from the platform of the rock, Ahmadinejad is ready to admit that if a missile was launched ‘like a bolt of lightning’, it could cause ‘a real mess’ in ‘some country’ (frame 4:50’). Funnily, he concedes to be ‘almost sure’ that they will not get the missile launched (frames 4:50’ and 4:58’) because they ‘stand for peace’ (5:03’).

At this point, the comedian’s body language and the camerawork make decisive contributions to the construction of meaning in the text. In 5:03’, we see the comedian with flexed arms and hands raised to the level of the chest point his fingers towards the heart; the head slightly tilted towards the left and shoulders faintly shrugged towards inside. The comedian’s postural ensemble aims to underscore the character’s honesty and transparency and, at last, reinforce the message that they ‘stand for peace’. Yet the prevailing irony hampers a literal interpretation of the scene. These practices seek, instead, to show that Ahmadinejad’s commitment with peace and stability is feeble. The interaction between modes (spoken, body and camera language) thus far is dense, but

the implied meanings in the scene cannot be decoded effectively unless we take into account the geopolitical context that underlies the comedian's performance.

The current sketch was produced and disseminated in a context of tense relations between Israel and the Islamic Republic, at a time when Ahmadinejad had been reported for having asserted that the Zionist regime should be wiped off the map. The antagonism between both states —conveniently nourished by Ahmadinejad and his counterpart in Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu— led many to believe that a war was about to break out in the Middle East. And it is perhaps not too unreasonable to say that, over the years, global media contributed to fostering the vision that if conflict broke out between Iran and Israel, it would be easy to recognise Iran as the aggressor state.

On a 2011 story, *El Jueves* reported that '[I]ran warns they are ready to go to war with Israel'. The accompanying photomontage features Ahmadinejad as an ape lifting two pistols (Figure 7.8)⁶⁰. The Iranian president is represented as the perfect example of non-containment, with his human condition strongly being called into question.

Figure 7.8. 'Dangerous ape with two pistols'



Source: *El Jueves* (5/11/2011)

It is not difficult to understand why these imaginings of the Iranian president were so vivid. Iran's rivalry with the U.S. and Israel intertwined with a nuclear crisis that was

⁶⁰ The montage echoes an idiomatic expression in Spanish, *ser más peligroso que un mono con dos pistolas* (Eng. 'to be more dangerous than an ape with two pistols'), used to describe a person who shows an erratic dangerous behaviour.

handled with ambiguity by leaders of the Islamic Republic. The Supreme Leader of Iran, for instance, issued a *fatwa* against the development of nuclear weapons. Yet, for the West, the measure did not seem compelling enough and more credit was given to the revelations that hinted to the continuation of the nuclear program with the construction of new facilities, and through dealings with Russia. The difficulties at striking a deal with the European negotiators and the U.S. added up to the vision that in Iran, an intractable regime had seized power since 1979.

In 5:05', via close-up, the narrative focus moves towards the comedian's face. The current frame works as a mirror of the former frame in 0:49'. There are no linguistic cues this time, but the close-up sets out to, once again, give prominence to the president's 'profound little eyes' and 'frank smile'. In this way, the current frame carries on anaphoric force—linking back to previous units of meaning in the text—and becoming a powerful mechanism for the building of textual coherence. In consequence, these 'twin frames' provide the text with structural and semantic solidity. They set out to underscore that, in spite of what Ahmadinejad declares, he is not someone 'We' can trust.

7.4 On difference and its strategies

The distinction between 'documentary' and 'performative' genres put forward by Hansen (2011) in her article 'Theorizing the image for Security Studies: Visual securitization and the Muhammad Cartoon Crisis' was underlined in the introduction to this chapter in order to situate media comedy and political cartoons within the category of performative genres. Crucially, performative genres differ from documentary genres in that they 'are not expected to reproduce reality, but to make an engagement with it' (Hansen, 2011, p. 60).

Hansen's (2011) insights into the relation that genres, documentary or performative, seek to establish with 'the truth' are inscribed in her further-reaching project to theorise the relationship between visuals and securitisation. As part of this project, the author ponders over the range of strategies used to depict Others in securitised visuals. She comes up with the conclusion that four strategies predominate. The first strategy—the most commonly mobilised by security discourses—consists of

‘demonising’ Others by portraying them as ‘demonic, barbaric, evil, and menacing’ (p. 59). The second strategy —‘belittling’— is employed when Others are shown as ‘insignificant, weak, small, cowardly, backward, or feminine, as someone “to be laughed at rather than hated or feared” (Coupe, 1969: 91; Duus, 2001: 983)’ (p. 59). The third strategy —‘familiarization’— is said to render ‘something that is held to be divine, sacred, or superior’ the object of a securitisation. Lastly, the ‘suffering’ strategy links the definition of threat to the representation of ‘persecuted, violated, downtrodden, starving’ Others (p. 59).

In this section, my aim is to discuss the incidence of demonisation and belittling in the comic stories explored in the chapter. Two points need to be clarified in this regard. The first is that the familiarisation and suffering strategies will not be discussed here because they are not relevantly mobilised in the humouristic texts examined in the chapter. The second issue is that, while Hansen (2011) locates her engagement with the visual in the broader discussion on securitisation, the explanatory puissance of her theorisation is major and can be used to explore processes of identification/differentiation that do not necessarily entail securitising moves. This disclaimer is germane because, generally, this thesis has not posited that practical or popular discourse in Spain constitutes Iran as a security threat (in a conventional sense at least).

Now, Hansen (2011) points at a key difference between the demonisation and belittling strategies that needs to be considered here. The author asserts that ‘a depiction through demonization constitutes a threat to be conquered while a strategy of belittling makes the threat manageable’ (p. 59). While Hansen (2011) also admits that, after empirical testing, ‘the boundary between demonization and belittling is [turns out to be] a grey zone’ (p. 64), for the purposes of this discussion, the theoretical distinction between ‘a threat that needs to be subdued’ (implicit in demonisation) and ‘a threat that can be somehow handled’ (implicit in belittling) needs to be underscored —first, because each strategy posits a distinct ethical engagement of Self with the Other; secondly (and interdependently), because each strategy presupposes distinct emotional reactions by the public to how difference is inscribed in visuals. In this way, it becomes clear —and this is the gist of Hansen’s (2011) argumentation— that the meaning of (securitised) visuals is not framed within the ‘image itself’, but needs to be interpreted

by reference to other key elements of the discursive event: ‘the immediate intertext’, ‘the wider policy discourse’ and ‘the texts ascribing meaning to the image’ (Hansen, 2011, p. 53).

These things considered, it is not easy to say whether the Iranian subject constituted in our comic stories is shown more idiotic than demonic, or vice versa. While all stories seem to rely on the premise that the events, situations and people of the international world are potentially laughable, each story is satirical in its own way and do not produce the same humour effects.

Like me, spectators must have laughed amusedly at the eccentric and whimsical performance of Joaquín Reyes and his convincing Ahmadinejad-isation; or at the cartoons from *El Jueves* that confer on Ahmadinejad a feminine or brute appearance in the, respectively, ‘chador’ and the ‘ape’ stories (Figures 7.4 and 7.8); at the piece that *hitlerises* the Iranian president by locating him in the ‘Great Dictator’ story (Figure 7.3); at the display of testosterone in the ‘big macho’ story (Figure 7.5); or even at the sliminess implicit in the ‘cardshap’ story (Figure 7.7). The alleged dishonesty of Iranian authorities in the handling of negotiations about the nuclear programme is also implicit in the story narrated in Figure 7.6.

By contrast, it is sure that the representation of repression against protestors in the aftermath of the June 2009 election (Figure 7.2) produces a different a kind of laugh—a bitter laugh. The cartoon, which was printed on *El Jueves*’ pages a few days after the presidential elections in Iran, has been read—also earlier in the chapter—as stating that Ahmadinejad was responsible for the crackdown on peaceful protests, hence for the bloodbath produced by police intervention. It is important to note how the straightforward vision of Ahmadinejad against the bloodbath—conjured up in the cartoon *via* blood stains—, helps drastically to decipher the cartoon’s meaning and, therefore, reduce the ambiguity of the visual⁶¹. Of all possible interpretations, it seems rather out of question that the cartoon assertion is that Ahmadinejad was responsible for turning non-violent demonstrations into carnage.

⁶¹ Another key point made by Hansen (2011) is that visuals are inherently ambiguous (p. 58).

In accord with Hansen (2011), however, the meaning of a visual is not conveyed by the image itself, but by the interplay of the image and the wider discursive and policy context. My argument on which strategy is used by the cartoonist to draw the character's subjectivity in Figure 7.2 is clear: Ahmadinejad is demonised. Yet, it is important to understand that the demonisation is not accomplished solely by means of the image itself. My point is that the broader media discourse on what happened in Iran upon the June 2009 elections plays a decisive role of disambiguation. When this piece (Figure 7.2) was released (22 September 2009), non-satirical media had already filled in the representational space with 'true' stories about the Iranian elections: about people feeling that their vote had been rigged, about the violent repression of demonstrators, Neda Soltani's death, the vigour of the Green Movement (the grass-roots movement of 'moderate' Iranians) whose leaders (rival candidates in the election) were put under house arrest after the vote, etc. Global audiences —and the Spanish audience for that matter— had already witnessed a certain display of events and come to be familiar with the actors of Iran's political drama. Global audiences had been 'shown' that the 'hard-liner' Ahmadinejad was a threat for the Iranian people —for the peaceful Iranians which, as everybody had 'seen', only claimed respect for their votes and safety as they protested peacefully against what seemed a massive fraud; a new victory of the ayatollahs' regime over democracy-willing Iranians.

In the same spirit, it can also be said that, by likening Ahmadinejad to a great dictator in the 'Great Dictator' story (Figure 7.3), the artists relies on demonisation to generate Ahmadinejad's alterity. The show of authoritarianism in the aftermath of June 2009 provides the true factual background and, as in the previous story, fingers point at Ahmadinejad for his responsibility on the post-electoral repression. Yet, by contrast with the former story, this piece is less capable of generating a straightforward emotional link between readers and the victims of authoritarian politics. My belief is that this is so because while the victims of repression (Iranians) are visually represented in Figure 7.2 through a vehicle as powerful as stains of blood, the story of the great dictator (Figure 7.3) relies on words rather than on images to, in fact, place Ahmadinejad in the position of the 'oppressor' and peaceful Iranians in the position of 'victims of oppression'. Therefore, it seems to be the case that, from a semiotic point of view, the use of a visual cue in Figure 7.2 (blood stains) is a more effective means for

crystallising the vision of Iranians as ‘victims’, while the written cue demands more elaboration (analysis) on the part of readers (Figure 7.3).

But it should be noted also that, as far as Iranians’ victimhood is concerned, the great dictator story is more ambiguous than the ‘bloodbath’ story. One needs to carefully read the text that ascribes meaning to the photomontage (Figure 7.3) in order to understand exactly why. The body of the text —remember it is a satirical story— makes two important assertions. The first is that Mousavi (Mir Hossein Mousavi, one of the ‘moderate’ rival candidates and leader of the Green Movement) declared that people would use all kinds of ‘peaceful weapons’ during protests. The second is that Ahmadinejad’s men dealt with demonstrators as if they were hooligans and beat them to death.

So, the critical issue is that, even though both the great dictator and the bloodbath story construct Ahmadinejad as the perpetrator/instigator of violent acts and Iranians as the victims of those acts, the vision of demonstrators having been armed with ‘peaceful weapons’ pictures the confrontation between the regime and the people in less uneven terms. In spite of the oxymoron implicit in the phrase ‘peaceful weapons’, the idea that people were armed somehow renders them less vulnerable than weaponless people, although it is difficult to discern which kind weapons are implicit here other than chants, slogans, banners and green ribbons. What is perhaps more consequential is that the story grants agency to another of the key political figures in the post-2009 scenario —Mir Hossein Mousavi— whom the story identifies as an opposition leader. This engenders the effect of picturing demonstrations as less of a spontaneous grass-roots response to Ahmadinejad’s alleged fraud, and more as organised rallies against the system’s dictates. Reading that people took to the streets because they were instigated by the losers at the elections could usher in a very different picturing of Iranians —more as an agency-less mass manipulated by the reform movement leaders, other than only victims of repression.

The vision of a demonic Ahmadinejad is absent from a story such as the one narrated in Figure 7.4. Here, the representation of a ‘feminine’ Ahmadinejad using a chador as a subterfuge to conceal his true identity seems to manifest the artist’s will at ridiculing the Iranian leader. But two issues need to be understood. The first issue is that, on the chador photomontage, the focus is neither on how the Iranian people lose

something (rights, dignity, voice) when they are cheated by authorities, nor on the consequences of demonstrating against the *nezam*'s will (the system's will)⁶². To be sure, the focus is not on the aftermath of the elections, but on Ahmadinejad's dishonest behaviour during the elections and the deceitful strategies employed to add up votes to his candidacy. This is a fundamental difference from the other election stories in our sample (7.2 and 7.3). The second issue (and the second key difference from 7.2 and 7.3) is that the photomontage is built upon a combination of 'true' and 'untrue' elements. What works as 'true' in the story is the widespread belief that the vote had been rigged. What is 'untrue' (it has not been documented and established as real; if it had, it would have been extremely hilarious) is that Ahmadinejad cross-dressed and rushed to a polling station to cast more votes than he had right to. It is untrue that Ahmadinejad used the strategy of dressing up like a woman to carry out the fraud with his own hands/body.

In sum, it becomes apparent that, rather than eulogising Ahmadinejad's stature as a politician, the cartoon pursues to draw the audience's attention to how the candidate for reelection put himself down for a few votes. Yet, an important effect of narrowing down the focus on Ahmadinejad (and of satirising his performance) is that it is implicitly assumed that one single person was able to engineer a massive electoral fraud, unless we construed that the story positions Ahmadinejad as a representative of the Iranian system (*versus* the people), which would render the system *in toto* responsible for the cheat (yet, I believe this is a less convincing interpretation). But other than this, what seems to be clear is that the cartoon manages to belittle Ahmadinejad by, first, ridiculing the means employed to enact the fraud; and, secondly, by keeping out of focus the 'truth' about violently smashed post-electoral protests, thus avoiding the president's vilification.

Thus far we have pondered over demonisation and belittling in relation to the post-2009 election stories, and we now turn to consider how these strategies are at work in the nuclear programme stories. My overall argument is that the boundary seems dark grey when it comes to deciding whether the nuclear stories demonise and/or belittle Ahmadinejad/Iranian authorities. Generally in these stories it is found that, despite

⁶² Ahmadinejad's continuity as president of the Islamic Republic was believed to be the Leader's will.

‘images themselves’ seeming to offer straightforward portrayals of Ahmadinejad/Iranian authorities, the wider discourse and policy contexts do not help disambiguate the meaning of images.

One reason for this is that, while the combination of ‘Iran’ and ‘nuclear’ stirs generalised anxiety in almost any context, the nuclear question is overall complex. Around the nuclear question many elements coalesce without them being fully clear for ‘expert’ (or the like) observers, less so by general publics: whether Iran is a NPT subscriber or not and what it means to be one, for which (civil/military) purposes nuclear energy is used, whether nuclear weapons are offensive or defensive, the role of the IAEA in monitoring proliferation and the distinct positions of actors involved in the Iran nuclear crisis. In the midst of complexity, ‘nuclear’ sounds scary and that often seems to be enough to predispose publics against potential nuclear states (especially if—or precisely because—they are ‘rogue’).

