Research Paper

The Implications of "Strategic Loneliness" for Iran's Geopolitics: Inevitable or Constructed?

Mahdi Ahouie[1]

1. Assistant Professor of Iranian Studies, University of Tehran, Iran (ahouie@ut.ac.ir)

(Received: Dec. 11, 2020 Revised: Feb. 17, 2021 Accepted: Mar. 2, 2021)

Abstract

This paper pays particular attention to three critical junctures in Iran's contemporary history: The Russo-Persian wars of the 19th century, Iran's occupation by the Allies in 1941, and the Iran-Iraq war of the 1980s. Combining a constructivist approach to geopolitics with the theory of Social Reality Construction, this article argues that these series of wars in the past two centuries have created an intersubjectivity, making Iranians feel "lonely" when the very survival of their state was at the stake. While Iran's geographical situation has brought the country to the core of the great powers' attention, repeated foreign invasions or interventions seem to have reproduced a sense of vulnerability for the Iranians. This paper is constructed around the following question: Is there something embedded in Iran's geography that betrays this land's sovereignty and imposes loneliness? The conclusion is that there is no natural or geographical reason to justify Iran's loneliness in the international arena, but rather, a perceptual construct reproduced by the historical context of events. The imposition of great political powers to contain Iran in its geography and to make it a buffer zone constitute a spatial reality; however, the feeling of loneliness derives from the social construction of reality.

Keywords: Iran geopolitics, Iran-Iraq war Russo-Persian wars, Second World War, Strategic loneliness

Journal of **World Sociopolitical Studies**| Vol. 5| No. 3| Summer 2021| pp. 507-544
Web Page: https://wsps.ut.ac.ir//Email: wsps@ut.ac.ir
eISSN: 2588-3127 PrintISSN: 2588-3119
DOI: 10.22059/WSPS.2022.335019.1252

Journal of **WORLD SOCIOPOLITICAL STUDIES** | Vol. 5 | No. 3 | Summer 2021

1. Introduction

"Iran lives in a hostile environment and needs to be self-reliant in protecting itself against the hostilities constantly coming from all around it"[1]. This phrase and utterances similar to this can easily shape a common sense in the minds of most Iranians, including politicians and ordinary people alike. Iranians are taught to praise the geography of their country: between the Caspian Sea and the Persian Gulf, at the crossroads of several subregions of Asia. However, Iranians often believe that they 'deserved' to have been better placed on the map of the world – in a more secure part of the globe, with more friendly neighbors and less attraction for the world conquerors. Iran's modern history reflects countless foreign interventions against the country's sovereignty and independence. The nation's strive for sustainability and integrity in spite of all the pressures and limitations through contemporary history seems to have shaped a culture of 'resistance' and 'self-reliance' among the Iranians. Whether it is praised as the 'dignity' of the nation, or blamed as 'isolationism', this situation can be described as a status of 'loneliness.' While some have limited the scope of this loneliness to the post-revolutionary era[2], several others have looked at it in a broader historical and civilizational perspective, arguing that Iran is characterized by a cultural, geographical, and strategic loneliness[3]. Yet, this notion still seems to be inadequately addressed in the Iranian studies literature.

1. This content can be found in abundance in the discourses of Iranian leaders in different periods of the contemporary history. For example, Imam Khomeini is quoted with regard to the Iran-Iraq war: "The War taught us to only rely on our own" (Khomeini, 1397 [2018 A.D.]).
2. See, for example, Adnan Tabatabai (2019), Thomas Juneau and Sam Razavi (2013).
3. See, among others, Mohammad Ali Eslami Nadoushan (1376 [1998 A.D.]); Sajjadpour (1383 [2005 A.D.]).

This article seeks an answer to the question of where the idea of loneliness has come from, and whether Iran is condemned to be lonely in its geographical situation. The main questions that shaped the idea behind this article consist of the following: Is there something embedded in Iran's geography that betrays this land's sovereignty and imposes loneliness? Is the feeling of loneliness a spatial reality and a social construct?

To unfold this puzzle, it is indispensable to look at Iran's experience with the great powers in the past two hundred years. Colin Gray argues that the interaction of states with constraints and opportunities that stem from geography accounts for strategic cultures, meaning patterns in foreign policy: "the political behavior of a country is the reflection of that country's history; and that country's history is in great part (though certainly not entirely) the product of its geographical setting (Gray, 1988, p. 43)".