Another factor that contributes to the ambiguity in these visuals is that, to date, a ‘nuclear Iran’ has remained a possibility and not a tangible reality. In recent years, how Iranian authorities toy with that possibility has been subjected to scrutiny and criticism in policy and media circles. But often the issues discussed in those circles are the intentions, aspirations and final demands of the Islamic Republic *versus* the ‘international community’, as well as worst-case scenarios for a region with a nuclear Iran. It is overall unclear which major and definite achievements Iran has made with respect to nuclear capabilities and how close/far ‘We’ are from a nuclear Iran. Aprioristically, therefore, the lack of certainty about how long Iran has gone into her programme could be deterring the identification of Iran as real nuclear threat, and this might be a reason why at least I am not certain about whether Ahmadinejad/Iranian authorities are demonised in the TV sketch (where the nuclear story is principal) and in some of the political cartoons (Figures 7.5, 7.6 and 7.7). Let me explain why. (The story narrated in 7.8 is not a nuclear story but will be discussed in relation to this latter set).

Drawing on Hansen’s (2011) definition of ‘demonisation’, visuals’ representation of Others as barbaric, demonic or threatening are accompanied by implicit calls to subdue the securitised threat. Picking up this thread, it could be said that what we have in the nuclear stories is the construction of a threatening and perilous Iran that needs to be hold back. At first glance, this interpretation is compelling because, at

the end of the day, the vision of a nuclear Iran is little cherished in ‘the West’. Yet, the question is: who should take on the lead in subduing ‘Them’? And a previous one: who is really threatened by a nuclear Iran?

The TV sketch and the story about Iran’s ‘unstoppable nuclearisation’ (Figure 7.6) introduce a critical element absent in the rest of pieces. They both relate the constitution of the Iranian subject to the framework of the U.S.-Iran crisis. In the ‘Iran-going-nuclear-by-the-day’ piece (Figure 7.6), that framing is essentially what the story is about. Contrastingly, in the TV sketch, the U.S.-Iran standoff is a minor reference, but one that helps disambiguate the question of who is mostly threatened by Tehran’s nuclear aspirations and, correspondingly, should enact the responsibility of repressing their nuclear aspirations. Principally, the nuclear stories represent the threat of a nuclear Iran as a problem that needs to be dealt with by a world superpower like the U.S., whose interests (in furthering a U.S. hegemonic order) are also most directly threatened by a nuclearised Iran. Importantly, there is no suggestion whatsoever throughout the stories that the ‘international community’ (and not the U.S. single-handedly) should take the lead in handling the Iran problem.

Iran —Ahmadinejad, specifically— is also a threat to Israel. This is asserted in Reyes’ parody, which admits that an Iranian missile could hit ‘somewhere’; and in the ‘ape’ story (Figure 7.8) which warns about Iran possibly ‘going to war with Israel’. While, as said, the ‘ape’ story does not address the nuclear question, the identification of Iran as an aggressive and potentially offensive state evinces that the story in 7.8 is part of the narrative that constitutes Iran as a militant and non-contained Islamic Republic.

All this could mean that the nuclear stories picture a demonic Ahmadinejad. Yet, the ambivalence is major and the extra-textual context does not help disambiguate the meaning of these visuals. Needed Ahmadinejad’s excesses be interpreted as anything different than egotistic acts that Western media could use to perpetuate a reductionist vision of Iran? Could threats against Israel be materialised? How much enriched uranium did Iran keep away from international monitoring? Was Ahmadinejad worse than Bush, Netanyahu or the Saudi regime? The humour stories examined in this chapter were produced for the consumption of audiences/readerships that would not be previously fond of Ahmadinejad or the Iranian ‘regime’ —and the comic stories would

only confirm this perception—, yet what seems less clear to me is that there was consensus in Spain/the West as to the extent of the Iranian threat, except for in the particular context of the 2009 elections when everybody could agree that the Islamic Republic had crossed a red line. Thus, in a nutshell, the uncertainty about how dangerous Ahmadinejad was for the world (or whether he was an instrument of the Islamic Republic to counter America's hectoring foreign policy, for instance) is important to bear in mind here, and probably the reason that the Other represented in the visuals must be managed somehow because, at the end of the day, Ahmadinejad is not the only '(d)evil' that peoples the world.

7.5 Final remarks

The chapter has surveyed the representation of Ahmadinejad/Iran in humour stories produced by Spanish political cartoonists and a comedian. Throughout the first part of the analysis, the argument has been made that the comic stories resonate with the narrative of 'rogue states' and, in this vein, concentrate on framing up Ahmadinejad's roguery. Drawing extensively on Hansen (2011), the chapter has, in a second step, revisited the humour stories with the aim of discerning whether comic representations picture a demonic or a ridiculous Other. A major conclusion that can be drawn from the analysis is that comic stories are 'congruent with most popular views of the day' (Purcell et al. 2010, p. 379). To be sure, two interdependent conclusions are implicit here, which I will elaborate further as I deliberate on the extent to which the performative genres surveyed in this chapter offer a 'critical narration' (Hansen, 2011, p. 60) of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's presidency or Iranian politics more generally.

The first conclusion is that the satirical portrayal of Ahmadinejad/Iran in the former stories is overall congruent with the vision of Iran that dominated media and policy circles since the early 2000s, when Tehran had been designated as a member of the 'axis of evil' (State of the Union Address, 2002). The narrative of the axis of evil has been generally read as a continuation (or an update) of the rogue state narrative and that the principal promoter of these —non-hegemonic, yet dominant— visions of Iran was the U.S. government. Thus, an important conclusion that can be drawn from our analysis is that the representation of Iran advanced by Spanish humour discourse is in accord with the standpoint on Iran furthered by U.S. elites. Put differently, it has been

shown that U.S. practical discourse on Iran has got a clear influence on the popular imagination of Spanish humour-makers, whom produce the representation of Iran by reviving the terms of one of the most influential security narratives in the 20th century.

In line with this, another conclusion is that comic discourse does not embark on a ‘critical narration’ (Hansen, 2011, p. 60) of either the Ahmadinejad presidency or the Iranian political system —or rather, more specifically, of the two main themes elaborated in the stories: Iran’s nuclear programme and the 2009 presidential elections. As far as the nuclear programme is concerned, a critical positioning would have demanded that the nuclear energy story had a greater array of points of view, including the various points of view on the nuclear programme developed inside Iran. Also, a richer elaboration (and more critical elaboration) would have pointed at alternative storylines to the main viewpoint that colonises public discourse that ‘the West’ cannot live with a ‘nuclear Iran’. The logic behind this viewpoint is that the only sensitive way out of this is to prevent the Islamic Republic from going further with her programme.

As for what happened in Iran in 2009, a critical narration should have shown awareness that the lack of transparency in Iran’s electoral processes is a structural problem of the Islamic Republic’s political system, by which I do not mean to downplay the evidence accumulated against the 2009 process in particular. The other more general issue is that the focus on Ahmadinejad obscures the fact that the key to Iran’s political system (as regards both domestic and international matters) is the Office of the Supreme Leader and not the Presidency of the Republic.

Initiating this analysis with the argument that humour discourse locates Ahmadinejad/Iran in the position of the ‘rogue’ was a sensitive option because key elements of the rogue state narrative are present in the comic stories. As we have seen, there is the question of the nuclear programme (thus, the weapons-of-mass-destruction ingredient); there is the question about repression, lack of freedoms and prosecution of homosexuals (thus, the human-rights–violations ingredient); and there is the enmity with Israel, which on the other side implies that Iran lends support to groups that militate against Israel (thus, the sponsorship-of-terrorism ingredient). This interacts with other prevalent discourses such as the clash of civilisations and a cartographical discourse that enables the location of the Iranian subject in the cartography of danger (thus, in an unsafe place). Ultimately, humour discourse enables the positioning of the

Self/Other relationship within a moral framework of interpretation which renders evident that, what makes 'Them' different from 'Us' is their proneness to vice in lieu of virtue, where vice means non-compliance with the standards of modern international politics and with the hegemonic writers of modern international politics.

8. Conclusions

This study set out to investigate the representation of Iran in Spain on two levels of geopolitical discourse: practical and popular. The thesis' main research question —*How do dominant geopolitical discourses inform the imagination of Iran and how do diplomatic, literary and humour narratives constitute the Iranian subject?*— was built upon the implicit assumption that the representation of Iran in Spanish geopolitical discourse must have been 'under the jurisdiction' (Ashley, 1989, p. 281) of the discourses which predominantly inform the theory and practice of world politics; and, in this way, must have established some sort of engagement with the stories of Iran that proliferated in the aftermath of the 1979. These stories (disseminated by media and U.S. foreign policy circles, especially) reduced the definition of Iran to a few salient —and spectacular— markers of identity linked to the country's conversion into an 'Islamic' Republic.

Against a pessimistic initial intuition about a possible lack of originality as to how Iran would be pictured in practical and popular discourse in Spain, the work has shown that, altogether, the diplomatic, literary and humour narratives scrutinised in the previous chapters paint a complex subject. The colour intensities and forms of this painting, however, change depending on whether we look inside diplomacy, travel writing or humour discourse. Broadly speaking, the readings of Iran advanced by diplomats, travellers and humourists are composed, i.e. nourished by a semantic material that takes elements from ancient, modern and contemporary times; from high and low culture; from foreign policy and popular texts; from historical and anonymous characters; from the evocation of dream and threatening scenarios; from imported references, but also from 'our' own references. Through the interpretation of this material and how it is arranged to fit within narratives, the thesis has pursued to gain understanding of how the contours of the Iranian subject are delineated. From a theoretical point of view, compass has been found in Critical Geopolitics and critical scholars' commitment with the study of geopolitics insofar as it is a mode of knowing and representing the world.

Critical Geopolitics and the representation of Iran

One of the scholars whose work has been more pivotal to the development of Critical Geopolitics, Gearóid Ó Tuathail (1996a), wrote in his seminal *Critical Geopolitics* that ‘critical geopolitics is a tactical form of knowledge. It works within the conceptual infrastructures that make the geopolitical tradition possible and borrows from it the resources necessary for its deconstruction’ (p. 68). As a tactical form of knowledge, critical geopolitics practices a philosophy of knowledge that interrogates where spatial models/discourses come from, which ontological/epistemological/theoretical materials form their texture and which power projects they serve. What has been done in this investigation can be read, in the terms used by Ó Tuathail, as a tactical incursion into the intricacies of geopolitical discourse and of meaning-making about the international world more generally. In carrying out this tactical incursion, the thesis has navigated across various tensions —the canons within disciplines and the critical revolts against the canons, abstract discursive forms and actual discursive realisations, here and there, inside and outside, Self and Other, the elitist and the popular, positivist indoctrination and reflectivist alternatives, essentialisations and deconstructions, the material and the representational, etc.

Critical Geopolitics’ early strategic operations were devised to explore the consequences implicit in the claim that geopolitics is a constellation of spatial practices, both material and representational, that intervene in the production of global space. The definition of spatial practices as both material and representational needs to be accentuated because Ó Tuathail (1996b) in particular took issue with those who insisted in ‘reading international relations through an identity politics narrative’ (p. 647) —only. Such a limited enterprise, Ó Tuathail (1996b) contention was, should be overcome by developing political economy analyses in parallel to incursions into the sites of geopolitical discourse production. One of the pieces in which Ó Tuathail raised this point —‘Dissident IR and the identity politics narrative’ (1996b)— was a review article of David Campbell’s two early 1990s books —*Writing Security* (1992/1998) and *Politics Without Principle* (1993). The article revealed the author’s disbelief at this genre of works which put excessive emphasis on the problem of subjectivity, and instead disregard the economic-material framework within which international politics develops. Largely read as poststructuralist scholarship, the thrust of David Campbell’s

work was to critically analyse the performance of identity and the constitution of ‘the foreign’ and ‘foreignness’ in U.S. foreign policy discourse during and in the post Cold War. In contrast with Ó Tuathail’s (1996b) suspicions, for Dalby (1991), Campbell’s proposal was timely enough because ‘the essential moment of geopolitical discourse is the division of space into “our” place and “their” place; its political function being to incorporate and regulate “us” or “the same” by distinguishing “us” from “them”, “the same” from “the other”’ (p. 274).

A research is always a project limited in scope; limited in what it is able to illuminate or discern about an object of study. Thus, in the light of the debate on what a critical geopolitics practice should be able to do —namely, the aspirations that, insofar as tactical knowledge, critical geopolitics should meet—, it is fair to recognise that this dissertation has put more effort in the exploration of the representational practices by which geopolitical discourse designates ‘We-here’ and ‘They-there’ than in the study of that material practices that shape the reality of international politics (according to particular points of view). Consequently, some could raise the objection that the thesis has not done what Gearóid Ó Tuathail —and, of course, John Agnew— would have, which is to address the problem of subjectivity simultaneously with the critical analysis of the international political economy in order to comprehend the practices of representation that render global space legible *and* the material-economic bases that sustain particular geopolitical orders. To be sure, given that the main purposes of this dissertation were i) to explore the representation of Iran in Spain on two levels of geopolitical discourse (practical and popular); and ii) the constitution of the Iranian subject in diplomatic, literary and humour narratives, such absence was planned from the beginning.

This could usher in the conclusion that the dissertation has pursued to satisfy its goals following in the footsteps of Dalby (1990, 1991) and Campbell (1992/1998, 1993) instead of Ó Tuathail’s (1996a, 1996b, 1998b) or Agnew’s (1998/2003; and Agnew & Corbridge’s, 1995). And, on the contrary, it must be underscored that the thesis has seconded the framework for analysis developed by the latter group of authors, and has established its most important premises according to the tenets proposed by them: i) geopolitics is a mode of representing global space, ii) hegemonic states establish the dominant representations of global space articulated in the discourse of ‘intellectuals of

statecraft’, iii) geopolitical discourse is produced in practical, formal and popular sites of representation, but iv) the most influential representations (in performative-political terms) of global space are produced by practical geopolitical discourse. Furthermore, the thesis has established the arguments related to the development of the ‘modern geopolitical imagination’ (Agnew & Corbridge, 1995; Agnew, 1998/2003) and the contingent relationship between ‘geopolitical orders’ and ‘geopolitical discourses’ (Agnew, 1998/2003) as a theoretical-epistemological ground from which to undertake the exploration of the study case.

With this framework in mind, the thesis has set out to observe how Critical Geopolitics helps expand the understanding of how dominant geopolitical discourses inform the imagination of Iran; and, as far as our case is concerned, how practical and popular discourse relate.

Generally, it can be said that discourses inform the imagination of Iran by providing structures which the intellect uses to make the world intelligible, thus to render Iran a legible reality. When, as Critical Geopolitics posits, discourses are hegemonic, the representations of global space are always undertaken from the point of view and with the terms that the hegemonic discourse imposes. This investigation, however, has not asked about the hegemonic discourses that inform the imagination because the post-Cold War period has been defined as an era with no hegemonic discourse. In an empirical sense, therefore, it is more appropriate to talk about dominant discourses, as there are various discourses that compete for providing a unique structure of intelligibility to the theory and practice of world politics in the post-Cold War.

The theoretical premise that hegemonic or core states establish the terms of hegemonic geopolitical discourse could however been adopted in this thesis, first to accept that the U.S. was in that position during the Cold War and, secondly, to infer that in the same way that hegemonic powers write hegemonic geopolitical discourses, dominant powers write dominant geopolitical discourses that aim to be a dominant framework for interpreting the international/global. This renders U.S. geopolitical discourse (the discourse of U.S. ‘intellectuals of statecraft’) still an important reference for this investigation, especially what concerns the study of Spanish practical geopolitical discourse. (In relation to this, it must be said that this investigation set out to observe the incidence of dominant discourses over representations of Iran and not of

alternative non-dominant discourses). Another key premise adopted in this study was that three sites of representation participate in the production of geopolitical discourse: formal, practical and popular. Empirically, this thesis has only looked at representations of Iran in practical and popular discourse.

Now, what can be concluded is that Spanish practical geopolitical discourse influences Spanish popular geopolitical discourse, but at the same time both are influenced by U.S. practical discourse. As seen in Chapter Five, the influence of U.S. foreign elites discourse on Spanish ‘intellectuals of statecraft’ is major, in the sense that U.S. practical discourse on Iran is one hegemonic/dominant structure of signification in the Cold War/post-Cold War, but generally the discourse of diplomacy is critical of the U.S. visions on Iran. This is not the case in the discourse of humour, which draws direct inspiration from U.S. practical discourse on Iran and shows no capacity to revise it critically. This could be read as evidence that Spanish foreign policy discourse is largely absent from public debate of international politics, and therefore, has no capacity to penetrate the popular imagination. With regards to travel writing, the thesis has proceeded in different ways, not aiming to establish a link with U.S. practical discourse because the discussion of international politics is generally absent from literary discourse.

Subjects, Engagements and Narratives We Live By

Perhaps unsurprisingly, no argument in this thesis has countered the general idea that visions of Iran in Spain are nourished, in the first place, by a Cold War legacy, which is the essential evaluation of post-1979 Iran as a ‘disruptive’ element of the international order. It might not be surprising because the reading that the happening of the revolution was a major shock to world politics, and in particular to U.S. interests in the Gulf, dominated narrations of international politics since the early 1980s . Drawing on the analyses presented in Chapters Five to Seven, it can be generally concluded that the identification of Iran as a ‘disruptive’ subject is a condition of possibility of the revolutionary subject constructed in the stories of diplomats, travellers and humourists; and does not need to be explicitly articulated in narratives to inform the way in which ‘We’ see Iran. In this way, the sense of rupture cannot be detached from the condition of

‘revolutionary’ and permeates even the most innocuous stories through which Iran is rendered legible by diplomatic, literary and humour narratives.

Enabled by different geopolitical discourses, the diplomatic, literary and humour narratives of Iran studied in the thesis construct the Iranian revolutionary subject in two senses. Generally speaking, we have identified representations in which the subject of discourse is Iran understood as the ‘polity’ (‘regime’ and ‘people’) and other representations where the subject conveyed by discourse is rather the ‘place’. The construction of the first is usually tied up to the representation of Iran’s revolutionary governments and their behaviour. In this way, differences across subsequent Iranian governments, especially as regards their international behaviour and the relationship with ‘the West’ (U.S./Europe), inspire also specific constructions of Iran’s identity which, despite all, remains an essentially ‘revolutionary’ subject. For its part, the construction of the place ‘Iran’ is dependent on two overlapping identifications: that of Iran as a ‘revolutionary’ subject and that of Iran as an ‘Oriental’ subject. The identification of Iran as ‘Muslim’ or ‘Islamic’ is contained in both and cuts through them.

In diplomatic narratives and political humour, Iran’s alterity is mainly tied up to its constitution as a revolutionary polity; hence, the object of representation is the Islamic Republic (and its representatives) as a political system. As regards diplomatic narratives, the thesis major accomplishment has been to track down the specific ways in which the Islamic Republic’s revolutionary identity has been interpreted through time, which means that diplomatic discourse does not envision revolutionary Iran as a static subject. On the contrary, it exhibits malleability, which comes in response to how Self reads the domestic and international changes affecting Iran. Also, it must be said that, within the Iranian polity, diplomatic discourse establishes a division between the ‘regime’ and the ‘people’. It also recognises the plurality within the ‘regime’. The discourse of political humour also establishes the ‘regime’/ ‘people’ division, but gives a very limited account of the multi-factional nature of the Iranian ‘regime’. This conclusion nonetheless needs to be read aware that humour discourse is explored in relation to a small sample of texts.

Diplomatic and humour discourse share an intense engagement with the construction of the revolutionary subject in a narrow sense; that is, as concerns

revolutionary elites and the governments of the Islamic republic. Nonetheless, diplomatic discourse is capable of capturing the complexity of the revolutionary subject owing that it adopts of a long-term perspective on Hispano-Iranian political/diplomatic relations and to the general follow-up of how Spanish diplomatic discourse interacts with the West (U.S./EU) discourse on Iran. This enables the observation of how visions of Iran evolve from the early days of the revolution when the Islamic Republic was regarded as ‘something exotic and strange’ to nowadays when Iran is called a ‘friend’. Despite its involvement in the production of the elite revolutionary subject, humour discourse differs from diplomatic discourse in that it does participate in the constitution of the Iranian subject from the point of view of inter-state relations and/or from a long-term perspective. As suggested also earlier, the themes and temporal framework (related to Ahmadinejad presidency) of the representations of humour discourse are more specific than any of the two other sites explored in the thesis.

Enabled by the cartographic discourse spatialises the world into ‘here’ and ‘there’, in the narratives of the journey in Iran, the construction of the Iranian subject as ‘place’ takes centre stage. The Iranian ‘polity’ is also relevant, but mostly as far as the construction of the subject, ‘people’, is concerned. The discourse of travel literature generates a subject that is both ‘Oriental’ and ‘revolutionary’, which can in turn be seen as necessary conditions for the development of stories. Iran’s ‘Oriental’ identity enables the elaboration of narratives such that travelling facilitates learning and one’s connection with the non-material world because the Orient is ‘a space of release’. Even so, the fact of the Islamic Republic is inescapable and, therefore, other than through its Oriental identity, Iran’s ‘Islamic’ condition permeates tales of travel. Literary discourse allows the construction of an Iranian subject whose modernity has been suspended but could be restored because the Iranian subject is both ‘modern’ and ‘traditional’. Iran’s allure and desirability as a travel destination lies precisely here—in the reading that Iran’s turning into an Islamic Republic braked Iran’s engagement with progress. Importantly, travel discourse also develops the story that Iran is a ‘travellable’ country where a European woman can journey solo in spite of the Islamic Republic.

On the other hand, the representation of Iran in diplomatic, literary and humour narratives reveal the construction of a complex and multidimensional Other with which different engagements are sought. The theoretical understanding of identity and

difference as 'relational' and 'contingent' (Hansen, 2006) implies that discourse always places Selves and Others in relation to each other within world politics stories (Neumann, 1999). With respect to this, the thesis has pointed at different engagements of diplomats, travellers and humourists with the subject Iran, all of which are based upon an assumption of ethical asymmetry between 'Us' and 'Them' (often reinforced by a spatial asymmetry), which is determined by the definition of diplomacy, travel writing and the production of political humour as specific social practices.

From a practical point of view, diplomacy is involved in the cultivation of relations with other world entities, as well as with the mediation amongst strangers (Der Derian, 1987). The discourse of diplomacy constructs a Self which is the representative of a normative state (Spain's Western liberal democracy), *versus* an Other which is a non-normative state (the Islamic Republic). This distribution of positions sets the asymmetrical ground in which relations develop generally. Within this framework, the narratives construct a diplomatic subject which is responsive to Iran's political demands and aspirations, and to the Islamic Republic's demands of respect. The Self/Other relationship is based on the assumption of a responsibility on the part of Self as concerns Iran's ethico-political identity which perpetuates the vision of Iran's non-normative actual political identity. Diplomatic discourse concedes that there is a framework of international relations in which Iran can have a place as long as it adjusts to norms and standards of modern international politics. The significant issue is that diplomatic discourse recognises Iran's capacity to change her ethico-political, which is not the case in the comic representations of Iran, where the narrow reading of Iran's polity and the very literal reproduction of the narrative of rogue states does not allow to see an evaluation different than Iran cannot comply with the norms and standards of international politics. On the other hand, the discourse of humour takes on the responsibility of disclosing Iran's unruliness before an intended audience. It assumes that the Other is a subject that can be laughed at and criticised for its misbehaviour.

The asymmetry of Self/Other relations in travel stories is based on the division between the traveller/travel writer, who is the active maker of the story; and Iran, which is the passive recipient of the traveller's actions and of the travel writer's representations. The discourse of travel literature puts forward two assumptions of responsibility *vis-à-vis* the Other. On the one hand, what concerns the traveller's

determination to journey in Iran, discover the place and the people, and overcome the journey's hardships. On the other hand, what concerns the travel writer's commitment to narrate Iran for others and, what is more transcendental, to offer visions of Iran that show it more authentic.

Another major conclusion is that diplomacy and literary discourse adumbrate a complex subject which resists one-sided readings of the Other, by contrast with humour, which produces a more uniform Iranian subject. One argument for saying this is that while the 'regime'/'people' division is accepted in the three sites of representation, usually to underscore the distance of the 'people' from the 'regime' (or vice versa); the 'regime' is conceived of as a quasi monolithic entity in comic representations, while the division between 'reformists' and 'hardliners' is broadly accepted by diplomacy and travel writing —not to imply from this that the 'hardliners'/'reformists' division gives full account of Iran's multi-factional political establishment. The making of Iran also benefits —in terms of complexity— from the identification of 'traditional' and 'modern' elements (including political) within Iranian society. This division is mostly visible in travel narratives; it can be said to be implicit in diplomatic discourse; and not really addressed in humour discourse.

But two notes of caution are due here, since, as is obvious, the humour stories analysed in this work had a very particular thematic focus —Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. The analysis of comic stories featuring Ahmadinejad has not been seen as an obstacle for the investigation of the Iranian subject, yet it must be recognised that, by focusing on him, the analysis falls short to register an evolution in the way in which the discourse humour engages the Iranian subject, which hampers more complex elaborations. Another issue concerns, again, the distinct nature of diplomacy, travel writing and humour as regards their constitution as social practices. With respect to this, it can be hypothesised that the one-sided Iranian subject that appears in comic stories *versus* the complex subject that appears in travel writing and diplomatic discourse is directly related to the particular engagements of diplomats, travel writers and humourists with 'Them-there' —and, therefore, possibly to the fact that the representations of diplomats and travel writers are nourished by the ground-level experience of Iran. In the case of comic narratives, the thesis has assumed that, in the construction of stories, humour

discourse relied on ‘mediatised’ forms of knowledge. Evidence does not confirm otherwise.

Discourse Analysis and the representation of Iran

One important purpose in this thesis has been to ponder over how Discourse Analysis helps to illuminate the production of the Iranian subject in diplomatic, literary and humour narratives. Discourse Analysis has helped to understand how geopolitical discourses—the structures of signification through which world politics is spatialised by pointing out that ‘We-here’ and ‘They-there’ are different from each other as well as hierarchically ordered—enable the constitution of narrated ‘Selves’ and ‘Others’ in myriad practices of representation. The thesis has perused such constitution in diplomatic, literary and humour stories through various means, which include the identification of attributes (i.e. ‘I am *outlandish*’) or implicit attributions of identity (for instance, ‘Iran’s original *sin* was...’; Iran was ‘*sinner*’); and often by interpreting which constitution of identity/difference is articulated in large instances of text such as the following:

As I wait sat on a pile of carpets with Hajji baba sleeping in his couch and Reza arranging tea glasses by the samovar, I think again of how difficult it must be for the pragmatic mentality of Westerners, used to disposable objects, to appreciate the real and immense value of carpets: the most valuable belonging of nomads; a believed a permanent ground without which shepherds would be unable to move around and without which the tea ceremony would be senseless (Briongos, 2002, pp. 37-38).

The construction of an ‘Oriental’ Iran in this passage is accomplished through the display of many resources, including references to typical objects of Oriental scenery (‘a pile of carpets’, ‘tea glasses’) or by conferring on ‘Westerners’ distinct (opposite) features to Orientals such as ‘a pragmatic mentality’. In other cases (in the analysis of multimodal humouristic texts, especially), attention has been paid at non-linguistic modes of communication such as colour, painting, music, sound or body posture.

My purpose, in all events, has been to explore the making of meaning in texts participating in the construction of Iran’s identity/difference. But perhaps in contrast with more orthodox Discourse Analysis investigations, this thesis has found itself in need of arguing that bits of colour such as the ‘blood stains’ on one of the cartoons analysed in Chapter Seven, or the ‘muezzin call’ in the background of Reyes’ parody

also in Chapter Seven, are semiotic resources enabled by discourses to foster particular readings of Self/Other identities. Thereby, I am openly admitting that certain exigencies related to the interpretive practice that I performed could not be anticipated in advance, such as the handling of the overall complexity of meaning-making in multimodal texts and of different typologies of multimodal texts. Probably, this is hinting at the argument that critical geopolitical analysis, especially when it grounds its investigations in the interpretation of texts (of any kind), needs to take root in some theory of genre —or perhaps advance a theory of geopolitical textual genres— because, as it has turned out, it is not enough to divide discursive space into practical, formal and popular analysis and, on this unique basis, anticipate conclusions about how representation operates within these domains and which particular engagements genres establish with ‘the truth’, ‘power’ or ‘the political’.

The construction of Moral Space

Another major purpose in this thesis has been to calibrate what the analysis of the representation of Iran in Spanish geopolitical discourse suggests about the contemporary ways of visualising global space. Drawing on the evidence gathered, our main conclusion is that diplomatic, literary and humour narratives of Iran are nourished by, and simultaneously promote, readings of global space along ethical lines. Correspondingly, it can be said that one way in which post-Cold War geopolitical discourse spatialises international politics is through the uneven distribution of moral qualities across space, thus establishing a hierarchical distribution of positions between virtuous Selves and vicious Others.

This genre of conclusion was contained in our early argumentations when, in spite of having defined the post-Cold War era as a period of discursive instability, it was assumed that the Western imagination of Iran was overall saturated with visions of a ‘sinful’, ‘implosive’ and ‘disruptive’ Iran, which in the early 1990s was appointed a ‘rogue’ (‘aggressive’, ‘irrational’, ‘unpredictable’), and in the early 2000s was seen as part of an ‘axis of evil’. Ethical readings of Self and Other have, therefore, been part and parcel of the Post-Cold War lexicon for some decades now; and, despite non-hegemonic, this genre of visions coming out of the foreign policy discourse of the U.S.

have become part of the repertoire for discussing Iran's domestic and international politics.

However, the thesis demonstrates that diplomacy, travel writing and humour show different engagements with these prevalent visions. Firstly, diplomatic discourse offers constructions of the Iranian subject which seldom mimic the U.S. narratives of Iran (although it might replicate some terms). Rather, what we often find is a dialogue with them in which diplomatic discourse often punctuates why Spanish or European foreign policy elites hold visions of Iran that differ from the more generally extreme representations promoted by the U.S. In particular, within the practical geopolitics remit, this has allowed the flourishing of narratives related to particular junctures (such as the Khatami era) that pinpoint Iran's aperture and possibility of reform, and Spain's desire to endorse Iran's reform. Thus, it must be said that, albeit expressed in positive terms, this genre of narratives also reveal that discourse establishes different ethicalities for 'Us' and 'Them' often built around an ideal of political sophistication by which it is possible to differentiate virtuous Selves from evil Others.

The replication of this pattern can be seen in literary discourse, when author of *Negro sobre Negro* and *La Cueva de Alí Babá* expresses how much she would like to be a witness to Iran's reform. The striking contrast is found in humour discourse which, as has been shown, turns out to be rather uncritical with the U.S.-promoted discourse of roguery and, therefore, with the vision that the Iran stands for its evilness, unpredictability and authoritarian regime, for instance.

Now, it is important to realise that the non-reproduction (or only in some domains of discourse) of U.S. narratives of Iran does not usher in the conclusion that the epistemology of the modern geopolitical imagination is less at work in Spanish discourse than in U.S. discourse. The contemporary discourse of world politics, however, instead of reading the global surface with a temporal criterion (development/underdevelopment, for example) (the 'conversion of time into space' is the second operation of modern geopolitical imagination), promotes the 'conversion of ethics into space' (after Agnew, 1998/2003); that is, the ascription of moral qualities to a global surface in which opposing ethical identities can be fixed and where the conflict

is about how some subjects of the anarchic international scenario violate the ethical frontiers of the domestic political community (Campbell & Shapiro, 1999).