Geography has played an important role in forming Iran's foreign policy for centuries. According to Anoushiravan Ehteshami: "over time, then, a combination of factors – geography; the need to secure the country's territorial integrity; adverse historical experiences; competition with other empires (such as the Ottoman Empire); meddling in Iran's internal affairs by Western/Eastern powers such as Russia, Britain, and the United States, and the country's resource endowment – have come together to give geopolitics and an acute awareness of the weight of history a special place in determining Iranian foreign policy". Ehteshami (2002, p. 285) further concludes in this regard:

> Iran's historical impotence in the face of foreign influence has left a deep and seemingly permanent scar on the Iranian psyche, which has also been guiding elite thinking for many decades. An almost obsessive preoccupation with outside interference in Iran's internal

Journal of **WORLD SOCIOPOLITICAL STUDIES** | Vol. 5 | No. 3 | Summer 2021

affairs has made Iranians wary of big-power involvement in the area, but at the same time the perception among most Iranians that Iran has been able to overcome outside pressures has allowed for the rise of a condition that I call "the arrogance of non-submission".

If such "arrogance of non-submission" constitutes the Iranian political identity in foreign relations, then one can imagine that it was shaped in contrast with "the arrogance of domination-seeking" that almost all great powers have exercised versus Iran. This dichotomy is usually not neglected by the observers of Iranian contemporary history[1]. What has not been sufficiently addressed – which this article intends to answer – is the ways in which this dialectic of domination-seeking and non-submission is linked to Iran's geography. Many nations in the world, especially during the 20th century, strived for their independence from colonial hegemony. The story of domination and non-submission is thus not limited to Iran's experience with great powers. But, what makes it unique in the case of Iran?

My hypothesis is that the great powers misused Iran's vulnerable geographical position and imposed a 'buffer zone status' on Iran through the Great Game of the 19th century and more into the 20th century, and this shaped a collective historical consciousness for Iranians. Thus, the idea of 'strategic loneliness' as an intersubjectivity is a historical-cultural construct, not an irreversible geographical fact. This paper draws upon two major sets of historical evidence:

First, since the 18th century, Iran was gradually circumvented from the main global trade routes. Iran lost its economic importance for great powers during the 18th and 19th centuries

1. See, among others, R. K. Ramazani, A. Houshang Mahdavi, Nikki Keddie.

(Farmanfarmaian, 2008, pp. 8-9). The discovery of oil in early 20th century made the situation different, but Iran was seen only as an oil well, and never as a genuine economic partner for great powers. Since the 19th century, the British, and then the Americans have held absolute supremacy in the Persian Gulf to guarantee their trade routes from the Mediterranean Sea to the Indian Ocean[1]. Iran's profile has decreased in the global trade in the last 200 years, and this has been the main reason behind the great powers' disinterest in paying the cost of protecting Iran against each other. The 19th-century Iran is often described as a military buffer zone between Russia and Britain; a buffer zone in military, economic, and political terms alike.

Second, the borders of the current Iranian state have unexceptionally been determined by the politics of the world's great powers. The frontier fictions and frictions have an important place in shaping the modern Iranian identity (Kashani-Sabet, 2000; Farmanfarmaian, 2008). Iranian nationalism has for generations been intertwined with the issue of ensuring Iran's territorial integrity (Ehteshami, 2002, p. 284). This is rather a rare case in the nationalist experiences of modern nations striving for their independence. Most cases of nationalism 'especially among former colonies in Asia and Africa' were formed around a core (i.e., an ethnic or social cause) which would enlarge from inside and would force the colonial powers to leave. This is what I describe as

1. The rerouting of trade was the result, not only of political considerations of the Great Game, but also of technological developments in naval and land transportation. This shifted the trade routes first from an east-west axis to a north-south axis, and then served to dry up trade quite substantially as the routes circumvented Persia through the Black Sea to the north, or from the Gulf through Baghdad along the railroad to Europe in the west (Farmanfarmaian, 2008, p. 9).

Journal of **WORLD SOCIOPOLITICAL STUDIES** | Vol. 5 | No. 3 | Summer 2021

'expansionary nationalism'. But in the case of Iran, it was the process of squeezing of its borders by the great powers which gave birth to the new Iranian identity and modern sense of nationhood. The modern Iranian nation-state was born through the tragic loss of territories and under extreme pressure coming from its geographical surroundings, as a direct consequence of the Great Game (Kashani-Sabet, 2000). Thus, the process of nationalism in Iran, unlike most other nations striving for national sovereignty, was contractionary in geographical terms. As Farmanfarmaian puts it, "for Persia under Qajars, its geopolitical importance and its need to protect both its borders and its resources, reflected a continuum that defined Persian identity and Persian foreign policy, and which continues to do so even under the country's rubric as the Islamic Republic of Iran (Farmanfarmaian, 2008, p. 10)". The cultural construct of land, Kashani argues, provided the primary impetus for Iranian nationalist discourse (Kashani-Sabet, 2000, pp. 6-7).

Based on the above, my main argument is that Iran's marginalization in the global trade and its consolidation as merely a "buffer zone" in the Great Game politics, together with the emergence of a contractionary and protective nationalism in Iran due to 19th-century frontier frictions, have led to a rather negative perception of Iran's geopolitics in the Iranian strategic culture. In this perception, I assume that the fear resulting from those horrific experiences has still remained in the Iranian political psyche, creating a strategic culture based on extreme protectiveness and self-reliance. Exploring and explaining the link between the 'buffer zone' in Iran's geopolitics and 'self-reliance' in the Iranian strategic culture shapes the main line of argument in this paper.