On the Enigma

This thesis began with a quotation which put that ‘Iran is an enigma’. At first glance, the utterance seemed to offer an anticipated justification for the hardship in understanding Iran and the things that go on ‘over there’, or perhaps a premature apology for possible wrong interpretations. Yet, this work’s purpose was not to discriminate the wrong from the good interpretations, the faulty from the faultless visions and the false from the true accounts. Rather, the aim of this work was to explore the interpretations, visions and accounts that make up the mosaic of the Spanish imagination of Iran. In the process, the thesis has tried to stay vigilant to the pretensions of critical analysis in that the discussion ought not to end up with the replacement of some ‘home truths’ (Agnew, 2006) by less familiar truths with a perhaps more sophisticated appearance. In sum, the work’s aim was to broaden the reflection on how the world—and its attending places, peoples and dramas—is thought of and represented and, ultimately, how the production of difference upholds and nourishes the asymmetry of Self/Other relations.

Also, there is no escaping the fact that the question of the enigma had resonances beyond the individual declaration, as it revives the modern disposition with respect to the non-European and non-Western world. Thus, the metaphor of Iran’s ‘enigma’ was chosen as an opening for this thesis because, enshrined within it one could detect the general standpoint of interpretation that prevails over the practical and popular representations of Iran brought under revision in this study. Not that a single phrase can condense the rich semantic map charted throughout the whole work but, in retrospect, it becomes apparent that the evaluation of Iran as ‘enigmatic’ anticipated important insights regarding the constitution of the Iranian subject in and through the stories of diplomats, travel writers and satirists. Also, the image of an enigmatic Iran pointed out an appreciable gap between the object of representation—Iran—and those who manufacture the representations who probably do not read themselves as enigmatic at all.

By surveying the representations of Iran available in diplomatic, travel and comic narratives the thesis has shown that such gap was not unbridgeable and that, in fact, myriad stories enable the legibility of post-revolutionary Iran. The appointment of diplomats, travellers and humourists as ‘translators’ of Iran’s meaning for Spanish audiences, readerships and the state indicates that the thesis has envisioned diplomacy, travel writing and satirical media as sites of representation particularly interesting to look from the point of view of the production of identity/difference due to their status as practical and popular domains of geopolitical discourse. In the case of diplomats and travellers, it was assumed that their positioning across ‘here’ and ‘there’ placed them in an authoritative position related to the asset of having been ‘over there’ —that is, in relation to their ‘experiential’ knowledge of Iran, which in the case of diplomats is also ‘expert’ knowledge. By contrast, humour stories show that one does not need to have been ‘over there’ in Iran to engage in the production/translation of Iran’s meaning for Spanish audiences through jokes and parody.

As said, this dissertation has contributed to our understanding of the complex ways in which the meaning of Iran is fabricated by practical and popular discourse in/from Spain, and also perhaps to the demystification of some ideas, such that Iran is essentially an enigma (perhaps a storied and contingent enigma, but not an essential one). This investigation being the first contribution to the topic, it can be said to have made manifold accomplishments. But what is perhaps more important, it has set the ground for future research and learnt from the difficulties encountered in the course of this project. The number of ways in which this study could be expanded is vast. The study of Hispano-Iranian relations could and should be continued; and special attention should be paid to economic relations and economic diplomacy because, after all, economic exchange has been the main responsible for the development of relations between Madrid and Tehran historically. Perhaps it is time, indeed, to broaden the analysis to better understand the interaction between the material practices and the representational practices that define the geopolitical order of our time and in our coordinates. From a methodological point of view, it would be interesting to continue experimenting with interviewing as a technique for geopolitical research. In relation to practical discourse also, more theorising could be done with respect to the geopolitical discourse of semi-peripheral and peripheral states, and investigate to which extent we

do not lose something when we establish the discourses of core countries as the main framework of reference.

Travel literature and humour also offer a world of possibilities for future investigations. For example, the study of contemporary travel literature in Iran could be brought into dialogue with the large family of travel books in the East in the Spanish tradition, as well as other traditions. The application of feminist theory to the study of travel writing should also continue to adumbrate interesting results, as it would allow to have a better comprehension of the different directions in which gender difference is produced in travel writing. Lastly, the relation between geopolitical discourse and satirical media is an incredibly fertile ground whose cultivation should not be delayed. Investigations might also want to shift the focus from the production of discourse to reception and understand in a deeper way how social consensuses are organised as to what is funny or laughable.

In the meantime, this thesis has taken steps in the examination of how geopolitical discourse in Spain constructs the representation of Iran through the mobilisation of a whole constellation of linguistic and non-linguistic signs and symbols. Indeed, it has shown that post-Cold War discourse makes available a semiotic repertoire made up by attributes and definitions ('rogue', 'evil', 'opening', 'transitioning', 'wise', 'noble', 'uncorrupted', 'revolutionary'), but also by icons (The Great Dictator), landscapes and scenarios (the bazaar, the desert, North and South Tehran, nuclear plants, tribal camps, etc.), objects (carpets, veils, miniatures, missile) and sounds (Oriental music and calls to prayer); all of which are put to work in the construction of Iran's meaning. Identifying the prevalence of this semiotic repertoire and understanding how discourse pours it into the representations of Iran has been a notable accomplishment in this work. This understanding should help to think of fruitful ways for investigating further the productivity of discourse from the point of view of the intersemiotic connections across sites of representation.

Conclusiones (en castellano)

Esta tesis nació con el propósito de investigar la representación de Irán en España en dos niveles del discurso geopolítico: práctico y popular. La principal pregunta de investigación de la tesis —*¿Cómo moldean los discursos geopolíticos dominantes la imaginación de Irán y de qué manera construyen al sujeto iraní las narrativas diplomáticas, literarias y del humor?*— se ha basado en una suposición implícita de que la representación de Irán en el discurso geopolítico debe haber estado “bajo la jurisdicción” (Ashley, 1989, p. 281) de los discursos dominantes que informan la teoría y la práctica de la política mundial y, por lo tanto, se debe haber relacionado de alguna manera con los relatos de Irán que comenzaron a proliferar tras el 79. Estas historias reducen la definición de Irán a unos pocos marcadores de la identidad —muchos de ellos espectaculares— vinculados a la conversión del país en una República Islámica.

Frente a una intuición inicial pesimista acerca de una posible falta de originalidad sobre cómo serían las visiones de Irán en el discurso práctico y popular español, este trabajo muestra que, tomadas en su conjunto, las narrativas diplomáticas, literarias y del humor examinadas en los capítulos previos, dibujan un sujeto complejo. Las intensidades de color y las formas de este dibujo, sin embargo, cambian dependiendo de que miremos al interior del discurso de la diplomacia, la literatura de viajes o el humor. En términos generales, las lecturas de Irán que ofrecen los diplomáticos, viajeros y humoristas son compuestas; esto es, se nutren de un material semántico que toma elementos de la antigüedad, de la modernidad y de la contemporaneidad; de la alta y la baja cultura; de los textos de la política y de los textos populares; de los personajes históricos y anónimos; de la evocación de escenarios de ensueño y también amenazantes; de las referencias importadas, pero también de “nuestras” referencias. A través de la interpretación de este material y cómo es ordenado para formar parte de narrativas, la tesis ha querido vislumbrar los contornos del sujeto iraní. Desde un punto de vista teórico, la tesis ha buscado la dirección de la Geopolítica Crítica y en el compromiso de los intelectuales críticos con el estudio de la geopolítica en tanto que modo de conocer y representar el mundo.

Geopolítica Crítica y la representación de Irán

Uno de los intelectuales cuyo trabajo ha sido más decisivo para el desarrollo de la Geopolítica Crítica, Gearóid Ó Tuathail (1996a) escribió en su obra de referencia —*Critical Geopolitics*— que ‘la geopolítica crítica es una forma táctica de conocimiento. Opera dentro de las infraestructuras conceptuales que dan forma a la tradición geopolítica y toma prestada de ellas los recursos necesarios para su deconstrucción’ (p. 68). En tanto que forma táctica de conocimiento, la geopolítica crítica practica una filosofía del conocimiento que interroga la procedencia de modelos espaciales/discursivos, los materiales ontológicos/epistemológicos/teóricos que los dotan de textura, y los proyectos de poder a los que sirven. Así, resulta aparente que la Geopolítica Crítica es un proyecto comprometido con la investigación de los nexos entre poder y conocimiento. Con todo, por lo tanto, puede interpretarse el planteamiento de esta investigación como una incursión en los entresijos del discurso geopolítico y la construcción del sentido sobre lo internacional/global de forma más general. Al llevar a cabo tal incursión táctica, esta tesis ha navegado entre varias tensiones —los cánones de las disciplinas y las revueltas críticas en contra de los mismos, formas discursivas abstractas y realizaciones discursivas concretas, aquí y allí, dentro y fuera, el Yo y el Otro, lo elitista y lo popular, el adoctrinamiento positivista y las alternativas reflectivistas, esencializaciones y deconstrucciones, lo material y lo representacional, etc.—.

Las primeras operaciones estratégicas de la Geopolítica Crítica fueron diseñadas para estudiar las consecuencias implícitas en la afirmación de que la geopolítica es una constelación de prácticas espaciales, tanto materiales como representacionales, que intervienen en la producción del espacio global. Es importante recalcar la caracterización de las prácticas espaciales como materiales y representacionales porque, en particular, Ó Tuathail (1996b) se mostró crítico con aquellos que insistían en ‘leer las relaciones internacionales a través de una narrativa de la política de la identidad’ (p. 647) —solamente—. La opinión de Ó Tuathail (1996b) era que un proyecto tan limitado debía ser superado realizando análisis de economía política en paralelo a la investigación de la producción del discurso geopolítico. Precisamente “Dissident IR and the identity politics narrative”, el artículo en el que revisa críticamente los trabajos de David Campbell realizados en los primeros años noventa— *Writing Security* (1992/1998) and *Politics Without Principle* (1993)—, es uno de los lugares donde desarrolla esta objeción. El artículo muestra el descrédito del autor frente al tipo de trabajos que ponen un excesivo énfasis en el problema de la subjetividad, y en cambio pasan por alto el marco económico-material dentro del cual se desarrolla la política internacional. Ampliamente leído como un autor postestructuralista, el objetivo

del trabajo de David Campbell era realizar un análisis crítico de la actuación de la identidad y la constitución de “el extranjero” y “lo extranjero” en el discurso de la política exterior estadounidense durante y tras la Guerra Fría. Como contraste a las sospechas de Ó Tuathail (1996b), para Dalby (1991), la propuesta de Campbell estaba lo suficientemente justificada porque “el momento esencial del discurso geopolítico es la división del espacio entre ‘nuestro’ y ‘vuestro’ espacio; siendo la función de este la de incorporar y regular al ‘nosotros’ o a ‘los semejantes’ a través de la diferenciación entre ‘nosotros’ y ‘ellos’, entre ‘el semejante’ y ‘el otro’” (p. 274).

Una investigación siempre es un proyecto de alcance limitado; limitado en lo que es capaz de iluminar o discernir acerca de un objeto de estudio. Por lo tanto, a la luz del debate acerca de qué es lo que una práctica de geopolítica crítica debería ser capaz de hacer —es decir, los objetivos a los que debería aspirar la geopolítica crítica en tanto que forma táctica de conocimiento—, es justo reconocer que esta tesis ha puesto más empeño en estudiar las prácticas de representación a través de las cuales el discurso geopolítico designa un “Nosotros-aquí” y un “Ellos-allí” que en el estudio de las prácticas materiales que conforman la realidad de la política internacional (de acuerdo con algunos puntos de vista). En consecuencia, alguien podría objetar que la tesis no ha hecho lo que Gearóid Ó Tuathail —y, por supuesto también, John Agnew— habría hecho, que es tratar el problema de la subjetividad de forma simultánea a un análisis crítico de la economía política internacional con el fin de comprender las prácticas de representación a través de las cuales leemos el espacio global y las bases materiales-económicas que sostienen determinados órdenes geopolíticos. A decir verdad, dado que los principales objetivos de esta tesis eran i) explorar la representación de Irán en España en dos niveles del discurso geopolítico (práctico y popular); y ii) la constitución del sujeto iraní en narrativas diplomáticas, literarias y humorísticas, esta ausencia estaba planeada desde el principio.

De ello podría deducirse que la tesis ha tratado de conseguir sus objetivos siguiendo la estela de Dalby (1990, 1991) y Campbell (1992/1998, 1993) más que la de Ó Tuathail (1996a, 1996b, 1998b) o Agnew (1998/2003; y Agnew & Corbridge, 1995). Por el contrario, es preciso recordar que esta tesis ha secundado el marco de análisis desarrollado por este último grupo de autores, y ha establecido sus premisas más importantes de acuerdo con los principios que ellos proponen: i) la geopolítica es un

modo de representación del espacio global; ii) los estados hegemónicos establecen las representaciones dominantes del espacio global, siendo estas articuladas en el discurso de los “intelectuales de gobierno”; iii) el discurso geopolítico es producido en ámbitos de representación práctica, formal y popular; iv) pero las representaciones del espacio global más influyentes (en términos performativos-políticos) las produce el discurso geopolítico práctico. Además, la tesis ha tomado la argumentación en torno al desarrollo de la “imaginación geopolítica moderna” (Agnew & Corbridge, 1995; Agnew, 1998/2003) y la relación contingente entre “órdenes geopolíticos” y “discursos geopolíticos” (Agnew, 1998/2003) como base teórico-epistemológica desde donde adentrarse en el examen del estudio de caso.

Con este telón de fondo, la tesis se ha propuesto observar de qué manera la Geopolítica Crítica ayuda a aumentar el entendimiento de cómo los discursos dominantes de la geopolítica moldean la imaginación de Irán; y, en lo que se refiere a nuestro caso particular, de qué manera se relacionan discurso práctico y popular.

De forma general, puede decirse que los discursos moldean la imaginación de Irán al proporcionar estructuras que el intelecto utiliza para hacer el mundo inteligible; esto es, hacer que Irán sea una realidad legible. Cuando, en la hipótesis de la Geopolítica Crítica, los discursos son hegemónicos, las representaciones del espacio global siempre toman como referencia el punto de vista y los términos que impone el discurso hegemónico. Sin embargo, la pregunta de investigación no hace referencia a los discursos hegemónicos porque el periodo tras la Guerra Fría ha sido definido como una era sin discurso hegemónico. En un sentido empírico, entonces, resulta más apropiado hablar de discursos dominantes, ya que hay varios discursos que compiten por proporcionar una estructura de inteligibilidad única a la teoría y práctica de la política mundial en la Posguerra Fría.

Sin embargo, la premisa teórica de que los estados hegemónicos o de centro establecen los términos del discurso geopolítico hegemónico sí ha podido ser adoptada en la tesis, primero para aceptar que los Estados Unidos estaban en esta posición durante la Guerra Fría y, en segundo lugar, para inferir que de la misma manera que los poderes hegemónicos escriben discursos geopolíticos hegemónicos, los poderes dominantes escriben discursos geopolíticos dominantes que se proponen convertirse en la manera dominante de referencia lo internacional/global. Esto hace que el discurso

geopolítico estadounidense (el discurso de sus “intelectuales de gobierno”) siga siendo una referencia importante para esta investigación, especialmente en lo que se refiere al estudio del discurso geopolítico práctico español. (En relación con esto, hay que decir que esta investigación comenzó para observar la incidencia de los discursos dominantes sobre las representaciones de Irán y no de discursos alternativos no dominantes). Otra premisa clave adoptada en este estudio fue que tres son los sitios de representación que participan en la producción del discurso geopolítico: formal, práctico y popular. Empíricamente, esta tesis sólo ha considerado las representaciones de Irán en el discurso práctico y popular.

Ahora bien, lo que se puede concluir es que el discurso geopolítico práctico español influye en el discurso geopolítico popular español, pero al mismo tiempo ambos están influenciados por el discurso práctico estadounidense. Como se vio en el Capítulo Cinco, la influencia del discurso de las élites que formulan la política exterior de Estados Unidos sobre los “intelectuales de gobierno” españoles es importante, en el sentido de que el discurso práctico de Estados Unidos sobre Irán ha sido tradicionalmente una estructura de significación hegemónica/dominante en la Guerra Fría/Posguerra Fría. Sin embargo, en general el discurso de la diplomacia es crítico con las visiones de Estados Unidos sobre Irán. Este no es el caso en el discurso del humor, que se inspira directamente en el discurso práctico de Estados Unidos sobre Irán y no muestra capacidad de revisión crítica. Esto podría interpretarse como una prueba de que el discurso de la política exterior española está en gran medida ausente del debate público de política internacional y, por lo tanto, no tiene capacidad para penetrar en el imaginario popular. Con respecto a la escritura de viajes, la tesis ha procedido de diferentes maneras, no apuntando a establecer un vínculo con el discurso práctico de Estados Unidos porque la discusión de la política internacional está generalmente ausente del discurso literario.

Sujetos, visiones y narraciones por las que vivimos

Tal vez no sea sorprendente que ningún argumento de esta tesis haya contrarrestado la idea general de que las visiones de Irán en España se nutren, en primer lugar, de un legado de la Guerra Fría, que es la evaluación esencial del Irán posrevolucionario como un elemento “perturbador” del orden internacional. Puede que no sea sorprendente

porque la lectura de que el suceso de la revolución fue un gran *shock* para la política mundial, y en particular para los intereses de Estados Unidos en el Golfo, dominó las narraciones de la política internacional desde principios de la década de 1980. En base a los análisis de los Capítulos Cinco a Siete, se puede concluir que la identificación de Irán como un sujeto “perturbador” es una condición de posibilidad del sujeto revolucionario, y no necesita ser explícitamente articulada en narrativas para moldear la manera en que “nosotros” vemos a Irán. El sentido de ruptura no puede separarse de la condición de “revolucionario” e impregna incluso las historias más inocuas a través de las cuales la diplomacia, la literatura y el humor construyen el sentido de Irán.

Habilitadas por diferentes discursos geopolíticos, las narrativas diplomáticas, literarias y humorísticas de Irán estudiadas en la tesis construyen el sujeto revolucionario iraní en dos sentidos. Tenemos, por un lado, las cuestiones que se refieren al “orden político” y, por otro lado, a Irán como “lugar”. La construcción del primero depende en gran medida de la evaluación del comportamiento de los gobiernos revolucionarios. De esta manera, las diferencias entre los sucesivos gobiernos iraníes, especialmente en lo que se refiere a su comportamiento internacional y a la relación con Occidente (EE.UU./Europa), han inspirado también diferentes construcciones de la identidad iraní que siguen siendo esencialmente “revolucionarias”. Por su parte, la construcción del lugar “Irán” depende de dos identificaciones superpuestas: la de Irán como sujeto “revolucionario” y la de Irán como sujeto “oriental”. La identificación de Irán como “musulmán” o “islámico” está contenida en ambos y los atraviesa.

En las narrativas diplomáticas y el humor político, la alteridad de Irán se refiere principalmente a su constitución como un sistema político revolucionario; por lo tanto, el objeto de la representación es la República Islámica (y sus representantes) en tanto que sistema político. En cuanto a las narrativas diplomáticas, la mayor contribución de la tesis es rastrear las formas específicas en que la identidad revolucionaria de la República Islámica ha sido interpretada a través del tiempo, lo que significa que la visión del Irán revolucionario no es estática. Por el contrario, muestra maleabilidad y responde a los cambios en la visión de lo que ocurre e Irán a nivel doméstico e internacional. Además, hay que decir que, dentro del sistema político iraní, el discurso diplomático establece una división entre el “régimen” y el “pueblo”. También reconoce la pluralidad dentro del régimen. El discurso del humor político también establece la

división entre “régimen”/ “pueblo”, pero no da demasiada cuenta de la naturaleza multifacética del “régimen” iraní. En todo caso, esta conclusión está sujeta a la consideración de que el discurso del humor investigado en esta tesis está basado en el análisis de una pequeña cantidad de textos.

El discurso diplomático y humorístico comparten un intenso compromiso con la construcción del sujeto “revolucionario” en un sentido estricto; es decir, en el sentido de las élites revolucionarias y los gobiernos de la República Islámica. Sin embargo, el discurso diplomático ofrece un relato más rico que deriva de la adopción de una perspectiva a largo plazo sobre las relaciones político-diplomáticas hispano-iraníes. Esto permite observar cómo evolucionan las visiones de Irán desde los primeros días de la revolución, cuando la República Islámica era considerada como “algo exótico y extraño”, hasta hoy en día, cuando Irán es llamado “amigo”. A pesar de estar involucrado en la producción del sujeto revolucionario (referido a las elites), el discurso humorístico difiere del discurso diplomático en que no trata con el Otro desde el punto de vista de las relaciones interestatales y/o desde una perspectiva a largo plazo. Como se sugirió anteriormente, los temas y el marco temporal (relacionado con la presidencia de Ahmadinejad) de las representaciones del discurso humorístico son más específicos que cualquiera de los otros dos ámbitos de representación explorados en la tesis.

Habilitadas por el discurso cartográfico que divide al mundo entre “aquí” y “allí”, en las narrativas del viaje por Irán, la construcción del sujeto iraní como “lugar” ocupa un lugar central. El “orden político” iraní también es relevante, pero sobre todo en lo que se refiere a la construcción del sujeto “pueblo”. El discurso de la literatura de viajes genera un sujeto que es a la vez “oriental” y “revolucionario”, que a su vez puede ser visto como una condición necesaria para el desarrollo de las historias. La identidad “oriental” de Irán permite la elaboración de narrativas tales que los viajes facilitan el aprendizaje y la conexión con el mundo no material porque Oriente es “un espacio de liberación”. Aún así, el hecho de la República Islámica es innegable y, más allá de su identidad oriental, la condición “islámica” de Irán impregna las historias de viajes. Ello además permite la construcción de un sujeto iraní cuya modernidad ha sido suspendida pero que podría ser restaurada porque el sujeto iraní es tanto “moderno” como “tradicional”. El atractivo y la conveniencia de Irán como destino del viaje contemporáneo se encuentran precisamente aquí, en la lectura de que la transformación

de Irán en una República Islámica frenó el compromiso de Irán con el progreso. Es importante destacar que el discurso de los viajes también desarrolla la historia de que Irán es un país “viajable” al que una mujer europea puede viajar sola a pesar de la República Islámica.

Por otro lado, la representación de Irán en narrativas diplomáticas, literarias y humorísticas revela la construcción de un Otro complejo y multidimensional con el que se buscan diferentes compromisos. La comprensión teórica de la identidad y la diferencia como “relacional” y “contingente” (Hansen, 2006) implica que el discurso siempre sitúa al Yo y al Otro en relación el uno con el otro dentro de las historias de la política mundial (Neumann, 1999). A este respecto, la tesis ha apuntado a diferentes compromisos de diplomáticos, viajeros y humoristas con el sujeto iranín, todos ellos basados en una asunción de asimetría ética entre “nosotros” y “ellos” (también subrayada por una asimetría espacial), que viene determinada por la definición de diplomacia, la escritura de viajes y la producción de humor político como prácticas sociales específicas.

Desde un punto de vista práctico, la diplomacia está involucrada en el cultivo de relaciones con otras entidades mundiales, así como en la mediación entre extraños (Der Derian, 1987). El discurso de la diplomacia construye un Yo que es el representante de un Estado normativo (la democracia liberal occidental española), frente a un Otro que es un Estado no normativo (la República Islámica). Esta distribución de posiciones establece el terreno asimétrico en el que se desarrollan las relaciones en general. A su vez, las narrativas construyen un sujeto diplomático que responde a las demandas y aspiraciones políticas de Irán y a las demandas de respeto de la República Islámica. La relación Yo/Otro se basa en la asunción de una responsabilidad con respecto a la identidad ético-política de Irán por parte del Yo que perpetúa la visión de la diferencia actual de identidad ético-política de Irán. El discurso diplomático concede que existe un marco de relaciones en el que Irán puede tener un lugar siempre que se ajuste a las normas y estándares de la comunidad internacional. En este sentido, lo significativo es que el discurso diplomático reconoce la capacidad de Irán para moldear su identidad ético-política, lo que no ocurre en los relatos cómicos analizados en donde la lectura estrecha de la política iraní no desencadena la inferencia de que Irán pueda cumplir con las normas y estándares de la política internacional. El discurso del humor asume la

responsabilidad de revelar la desobediencia de Irán ante un público potencial. Asume que el Otro es un sujeto del que se puede reír y criticar por su mal comportamiento.

La asimetría de las relaciones entre el Yo y el Otro en los relatos de viajes se basa en la división entre el viajero/escritor de viajes, que es el creador activo de la historia; e Irán, que es el receptor pasivo de las acciones del viajero y de las representaciones del escritor de viajes. El discurso de la literatura de viajes plantea dos supuestos de responsabilidad frente al Otro. Por un lado, lo que concierne a la determinación del viajero de viajar por Irán, descubrir el lugar y la gente y superar las dificultades del viaje. Por otro lado, lo que concierne al compromiso del escritor de viajes de narrar Irán para otros y, lo que es más trascendental, ofrecer visiones de Irán que lo muestren más auténtico.

Otra conclusión importante es que la diplomacia y el discurso literario adumbran un sujeto complejo que se resiste a las lecturas unilaterales del Otro, en contraste con el humor, que produce un sujeto iraní más uniforme. Un argumento para decir esto es que mientras que la división “régimen”/ “pueblo” es aceptada en los tres ámbitos de representación, usualmente para subrayar la distancia del “pueblo” el “régimen” (o viceversa); el “régimen” es concebido como una entidad cuasi monolítica en las representaciones cómicas, mientras que la división entre “reformistas” y “duros” es ampliamente aceptada por la diplomacia y la escritura de viajes —sin insinuar con ello que la división entre “duros”/ “reformistas” da cuenta esencialmente de cómo se divide el campo político multifaccional de Irán. La fabricación del sujeto iraní también se beneficia —en términos de complejidad— de la identificación de elementos “tradicionales” y “modernos” (incluyendo los políticos) dentro de la sociedad iraní. Esta división es sobre todo visible en los relatos de viajes; puede decirse que está implícita en el discurso diplomático; y no se aborda realmente en el discurso del humor.

Pero aquí se deben hacer dos advertencias, ya que, como es obvio, las historias humorísticas analizadas en este trabajo tenían un enfoque temático muy particular — Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. El análisis de las historietas de Ahmadinejad no se ha considerado un obstáculo para la investigación del sujeto iraní, pero al enfocarse en él, el análisis se queda corto para registrar la evolución en la forma en que el humor se relaciona con el sujeto iraní, lo que dificulta elaboraciones complejas. De nuevo, otra cuestión se refiere a la naturaleza distinta de la diplomacia, la escritura de viajes/viajes y

el humor en términos de práctica social. Con respecto a esto, se puede plantear la hipótesis de que el sujeto iraní unilateral que aparece en las historias cómicas *versus* el sujeto complejo que aparece en la escritura de viajes y en el discurso diplomático está directamente relacionado con los compromisos particulares de los diplomáticos, escritores de viajes y humoristas con “Ellos-Allí” —y, por lo tanto, posiblemente con el hecho de que las representaciones de diplomáticos y escritores de viajes se nutren de la experiencia en el terreno de Irán. En el caso de las narrativas cómicas, la tesis ha supuesto que, en la construcción de los relatos, el discurso humorístico se basa en formas de conocimiento “mediatizadas”. La evidencia recogida no apunta a una dirección distinta.

Análisis del discurso y la representación de Irán

Un propósito importante en esta tesis ha sido reflexionar sobre cómo el Análisis del Discurso ayuda a iluminar la producción del sujeto iraní en narrativas diplomáticas, literarias y humorísticas. El análisis del discurso ha ayudado a comprender cómo los discursos geopolíticos —las estructuras de significación a través de las cuales se espacializa la política mundial, al señalar que “Nosotros-aquí” y “Ellos-allí” son diferentes entre sí y están ordenados jerárquicamente— permiten la constitución de “Yoes” y “Otros” narrados en multitud de prácticas de representación. La tesis ha examinado esa constitución en historias diplomáticas, literarias y humorísticas por diversos medios, que incluyen la identificación de atributos (por ejemplo, “soy extravagante”) o atribuciones implícitas de identidad (por ejemplo, “el pecado original de Irán fue...”; Irán era un “pecador”); y a menudo interpretando qué constitución de identidad/diferencia se articula en grandes fragmentos de texto como el siguiente:

Mientras espero sentado en una pila de alfombras con el baba Hajji durmiendo en su sofá y Reza colocando vasos de té junto al samovar, pienso de nuevo en lo difícil que debe ser para la mentalidad pragmática de los occidentales, acostumbrados a los objetos desechables, apreciar el valor real e inmenso de las alfombras: la pertenencia más valiosa de los nómadas; un suelo permanente sin el cual los pastores serían incapaces de moverse y sin el cual la ceremonia del té carecería de sentido (Briongos, 2002, pp. 37-38).

La construcción de un Irán “oriental” en este pasaje se logra a través de la exhibición de muchos recursos, incluyendo referencias a objetos típicos del paisaje oriental (“una pila de alfombras”, “vasos de té”) o confiriendo a los “occidentales” rasgos distintos

(opuestos) a los orientales, como “una mentalidad pragmática”. En otros casos (especialmente en el análisis de textos humorísticos multimodales), se ha prestado atención a modos de comunicación no lingüísticos como el color, la pintura, la música, el sonido o la postura corporal.

Mi propósito, en todo caso, ha sido explorar la construcción de sentido en textos que participan en la construcción de la identidad/diferencia de Irán. Pero quizás en contraste con las investigaciones más ortodoxas del Análisis del Discurso, esta tesis se ha visto en la necesidad de argumentar que retazos de color como las “manchas de sangre” en una de las caricaturas analizadas en el Capítulo Siete, o la “llamada a la oración del muecín” en el trasfondo de la parodia de Reyes, también en el Capítulo Siete, son recursos semióticos habilitados por los discursos para fomentar lecturas particulares de las identidades del Ser/Otro. Por lo tanto, estoy admitiendo abiertamente que ciertas exigencias relacionadas con la práctica interpretativa que he llevado a cabo no podían anticiparse de antemano, como por ejemplo el manejo de la complejidad general de la construcción de significados en textos multimodales y con diferentes tipologías de textos multimodales. Probablemente, esto insinúa el argumento de que el análisis geopolítico crítico, especialmente cuando basa sus investigaciones en la interpretación de textos (de cualquier tipo), necesita extraer fundamentos de alguna teoría del género —o quizá avanzar en una teoría de los géneros textuales geopolíticos— porque, como se ha visto, no basta con dividir el espacio discursivo en un análisis práctico, formal y popular y, sobre esta base única, anticiparse a las conclusiones acerca de cómo opera la representación dentro de estos dominios y qué compromisos particulares establecen los géneros con “la verdad”, “el poder” o “lo político”.

La construcción del Espacio Moral

Otro de los principales objetivos de esta tesis ha sido calibrar lo que el análisis de la representación de Irán en el discurso geopolítico español sugiere sobre las formas contemporáneas de visualizar el espacio global. Sobre la base de las pruebas reunidas, nuestra principal conclusión es que las narrativas diplomáticas, literarias y humorísticas del Irán se nutren de lecturas del espacio mundial, que al mismo tiempo promueven, de acuerdo con criterios éticos. En consecuencia, puede decirse que una de las formas en

que el discurso geopolítico de la Posguerra Fría espacializa la política internacional es a través de la distribución desigual de cualidades morales a través del espacio, estableciendo así una distribución jerárquica de las posiciones entre los “Yoes virtuosos” y los “Otros viciosos”.

De alguna manera, una conclusión de este tipo ya estaba contenido en nuestras primeras argumentaciones cuando, a pesar de haber definido la era posterior a la Guerra Fría como un período de inestabilidad discursiva, se asumió que la imaginación occidental de Irán estaba en general saturada de visiones de un Irán “pecaminoso”, “implosivo” y “perturbador”, que a principios de la década de 1990 fue designado como un Irán “canalla” (“agresivo”, “irracional”, “impredecible”), y que a principios de la década de 2000 fue visto como parte de un “eje del mal”. Por lo tanto, las lecturas éticas del Yo y del Otro han sido parte integrante del léxico de la Posguerra Fría desde hace algunas décadas; y, a pesar de no ser hegemónicas, este género de visiones que surgen del discurso de política exterior de Estados Unidos se han convertido en parte del repertorio para discutir la política nacional e internacional de Irán.

Sin lugar a dudas, la tesis demuestra que la diplomacia, la escritura de viajes y el humor ofrecen diferentes compromisos con estas visiones dominantes. En primer lugar, el discurso diplomático ofrece construcciones del sujeto iraní que rara vez imitan las narrativas de Estados Unidos sobre Irán (aunque podría replicar algunos términos). Más bien, lo que a menudo encontramos es un diálogo con ellos en el que el discurso diplomático suele puntuar por qué las élites de la política exterior española o europea tienen visiones de Irán que difieren de las representaciones más generalmente extremas promovidas por Estados Unidos. En particular, dentro del ámbito de la geopolítica práctica, esto ha permitido el florecimiento de narrativas relacionadas con coyunturas particulares (como la era de Jatami) que apuntan a la apertura de Irán y a la posibilidad de reforma, así como el deseo de España de apoyar la reforma de Irán. Por lo tanto, hay que decir que, aunque expresado en términos positivos, este género de narrativas también revela que el discurso establece diferentes éticas para “nosotros” y “ellos”, a menudo construidas en torno a un ideal de sofisticación política por el cual es posible diferenciar los “Otros malvados” de los “Yoes virtuosos”.

La réplica de este patrón se puede ver en el discurso literario, cuando la autora de *Negro sobre Negro* y *La Cueva de Alí Babá* expresa cuánto le gustaría ser testigo de la reforma de Irán. El contraste llamativo se encuentra en el discurso humorístico que, como se ha demostrado, resulta poco crítico con el discurso del estado canalla promovido por Estados Unidos y, por lo tanto, con la visión de que Irán representa la maldad, la imprevisibilidad y el autoritarismo, por ejemplo.

Ahora bien, es importante darse cuenta de que la no reproducción (o sólo en algunos dominios del discurso) de las narrativas estadounidenses sobre Irán no lleva a la conclusión de que la epistemología de la imaginación geopolítica moderna está menos presente en el discurso español que en el de Estados Unidos. El discurso contemporáneo de la política mundial, no obstante, en lugar de leer la superficie global con un criterio temporal (desarrollo/subdesarrollo, por ejemplo) (la “conversión del tiempo en espacio” es la segunda operación de la imaginación geopolítica moderna), promueve la “conversión de la ética en espacio” (después de Agnew, 1998/2003); esto es, la adscripción de cualidades morales a una superficie global en la que pueden fijarse identidades éticas contrapuestas y donde el conflicto versa acerca de cómo algunos sujetos del anárquico escenario internacional violentan las fronteras éticas de la comunidad política doméstica (Campbell & Shapiro, 1999).

Sobre el Enigma

La tesis comenzó con una cita que decía que “Irán es un enigma”. A primera vista, la declaración parecía ofrecer una justificación anticipada para la dificultad de entender a Irán y las cosas que suceden “allí”, o quizás una disculpa prematura por posibles interpretaciones erróneas. Sin embargo, el propósito de este trabajo no ha sido discriminar entre las malas y las buenas interpretaciones, entre las visiones malas o las impecables y entre lo falso y los relatos verdaderos. Más bien, el objetivo ha consistido en explorar las interpretaciones, visiones y relatos que conforman el mosaico del imaginario español de Irán. En el proceso, se ha tratado de permanecer atenta a las pretensiones del análisis crítico en el sentido de que la discusión no debería terminar con el reemplazo de algunas “verdades caseras” (Agnew, 2006) por verdades menos familiares con una apariencia quizás más sofisticada. En resumen, el objetivo de la obra

ha sido ampliar la reflexión acerca de cómo se piensa y se representa el mundo —y sus lugares, pueblos y dramas presentes— y, en última instancia, cómo la producción de la diferencia sostiene y nutre la asimetría de las relaciones entre uno mismo y los demás.

Asimismo, no puede eludirse el hecho de que la cuestión del enigma tuvo resonancia más allá de la declaración individual, ya que reaviva la disposición moderna con respecto al mundo no europeo y no occidental. Así, la metáfora del “enigma” iraní fue escogida como apertura para la investigación porque en ella se encarna el punto de vista general de interpretación que prevalece sobre las representaciones prácticas y populares de Irán y que el trabajo analiza. No es que una sola frase pueda condensar el mapa semántico trazado a lo largo de toda la obra, pero, en retrospectiva, resulta evidente que la evaluación de Irán como “enigmático” anticipa importantes percepciones sobre la constitución del tema iraní en y a través de las historias de diplomáticos, escritores de viajes y satíricos. Asimismo, la imagen de un enigmático Irán señala una apreciable brecha entre el objeto de representación —Irán— y los que fabrican las representaciones.

Al examinar las representaciones del Irán disponibles en los relatos diplomáticos, de viajes y del humor, la tesis muestra que la brecha no es insalvable y que, de hecho, se generan innumerables historias para permitir la legibilidad del Irán posrevolucionario. La designación de diplomáticos, viajeros y humoristas como “traductores” del significado de Irán para el público español, los lectores y el Estado indica que la investigación ha conferido a la diplomacia, la literatura de viajes y el humor un lugar interesante para el estudio de la identidad y la diferencia en tanto que ámbitos de representación de la geopolítica práctica y popular. En el caso de diplomáticos y viajeros, se asume que su posicionamiento a través de “aquí” y “allí” los coloca en una posición de autoridad relacionada con la ventaja de haber estado “allí”— es decir, en relación con su conocimiento “experiencial” de Irán, que en el caso de los diplomáticos es también un conocimiento “experto”. Por el contrario, el humor muestra que no es necesario haber estado “allí” para participar en la producción/traducción del significado de Irán para el público español a través de chistes y parodias.

Esta disertación ha contribuido a nuestra comprensión de las complejas formas en que el discurso práctico y popular en España fabrica el significado de Irán, y quizás también a la desmitificación de algunas ideas como, por ejemplo, que Irán es

esencialmente enigmático (puede que sea un enigma construido y contingente, pero no una esencia enigmático). Siendo esta investigación la primera contribución al tema, se puede decir que hace múltiples contribuciones. Pero lo que es quizás más importante, ha sentado las bases para futuras investigaciones y ha aprendido de las dificultades encontradas en el curso de este proyecto. El número de direcciones en las que este estudio podría ampliarse es enorme. El estudio de las relaciones hispano-iraníes puede y debe continuar; y debe prestarse especial atención a las relaciones económicas y a la diplomacia económica porque, después de todo, el intercambio económico ha sido el principal responsable del desarrollo de las relaciones entre Madrid y Teherán históricamente. Quizá es hora, efectivamente, de ampliar el análisis para comprender mejor la interacción entre las prácticas materiales y las prácticas representacionales que definen al orden geopolítico de nuestro tiempo y en nuestras coordenadas. Desde un punto de vista metodológico, sería interesante seguir experimentando con la entrevista como técnica de investigación geopolítica. También en relación con el discurso práctico, se podría hacer más teorización respecto al discurso geopolítico de los estados semiperiféricos y periféricos, e investigar hasta qué punto no perdemos algo cuando establecemos los discursos de los países centrales como marco principal de referencia.

La literatura de viajes y el humor también ofrecen un mundo de posibilidades para futuras investigaciones. Por ejemplo, el estudio de la literatura de viajes contemporánea en Irán podría ser puesto en diálogo con la gran familia de libros de viaje en Oriente en la tradición española, así como de otras tradiciones. La aplicación de la teoría feminista al estudio de la escritura de viajes también debería seguir dando resultados interesantes, ya que permitiría tener una mejor comprensión de las diferentes direcciones en las que se produce la diferencia de género en la escritura de viajes. Por último, la relación entre el discurso geopolítico y los medios de comunicación satíricos es un terreno increíblemente fértil cuyo cultivo no debe retrasarse. Las investigaciones también podrían querer cambiar el enfoque de la producción del discurso a la recepción y entender de una manera más profunda cómo se organizan los consensos sociales en cuanto a lo que es divertido o ridículo.

Mientras tanto, esta tesis ha dado pasos en el examen de cómo el discurso geopolítico en España construye la representación de Irán a través de la movilización de toda una constelación de signos y símbolos lingüísticos y no lingüísticos. De hecho,

muestra que el discurso posterior a la Guerra Fría pone a disposición un repertorio semiótico compuesto por atributos y definiciones (“canalla”, “malvado”, “apertura”, “transición”, “sabio”, “noble”, “incorrupto”, “revolucionario”), pero también iconos (El Gran Dictador), paisajes y escenarios (el bazar, el desierto, el norte y el sur de Teherán, las centrales nucleares, los campamentos tribales, etc.), objetos (alfombras, velos, miniaturas, misiles) y sonidos (música oriental y llamadas a la oración); todos los cuales se ponen a trabajar en la construcción del significado de Irán. Identificar la preeminencia de este repertorio semiótico y entender cómo el discurso alimenta las representaciones de Irán en relación con él es un logro notable del trabajo. Esta comprensión debería ayudar a pensar en formas fructíferas de investigar más a fondo la productividad del discurso desde el punto de vista de las conexiones intersemióticas entre los distintos ámbitos de representación.

Resumen/Summary

En castellano

El título de esta tesis, *Iran and the geopolitical imagination: A discourse analysis of the Spanish contribution to the debate on the meaning of modern Iran*, anticipa el principal propósito de la misma, que es el estudio de la representación de Irán en España a través de un análisis del discurso geopolítico. Tras la Revolución Islámica de 1979 comenzó una intensa batalla por definir el significado del “nuevo” Irán que emergió de un proceso político doméstico con repercusiones globales (Adib-Moghaddam, 2008). Desarrollada en escenarios domésticos e internacionales, la batalla semántica es abordada aquí en su dimensión externa.

En Occidente, la imagen de Irán quedó unida a la idea de desviación del orden bipolar y a la crisis permanente con EE.UU. A ello contribuyeron observadores externos (políticos, estrategas, periodistas, artistas, etc.) que se afanaron por “traducir” el significado del Irán posrevolucionario (Adib-Moghaddam, 2008) a menudo con imágenes distorsionadas e hiperbolizadas. La demonización de la República Islámica (Beeman, 2005) formó parte de una dinámica de alcance mayor que situó al “Islam” como antagonista de “Occidente” (Said, 1981/1997) en narrativas como el “choque de civilizaciones” (Huntington, 1993; 1996). El Irán de Jomeini se aparecía así como portador de una alteridad política, cultural y moral en las antípodas de Occidente. En los primeros años 90, la comunidad estratégica estadounidense ya había establecido que Irán era un “Estado canalla” y orientaba la política exterior sobre este criterio (Homolar, 2011).

El proyecto se propone entender las visiones de Irán en/desde España a través de las representaciones de diplomáticos, viajeros y humoristas españoles. Una asunción clave es que tales visiones —y las narrativas que alumbran— están “bajo la jurisdicción” de los discursos que dominan la teoría y práctica de la política mundial (Agnew & Corbridge, 1995; Agnew, 1998/2003; Lisle, 2006). Por ello la principal pregunta de investigación es:

¿De qué manera moldean los discursos geopolíticos dominantes la imaginación española de Irán y cómo construyen las narrativas diplomáticas, literarias y del humor al sujeto iraní?

La tesis bebe de desarrollos teóricos críticos en Geopolítica y Relaciones Internacionales. El primer campo ayuda a entender las consecuencias de definir la “Geopolítica como discurso” (Ó Tuathail, 1996a) y a indagar en la moderna genealogía de los discursos dominantes en la Guerra y Posguerra Fría (Agnew & Corbridge, 1995; Agnew, 1998/2003). Siguiendo la distinción entre “Geopolítica formal”, “práctica” y “popular” (Ó Tuathail & Dalby, 1998, pp. 1-15), la tesis categoriza las representaciones diplomáticas como “prácticas” y las de viajeros y humoristas como “populares”. La teorización sobre el vínculo entre identidad/diferencia y relaciones internacionales (Hansen, 2006; Neumann, 1999) guía la observación de cómo los discursos inscriben la identidad/diferencia en las narrativas sobre Irán y articulan la relación Yo/Otro en base a distinciones que atañen a lo espacial, temporal y ético; así como la observación de los distintos grados de alteridad entre “nosotros” y “ellos”.

Junto al general, el proyecto persigue estos objetivos:

- 1) Entender la naturaleza de los discursos y la relación entre ámbito práctico y popular.
- 2) Examinar qué tipo de Otro construyen las narrativas diplomáticas, del viaje y el humor.
- 3) Examinar la relación Yo/Otro.
- 4) Reflexionar sobre el modo de visualizar el espacio global.

La investigación utiliza una metodología de Análisis del Discurso (Hansen, 2006) para interpretar una muestra de “textos geopolíticos” de distintos géneros: 16 entrevistas de investigación con diplomáticos, 2 libros de viaje, 1 monólogo humorístico y 7 caricaturas políticas.

La tesis muestra que las visiones de Irán en España se nutren, en primer lugar, del discurso que, tras la revolución de 1979, construye al Otro iraní como un elemento disruptivo del orden internacional de la Guerra Fría. Esta identificación es condición de posibilidad del sujeto revolucionario en dos sentidos: como orden político (*polity*) y como lugar (*place*). En relación al primero, las visiones están fuertemente ligadas al

juicio sobre el comportamiento de los gobiernos revolucionarios y evoluciona en distintas direcciones dependiendo de la orientación de los mismos, especialmente en lo que se refiere a la relación con Occidente. En la construcción del lugar “Irán” se solapan dos identificaciones: la de Irán como sujeto “revolucionario” y la de Irán como “oriental”. La identificación de Irán como “musulmán” o “islámico” está contenida en las anteriores y las atraviesa.

En las narrativas diplomáticas y del humor político la alteridad de Irán reside principalmente en su constitución como sujeto revolucionario y, por lo tanto, el objeto de la representación es la República Islámica (y sus representantes) en tanto que sistema político. En las narrativas del viaje, la construcción del lugar toma enorme importancia por encima del orden político. El discurso de la literatura de viajes genera un sujeto que es a la vez oriental y revolucionario. De aquí se desprende que las dimensiones de la identidad más relevantes en la producción de la identidad son la “ética” y la “espacial”.

Las visiones de Irán en España revelan la construcción de un Otro complejo y multidimensional con el que se establecen relaciones de identidad/diferencia de distinto tipo. Destaca la menor complejidad del sujeto iraní en el discurso del humor, frente a las representaciones de la diplomacia y la literatura donde se muestra una implicación desde lo experiencial del sujeto que produce la representación (diplomático, viajero) con el objeto de la representación. Como muestra de la productividad del discurso, la investigación observa trasvases entre el discurso práctico y el popular y también la generación de narrativas propias. En definitiva, la tesis concluye que la imaginación de Irán en España se nutre de la espacialización del mundo en base a criterios morales y la reproducción del modo moderno de conocer a través de la reproducción de epistemologías que construyen “nosotros” y “ellos”.

In English

The thesis' title —*Iran and the geopolitical imagination: A discourse analysis of the Spanish contribution to the debate on the meaning of modern Iran*— anticipates the main purpose in this research, which is to study the representation of Iran in Spanish geopolitical discourse; in particular, practical and popular discourse. After the Islamic Revolution of 1979, an intense battle began to determine the meaning of the 'new' Iran coming out of a domestic process of political change with global repercussions (Adib-Moghaddam, 2008). Staged in domestic and international scenarios, the semantic battle is addressed here from an external point of view.

In the West, the image of post-revolutionary Iran became tied up with visions of deviation from the bipolar order and of permanent crisis with the U.S. Often in biased and hyperbolic ways, the meaning of Iran was forged in the "translations" of myriad external observers (officials, strategists, journalists, artists, etc.) (Adib-Moghaddam, 2008). Demonising accounts of the Islamic Republic (Beeman, 2005) formed part of a more encompassing tendency to situate 'Islam' as the 'West's' antagonist (Said, 1981/1997) in narratives such as the 'clash of civilisations' (Huntington, 1993; 1996). This explains why public discourse set out to portray Khomeini's Iran as the bearer of political, cultural and moral difference from the West. In the early 1990s, the U.S. strategic community had already established the definition of Iran as a 'rogue state', which inspired its foreign policy (Homolar, 2011).

This project pursues to understand the visions of Iran in/from Spain. Insights are based on the analysis of the representations of Iran made by Spanish diplomats, travellers and humourists. A key assumption is that the visions of these social/political subjects —and the narratives they inspire— are 'under the jurisdiction' of the discourses that dominate the theory and practice of world politics (Agnew & Corbridge, 1995; Agnew, 1998/2003; Lisle, 2006). Owing to this, the main question in this research is the following:

How do dominant geopolitical discourses inform the Spanish imagination of Iran and how do diplomatic, literary and humour narratives construct the Iranian subject?

The dissertation draws on theoretical developments in Critical Geopolitics and International Relations. The first field eases the understanding of the implications following from the definition of ‘Geopolitics as discourse’ (Ó Tuathail, 1996a), as well as the exploration of the modern genealogy of the discourses that dominate the scripting of world politics in the Cold and Post-Cold War eras (Agnew & Corbridge, 1995; Agnew, 1998/2003). On the basis of the distinction between ‘formal’, ‘practical’ and ‘popular geopolitics’ (Ó Tuathail & Dalby, 1998, pp. 1-15) the thesis categorises diplomatic representations as ‘practical’ and travellers’ and humourists’ representations as ‘popular’. For its part, theoretical insights on the link between identity/difference and international relations (Hansen, 2006; Neumann, 1999) orient the observation of how discourses inscribe identity/difference into narratives of Iran and articulate the Self/Other relation by reference to spatial, temporal and ethical distinctions; as well as the observation of various degrees of difference between ‘Us’ and ‘Them’.

In parallel to the general purpose, the project aims to fulfill a number of specific purposes:

- 1) To understand the nature of discourses and understand the connection between practical and popular discourse.
- 2) To understand which kind of Other is represented in diplomatic, travel and comic narratives.
- 3) To examine the Self/Other relation.
- 4) To reflect upon the mode of visualising global space.

The investigation uses a Discourse Analysis methodology (Hansen, 2006) to interpret a dataset of ‘geopolitical texts’ of different genres: 16 research interviews with diplomats, 2 travel books, 1 stand-up comedy monologue and 7 political cartoons.

The thesis shows that visions of Iran in Spain are nourished, in the first place, by the discourse which, after the 1979 revolution, constructs the Iranian Other as a ‘disruptive’ element of the international order of the Cold War. This identification is a condition of possibility of the revolutionary subject in two senses: as a society organised under a certain political system (polity) and as a place (place). In relation to the former, visions are strongly linked to the judgment on the behaviour of revolutionary

governments and evolve in different directions depending on the orientations of governments, especially in relation to the West. In the construction of the place 'Iran', two identifications overlap: that of Iran as a 'revolutionary' subject and that of Iran as an 'Oriental' subject. The identification of Iran as 'Muslim' or 'Islamic' is contained in both and cuts through them.

In diplomatic narratives and political humor, Iran's alterity refers mainly to its constitution as a revolutionary subject; therefore, the object of representation is the Islamic Republic (and its representatives) as a political system. In the narratives of the journey in Iran, the construction of the place takes on enormous importance above the system of government. The discourse of travel literature generates a subject that is both 'Oriental' and 'revolutionary'. It follows that the most relevant dimensions of identity in the production of identity are 'ethics' and 'space'.

The visions of Iran in Spain reveal the construction of a complex and multidimensional Other with which different types of identity/difference relationships are established. It emphasises the lesser complexity of the Iranian subject in the discourse of humour, in front of the representations in the discourse of diplomacy and literature where the subject that produces the representation (diplomat, traveller) engages with the object of the representation on an experiential basis. As an example of the productivity of the discourse, the research observes transfers between practical and popular discourse and also the generation of specific narratives. In short, the thesis concludes that the imagination of Iran in Spain is shaped by the moral spatialisation of the world and the reproduction of the modern way of knowing through the reproduction of epistemologies that construct 'Us' and 'Them'.

Annexes

Annex One. *List of interviews*

Interviewees	Rank	Duration	Date and place
No. 1	Ambassador (Chief of Mission)	1:03'	March, 24th 2014 Private venue
No. 2	Ambassador (Chief of Mission)	1:17'	April, 1st 2014 MFA Office
No. 3	Deputy-Assistant Director General for Middle Eastern Affairs	Recording not permitted	April, 1st 2014 MFA Office
No. 4	Chargé d'Affairs	Recording not permitted	April, 10th 2014 Private venue
No. 5	Minister Plenipotentiary	1:10'	April, 11th 2014 Skype
No. 6	Secretary/Commercial attaché	0:37'	June, 6th 2014 Private venue
No. 7	Minister of Foreign Affairs	0:51'	October, 22nd 2014 Private venue
No. 8	Minister Plenipotentiary	2:01'	November, 17th 2014 Skype
No. 9	Minister Plenipotentiary	0:53'	December, 3rd 2014 MFA Office
No. 10	Secretary	Recording not possible	December, 4th 2014 Phone
No. 11	Minister Plenipotentiary	0:47'	December, 9th 2014 Private venue
No. 12	Secretary/Chargé d'Affairs	1:11'	December, 22nd 2014 Private venue
No. 13	Chargé d'Affairs	1:20'	January, 7th 2015 Private venue
No. 14	Minister Plenipotentiary/Chargé d'Affairs	0:41'	January, 9 th 2015 Private venue
No. 15	Director General for Middle Eastern Affairs	Recording not permitted	May, 29th 2015 MFA Office
No. 16	Secretary	1:13'	June, 25th 2015 Casa Árabe

Annex Two. *Agreements and treaties between Spain and Iran*

Year	Description
1954	Economic and Commercial Cooperation Agreement
1956	Treaty of Friendship and Establishment
1958	Cultural Cooperation Agreement
1973	Trade and Cooperation Agreement
1996	Air Transport Agreement
1999	Agreement on Road Transport
2002	Agreement for the promotion and reciprocal protection of investments
2003	Agreement for the avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income and on capital

Annex Three. High-level visits between Iranian and Spanish authorities (1957-2018)

<i>Iranian authorities in Spain</i>			<i>Spanish authorities in Iran</i>	
Year	Name	Description	Name	Description
1957	Mohammad Reza Pahlavi	Shah of Iran		
	Gholi Ardalan	Minister of Foreign Affairs		
1961	Sodegh Amir Azizi	Minister of Home Affairs		
1965	Mohammad Reza Pahlavi	Shah of Iran		
1966	Abbas Aram	Minister of Foreign Affairs		
1971			Don Juan Carlos y Doña Sofía	Princes of Spain
1972			Manuel Díez Alegría	Chief of Army Staff
1973	S. Nehran	Deputy Minister of Economy	Gregorio López Bravo	Minister of Foreign Affairs
1974			Pío Cabanillas	Minister of Information and Tourism
1975			Don Juan Carlos y Doña Sofía	Princes of Spain
			Pedro Cortina Mauri	Minister of Foreign Affairs
			José Utrera Molina	Secretary General Minister of the Movement
			José Luis Cerón Ayuso	Minister of Commerce Minister of Industry
			Alfonso Álvarez de Miranda	
1977	Amir Abbas Hoveyda	Prime Minister of		

Iran

1978			Don Juan Carlos y Doña Sofía	Princes of Spain
			Marcelino Oreja	Minister of Foreign Affairs
			Carlos Bustelo	Minister of Industry
1979	Hassan Ali	Minister of Commerce		
1980			Enrique Tierno Galván	Mayor of Madrid
1981			Luis Ortiz	Minister of Public Works and Urbanism
1982	Abdollah Nouri	Chief of the Movement for the National Reconstruction		
	Mustafa Hashemi	Minister of Industry		
1983			Luis de Velasco	Secretary of State of Commerce
1985	Hussein Mousavi	Prime Minister (refuelling stop)		
	Ahmad Azizi	Chief of the Parliamentary Foreign Policy Commission		
1987	Hossein Sheikoleslam	Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs		
1988			Jorge Dezcallar	Director General of Foreign Policy for Africa and the Middle East
				Minister of Industry and Energy
			Claudio Aranzadi	
1989	Ali Akbar Velayati	Minister of Foreign Affairs		
1991			Francisco Fernández Ordóñez	Minister of Foreign Affairs







			Jorge Dezcallar	Director General of Foreign Policy for Africa and the Middle East
			Herminio Morales	Minister of Consular Affairs
1992	Mahmoud Vaezi	Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs	Francisco Villar	Secretary General of Foreign Policy
	Gholamreza Aqazadeh	Oil Minister		
1993	Ali Akbar Velayati	Minister of Foreign Affairs		
1994	Kamal Kharrazi	Minister of Foreign Affairs		
1995			Joan Rogol	Vice-President of the Senate
1996	Hassan Rouhani	Vice-President of the Parliament	Manuel Fraga Iribarne	President of Galicia
1998	Kamal Kharrazi	Minister of Foreign Affairs	Carlos Bastarreche	Secretary General of Foreign Policy and for the European Union
	Ali Akbar Nateq Nuri	President of Parliament	Enrique Fernández Miranda	Vice-President of the Congress
1999			Fernando Villalonga	Secretary Minister for International Cooperation and for Latin America
2000	Mohammad Khatami	President of the Islamic Republic of Iran (refuelling stop)	José María Aznar	Prime Minister of Spain
			Pío Cabanillas	Spokesperson of the Government of Spain
2001	Ali Ahani	Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs	Josep Piqué	Minister of Foreign Affairs
			José Folgado Blanco	Secretary of State of Economy, Energy, Fishing and Midsize Business







2002	Mohammad Khatami	President of the Islamic Republic of Iran	Esperanza Aguirre	President of Senate
	Ali Ahani	Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs		
	Mostafa Moih	Minister of Science, Research and Technology		
	Mohammad Jarat Faridzadeh	Presidential Counsellor		
2003	Kamal Kharrazi	Minister of Foreign Affairs	Ana de Palacio	Minister of Foreign Affairs
			Rodrigo Rato	Minister of Economy
2004	Morteza Moballegh	Vice-Minister of Home Affairs	Ana de Palacio	Minister of Foreign Affairs
	Seyyed Hossein Marashi	Vice-President of Iran		
2005			Josep Antoni Durán i Lleida	Member of Parliament
2006	Manouchehr Mottaki	Minister of Foreign Affairs	Felipe González	Former Prime Minister of Spain (private visit)
	Ali Larijani	Nuclear negotiator		
	Manouchehr Mohammadi	Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs		
2007	Esfandiar Rahim Mashaei	Vice-President of Iran		
	Manouchehr Mottaki	Minister of Foreign Affairs		
	Ali Larijani	Nuclear negotiator		
2013			Manuel-Gómez Acebo Rodríguez Spiteri	Director General for Middle Eastern Affairs






2014	Ali Najafi	Vice-President of Iran	Josep Antoni Durán i Lleida	President of the Foreign Affairs Commission at Congress
	Mehdi Danesh Yazdi	Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs	José Manuel García-Margallo	Minister of Foreign Affairs
2015	Mohammad Javad Zarif	Minister of Foreign Affairs	José Manuel García-Margallo	Minister of Foreign Affairs
			Ana Pastor	Minister of Public Works
			José Manuel Soria	Minister of Industry, Energy and Tourism
			Enrique Mora	Director General for Foreign Affairs
			Fernando Martí	President of Nuclear Security Council
2016	Majid Takht	Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs	Isaac Martín Barbero	Director General for Business Globalisation
	Hassan Ghasghavi	Foreign Ministry Spokesman	Jaime García-Legaz	Secretary of State of Commerce
2017	Mojtaba Khosro-Taj	Deputy Mine, Industry and Trade Minister	Pío García Escudero	President of the Senate
2018	Ali Ashgar Mounesan	Head of the Cultural, Handcraft and Tourism Organization		






Sources: *Base de Datos Integrada de Política Exterior* (<http://www.bdpexonline.org>) and *Ficha País: 'Irán'* (Oficia de Información Diplomática [Diplomatic Information Office]; Last update: February 2018).







Annex Four. Joaquín Reyes feat. ‘Mahud Jamadineyad’







TIME	VISUAL FRAME	SETTING	SPEECH	KINETIC FEATURES	MUSIC/SOUND EFFECTS	METAFUNCTIONAL INTERPRETATION
0:09		Inside nuclear facility	‘Hello, I’m Mahud Jamadineyad’.	<i>Gaze:</i> directed at camera/viewer <i>Body posture:</i> straight <i>Gesture:</i> raised hands swirl to the music.	[cheerful Oriental melody]	Introduction of ‘celebrity’ ↓ Name
0:16		↓↓	‘–with an aspirated jay–’	<i>Gaze:</i> directed at camera/viewer <i>Body posture:</i> straight <i>Gesture:</i> both hands raised; forefingers pointing towards himself	[silence]	↓ [jokes on Persian/Arabic phonetics]
0:17		↓↓	‘Jamadineyad!’, ‘Jamadineyad!’, ‘Jamadineyad!’ ‘How’re you doing artist? What’re you up to?’.	<i>Gaze:</i> directed at camera/viewer <i>Body posture:</i> angled <i>Gesture:</i> --	[cheerful Oriental melody]	↓ [surname’s mistaken pronunciation repeated several times → ridiculisation and enhanced differentiation]
0:26			‘I am the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran. <i>Irán y no volverán*</i> ’. *Trans. ‘they’ll go and they won’t come back’	<i>Gaze:</i> directed at camera/viewer <i>Body posture:</i> straight <i>Gesture:</i> hands crossed on lap	[background music]	↓ [introduction of institutional position]
0:30		Wall	‘I was craving for saying this!’.	<i>Gaze:</i> directed at camera/viewer <i>Body posture:</i> angled <i>Gesture:</i> --	↓↓	
0:33		Inside nuclear facility	‘Look this Persian carpet! It’s thick!’.	<i>Gaze:</i> directed at floor <i>Body posture:</i> straight <i>Gesture:</i> head bowed towards the front; hands touching fluffy hair	↓↓	[joke on character’s hair → comical effect enabled by the metaphorical use of cultural element: Persian carpet]







0:38		↓↓	'What are you up to when you look at my head?'	<i>Gaze:</i> directed at camera/viewer <i>Body posture:</i> straight <i>Gesture:</i> head before shoulders	↓↓	↓ [character shown as menacing]
0:41		↓↓	(no spoken words)	<i>Gaze:</i> directed at camera/viewer <i>Body posture:</i> straight <i>Gesture:</i> head before shoulders; right forefinger showing a warning gesture; left fist clenched ↓↓ both hands squeezing the air	↓↓	
0:42		↓↓			↓↓	
0:44		Wall	'Tehraaaaaaaan. You know, I was the Mayor of Tehran'. 'I am outlandish' (Outside).	<i>Gaze:</i> directed at camera/viewer <i>Body posture:</i> in motion <i>Gesture:</i>		[introduction of additional information about the character → former institutional position]
0:49		Inside nuclear facility	'Look what little eyes I have. There is gleam. They are black because they are deep. Old civilisations can be seen in my eyes. And my smile... My smile is the smile of the people. A frank smile'.	<i>Gaze:</i> directed at camera/viewer <i>Body posture:</i> straight <i>Gesture:</i> eyes half-closed showing profundity	[voice over sounds like muezzin calling on believers to pray]	[Character's eyes used to introduce reference to old [Persian] civilisation... Character's smile → cue for reference to 'the people']
1:03		↓↓	'In Iran, there are very cheerful people... Perhaps they don't show their emotions'.	<i>Gaze:</i> directed at camera/viewer <i>Body posture:</i> straight <i>Gesture:</i> casual movement of hands	[background music]	People → emotionless /lifeless [mourning / martyrdom]







1:08		Wall	'There is just one TV channel'.	<i>Gaze:</i> directed at camera/viewer <i>Body posture:</i> straight <i>Gesture:</i> showing right forefinger	[classical music] ↓ ↓	Limited media offer → lack of freedom / lack of pluralism
1:09		Rock	'There is no channel-hopping'.	<i>Gaze:</i> directed at camera/viewer <i>Body posture:</i> angled <i>Gesture:</i> doing as if using a remote control	↓ ↓	
1:12		Inside nuclear facility	'Share, 100% share'.	<i>Gaze:</i> directed at camera/viewer <i>Body posture:</i> straight <i>Gesture:</i> arms crossed		
1:16		Wall	'Broadcasting begins at 10 a.m. There's no need to start early'.	<i>Gaze:</i> directed at camera/viewer <i>Body posture:</i> straight <i>Gesture:</i> hands supporting spoken language	[short silence]	Details on how TV emissions work
1:18		Inside nuclear facility Outside Outside	'There is music [he imitates Arabic singing for some seconds]. At 12:30 p.m. News. [he continues singing in Arabic]. Testcard'. 'Until next day'. 'Khamadinejad!'	<i>Gaze:</i> directed at camera/viewer <i>Body posture:</i> straight <i>Gesture:</i> right hand marking the rhythm of music	[humming Oriental/Arab song]	






1:32		Rock	[Voice over] 'What do you think of homosexuals?' 'There aren't!'. [Voice over] 'Are you sure?'.	<i>Gaze:</i> directed to the right and looking upwards <i>Body posture:</i> angled <i>Gesture:</i> both hands resting on knees	Classical music	Homosexuality → Denial →
1:38		Wall	'There are no homosexuals in Iran. There are no fags'.	<i>Gaze:</i> directed at camera/viewer <i>Body posture:</i> straight <i>Gesture:</i> both hands raised; palms slightly facing downward; outside movement; underscoring a negative statement	↓↓	Reference to the episode in which Ahmadinejad denied the existence of homosexuals in Iran
1:40		Rock	'In fact, I've received a report from the Gay Studies Office'.	<i>Gaze:</i> directed at camera/viewer <i>Body posture:</i> angled <i>Gesture:</i> both hands showing the writing of a report	↓↓	
1:45		Inside nuclear facility	'Zero per cent cucumber club members'.	<i>Gaze:</i> directed at camera/viewer <i>Body posture:</i> straight <i>Gesture:</i> right hand making a zero signal	↓↓	
1:48		Rock	'And I asked: "have you searched for them in earnest?" There is perhaps someone hiding in a cave. A cave man'.	<i>Gaze:</i> directed at camera/viewer <i>Body posture:</i> angled <i>Gesture:</i> both hands showing scepticism	↓↓	[gay men hiding in caves → cave= space where deviant members of society hide, such as al-Qaeda combatants in the Afghan mountains/caves] [Spanish TV → gay hosts or






1:57		Inside nuclear facility	‘So, how do you do gossip talk shows without gays?’ ‘They finish earlier’.	<i>Gaze:</i> off-screen; directed to the right <i>Body posture:</i> straight <i>Gesture:</i> shoulders shrugged; buttoning his blazer	↓↓	commentators regular presence in gossip talk shows]
2:02		Wall	‘You can count on me to prosecute unbelievers. Indeed you can, but not to make “el trencito chu chu*”, coz, what’s that?’ *sexual game for homosexuals	<i>Gaze:</i> directed to the right <i>Body posture:</i> angled <i>Gesture:</i> both hands raised; fists almost clenched; downward movement	[cheerful Oriental melody]	Leaders in the Muslim world → prosecution of unbelievers → purported harassment of non-Muslims in Muslim majority contexts
2:12		↓↓	‘This is my nephew’ (The boy wears a New York Police Department (NYPD) hoodie).	<i>Gaze:</i> directed at camera/viewer <i>Body posture:</i> straight <i>Gesture:</i> he puts an arm around his nephew’s shoulder	[sound effects]	[The scene is pretty senseless]
2:20		Inside nuclear facility	‘I went to Columbia University in the U.S., where I’m really appreciated’.	<i>Gaze:</i> directed at camera/viewer <i>Body posture:</i> straight <i>Gesture:</i> both hands on his lap	[cheerful Oriental melody] ↓↓	Reference to Ahmadinejad’s visit to Columbia University, September 2007 →
2:25		Rock	‘You know, I have an engineering certificate’.	<i>Gaze:</i> directed towards watch/left wrist <i>Body posture:</i> angled/leant towards right <i>Gesture:</i> right hand grabbing left wrist and point to his watch	↓↓ ↓↓	[Many Iranian politicians are engineers (<i>mohandes</i>) → Respectful profession]
2:33		Inside nuclear facility	‘I went there to give a speech –by the way, they have to transfer me the money. And I also asked for a refund of the money for taxis’.	<i>Gaze:</i> directed at camera/viewer <i>Body posture:</i> straight <i>Gesture:</i> hands helping to show that he writing something down	↓↓ ↓↓	Homosexuality denial (plus other bewildering statements) → produced a stir of protest in the West






2:37		↓↓	'This is Khamadinejad'. And me: 'Khamadinejad', (they) 'Khamadinejad', (me) 'Khamadinejad' (they) He's a tyrant, a satrap, and a criminal...'	<i>Gaze:</i> off-screen; directed towards right <i>Body posture:</i> straight <i>Gesture:</i> hands above the level of the hips; pointing and showing something to the right	[silence] ↓↓	Response to criticism → Indifference → Further evidence of unruly behaviour Burping in public → Lack of manners Children's game: <i>Red Light / Green Light</i> → Ahmadinejad playing role of 'it' person Child's play re-signified as prosecution of infidels (participants) by Ahmadinejad ('it' person) → Infidels = rats Major infidel → George W. Bush
2:46		↓↓	'And I was there...'	<i>Gaze:</i> directed at the floor <i>Body posture:</i> straight <i>Gesture:</i> head resting on the right hand; making an indifference gesture.	↓↓	
2:47		↓↓	[He burps] 'Bon appétit'.	<i>Gaze:</i> directed at camera/viewer <i>Body posture:</i> straight <i>Gesture:</i> lips pressed together	↓↓	
2:49		↓↓	[Playing <i>Red Light/Green light</i>] '1 , 2, 3, red light, green light'.	<i>Gaze:</i> eyes covered by the left arm <i>Body posture:</i> turned back from camera/viewer <i>Gesture:</i> --	↓↓	
2:50		↓↓	'Where are you infidels? You're hiding like rats'.	<i>Gaze:</i> off-screen; catching sight of someone located at a distance <i>Body posture:</i> angled	↓↓	
2:56			'To Bush!'	<i>Gaze:</i> directed towards the left <i>Body posture:</i> angled and in motion <i>Gesture:</i> right arm raised and pointing towards someone located at a distance	[sound effects]	

2:58		↓↓	'The infidels, whom we all know who they are, have a certain way of dancing –the infidels' dance'.	<i>Gaze:</i> directed at camera/viewer <i>Body posture:</i> in motion <i>Gesture:</i> head slightly bowed; arms akimbo	[cheerful melody] ↓↓	Foolish dance → Infidels mocked
3:06		↓↓	'This one (he dances foolishly). Coz them, due to their sinful and dissolute life...'	<i>Gaze:</i> straight <i>Body posture:</i> in motion <i>Gesture:</i> arms and legs moving; foolish dance	↓↓	Infidels → Embodiment of sin and deviance
3:12		↓↓	'The floor is burning under their feet because they are sinners and they have to walk this way, as if the beach sand was burning under your feet'.	<i>Gaze:</i> off-screen <i>Body posture:</i> in motion <i>Gesture:</i> arms and legs moving; foolish dance; walking around on his tiptoes	↓↓	Burning floor → hell
3:23		↓↓	'Right now I'm like crazy with nuclear energy'.	<i>Gaze:</i> directed at camera/viewer <i>Body posture:</i> straight <i>Gesture:</i> hands over lap		Nuclear issue → first time explicitly addressed
3:24		Wall	'Nuclear!!'	<i>Gaze:</i> directed at camera/viewer <i>Body posture:</i> angled <i>Gesture:</i> right side of the head resting against a wall	[silence]	
3:25		Inside nuclear facility	'Alarm clock. In three months, nuclear energy'.	<i>Gaze:</i> directed downwards <i>Body posture:</i> angled <i>Gesture:</i> right hand manipulates watch on left wrist	[sound effects]	Alarm clock set → Nuclear energy → Pressing issue

3:31		↓↓	'Look! What d'you think? I bought it in Andorra'.	<i>Gaze:</i> directed at camera/viewer <i>Body posture:</i> angled <i>Gesture:</i> showing to the camera/viewer the watch on his left wrist	↓↓	[cultural reference] → Andorra = Spain's neighbouring country popular as a tax-free shopping destination Cheap watch → ridiculous leader
3:36		Wall Inside nuclear facility	'Splitting atoms ain't easy'. 'The energy, is it ready?' [voice over] 'No, I ran out of time...' 'Get the damned atoms split, for God's sake!'.	<i>Gaze:</i> directed at camera/viewer <i>Body posture:</i> angled <i>Gesture:</i> both hands raised; forefingers pointing towards each other	[silence] ↓↓	President anxious about atom fission → Nuclear energy → Pressing issue
3:45		Inside nuclear facility	'Fission, fission, fission!'	<i>Gaze:</i> off-screen <i>Body posture:</i> in motion <i>Gesture:</i> spinning around	↓↓	Ahmadinejad spinning around like a dervish
3:48		Wall	'The point is that this is for peaceful ends... for cooking and life... to help people muddle through...'	<i>Gaze:</i> directed at camera/viewer <i>Body posture:</i> straight <i>Gesture:</i> both hands raised; palms facing outward	↓↓	Honest intentions behind development of nuclear energy disclosed → Government responsible for the betterment of people's life conditions → populism
3:57		Inside nuclear facility	'Then, you see, the nuclear energy meter, where is it?'. 'Is it here, ma'am? In the larder?'.	<i>Gaze:</i> off-screen; directed to the right <i>Body posture:</i> angled <i>Gesture:</i> left arm raised at the level of the waist and right arm above this level; forefingers pointing towards the right	[background music] ↓↓	[cultural reference] → Nuclear energy meter → Equalled to electricity/water meter (often located in larder)
4:01		↓↓	'You write it down... nuclear energy consumed'.	<i>Gaze:</i> off-screen; directed downwards; head also downwards <i>Body posture:</i> angled <i>Gesture:</i> hands showing that he is writing something down	↓↓	Being casual about domestic use of nuclear energy

4:04		↓↓	(no spoken words)	<i>Gaze: eyes closed</i> <i>Body posture: angled</i> <i>Gesture: as if having a nap resting against a column</i>	[muezzin]	
4:07		Wall	'To be honest, I didn't know one could make a bomb with nuclear energy'.	<i>Gaze: directed at camera/viewer</i> <i>Body posture: angled</i> <i>Gesture: hands raised at the level of the shoulders; palms facing each other at reduced distance; trying to be compelling</i>	[cheerful Oriental drum melody] ↓↓	Reference to concerns of international community → use of nuclear energy for non-civil purposes →
4:11		Inside nuclear facility	'You know you can make a bomb with this?' 'Really? I didn't know. See?! I didn't know... Can we make a bomb? What for?' 'To kill' [emphasis].	<i>Gaze: directed at camera/viewer</i> <i>Body posture: angled</i> <i>Gesture: arms raised at the level of the waist and directed towards the left; palms facing upwards</i>	↓↓ ↓↓	Character declares lack of awareness regarding nuclear energy military potency → Proof that Iran does not seek the nuclear weapon → Unconvincing
4:26		Wall ↓↓	'It's also true that we have built up a missile. That's some 10 meter long...'	<i>Gaze: directed at camera/viewer</i> <i>Body posture: angled</i> <i>Gesture: arms raised above the level of the waist; outward movement; palms facing downward as if measuring up a missile</i>	[epic Oriental music] ↓↓	Reference to ballistic missile programme → Recognition that Iran owns missiles
4:29		↓↓	'truly smooth and even, coz it's been rasped with sandpaper... It got really smooth'	<i>Gaze: directed at camera/viewer</i> <i>Body posture: angled</i> <i>Gesture: arms raised above the level of the waist; right hand as if caressing a missile</i>	↓↓	Comments on external qualities: smoothness and colours →

4:32			‘and with a red tip, and then grey’	<i>Gaze:</i> directed at camera/viewer <i>Body posture:</i> angled <i>Gesture:</i> hands put together show that the missile ends in a sharp tip	↓↓	Aesthetic qualities underscored → make missile seem like a toy
4:35			‘it’s been painted with airbrush’.	<i>Gaze:</i> directed at camera/viewer <i>Body posture:</i> angled <i>Gesture:</i> right arm/hand signalling that a spray has been used to paint the missile	↓↓	
4:38		↓↓	‘And then it’s written, <i>Iran</i> , like this’.	<i>Gaze:</i> off-screen; directed towards the wall <i>Body posture:</i> angled <i>Gesture:</i> right hand pointing to an inscription on the missile’s surface		
4:40		Inside nuclear facility	‘Well, it’s written in Arabic. You know, we write the other way round. Many times you’re writing and, without noticing, you’re making blots...’.	<i>Gaze:</i> directed at camera/viewer <i>Body posture:</i> angled <i>Gesture:</i> right hand movement indicating Arabic is written right to left	[silence]	Inscription ‘Iran’ on missile → Certification of ownership / National pride Persian mistaken for Arabic / Joke showing Arabic calligraphy as working ‘the other way round’, as opposite to Latin alphabet → sign of deviancy from the norm
4:50		Rock	‘It’s true that, that launched like a bolt of lightning, it gets to some country and makes a mess, real mess... But we’re not gonna get it launched’.	<i>Gaze:</i> directed at camera/viewer <i>Body posture:</i> angled <i>Gesture:</i> sitting on a rock; left hand resting on the knee; right hand/arm displaying an upward movement	[epic Oriental music]	Revelation → catastrophic effects of launching missile ‘Some country’ → Israel meant to be ‘wiped off’ the map Declaration of intent → missile not launched

4:58		Inside nuclear facility ⇓	'Almost sure. I can check it out... but, really, no'.	<i>Gaze:</i> directed at camera/viewer <i>Body posture:</i> straight <i>Gesture:</i> arms crossed above the level of the waist; fists almost clenched; outward movement	[silence]	Hesitation → Unreliability
5:01		⇓	'It's there [the missile]'.	<i>Gaze:</i> directed at camera/viewer <i>Body posture:</i> angled <i>Gesture:</i> arms slightly falling and open; showing the honest nature of his statement		Character outspoken about missile ownership
5:03		⇓	'But we stand for peace'.	<i>Gaze:</i> directed at camera/viewer <i>Body posture:</i> angled <i>Gesture:</i> hands raised at the level of the chest and pointing towards the heart		We → Iranian nation / Islamic Republic's government → Peaceful intentions
5:05		⇓ ⇓	(no spoken words)	<i>Gaze:</i> directed at camera/viewer <i>Body posture:</i> straight <i>Gesture:</i>	[sound effects]	Close up on persona's face → focus 'deep eyes' + 'frank smile' → a man of the people
5:06		⇓		<i>Gaze:</i> directed at camera/viewer <i>Body posture:</i> straight <i>Gesture:</i> hands crossed on his lap		Underlying sarcasm → Ahmadinejad = crazy buffoon

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