2. Methodology

The methodology I use in this paper aims to analyze the link between geopolitics and strategic culture in historical contexts. To this purpose, I have specifically borrowed from the model that Rebin Fard (2021) has developed in his recent article in *Central European Journal of International and Security Studies*. He has developed a constructivist model to study geopolitics, which focuses on the reconciliation of classical and critical geopolitics[1].

In this essay, I do not aim to enter into a thorough analysis of the Iranian strategic culture, as it would require a separate study. However, I assume there is a causal relationship between geopolitical perceptional constructs and strategic culture, because those perceptions are resulted from Iran's historical interaction with the outside environment, and they shape a coherence in Iran's strategic choices over time. Most specifically, I assume that 'self-reliance' as an undisputed component of Iran's strategic culture is directly linked to Iran's sense of 'loneliness' in its contemporary geopolitical experiences. Colin Gray, as one of the early theorizers of strategic culture, contended that the national historical experience can produce "modes of thought and action with respect to force", which would result in a unique set of "dominant national beliefs" with respect to strategic choices (Johnston, 1995, p. 36). Since the concept of 'strategic loneliness' can be placed at the crossroads of geopolitics, history, and strategic culture, I therefore think the constructivist approach to geopolitics would be suitable for analyzing this concept. By using a historical-analytical approach and by adopting a constructivist model of geopolitical

1. Usually, constructivist approach to geopolitics is taken interchangeable with critical geopolitics. Constructivist geopolitics in the sense of middling between the classical and the critical is rather a new concept.

Journal of **WORLD SOCIOPOLITICAL STUDIES** | Vol. 5 | No. 3 | Summer 2021

analysis, the aim of my paper is to explore the historical process through which the 'subjective space of loneliness' has been formed based on the Iranians' experience of the geographical objectivity. I also borrow from the sociological theory of Berger and Luckmann (1966) on *Social Construction of Reality*. They define the processes of externalization, objectification, and internalization, to explain how people in a society create and maintain reality[1]. In this article, I will focus on the externalization and objectification processes. Externalization is the process by which the meaning is carried and communicated from/to the outside world. Objectification is the process of making the subjectively plausible representation of reality into an objectified, institutionalized, and legitimate reality. According to Adib-Moghaddam (2010, p. 37), "Culture in this sense functions as shared, 'factualized' ideational patterns that permit the nation-state to interpret its relationship with the external environment (alter, or international society) and to order the internal self (ego, self-identity)".

In the classic schools of geopolitics, the highest importance is given to the geographical position of a country as the absolute determinant of that country's weight in the world politics. Critical geopolitics, on the contrary, contends that the perception of space constitutes a subjective political reality, which is more important that the objective reality as an external being. The constructivist geopolitics suggests a new approach to explain the relation between power, space and politics in the international system of states. According to Fard (2021, p. 44), "both classical and critical approaches can be considered as a possible step to increase the technical ability of the basic science-theoretical knowledge of geopolitics. Constructivism contends that political reality emerges

1. For details, see: Flecha, R., Gómez, J., & Puigvert, L. (2001)

from a combination of objective and subjective dimensions. Therefore, both approaches can complement each other in their theoretical and methodological foundations".

According to Colin Flint, "national identity is a territorial identity" (Flint, 2006, p. 133). Geography can be seen as the material-ecological and social structures in which identity is formed, as "one belongs to a territorially determined community in which to live and experience specific but shared visions of meaning from a place in the world and the global system. This spatial identification of a community that belongs to a particular territory that is linked to a particular culture can be understood as origin and identity" (Fard, 2021, p. 47). In the words of Kashani-Sabet, "a visuality and materiality then undergirded the imagined community, and this duality – the blending of the imagined and the material – helped forge nations. Land, an object with material and invented properties, shaped the polemics of patriotism" (Kashani-Sabet, 2000, p. 8).

From theory-oriented perspective, Rebin Fard argues, political reality does not only consist of social, but also the spatial dimension, and that the identity and political action of states are primarily constituted in space and then constituted in social interaction processes: "Turning to the constructivist geopolitics, geopolitical thinking can be shown on the one hand with 'spatiality', namely the influence of space on politics, and on the other hand in terms of 'temporality', including historical developments in spatial policy action and thought systematically reflects it (Fard, 2021, p. 49)".

Based on the above, the constructivist model of geopolitical analysis can be defined as follows: "the constructivist geopolitics…

is an explanatory approach to the action of states in the context of space and power on a global scale in international politics. The constructivist view in geopolitics in knowledge production is how states act in international geopolitics through both experience and observation based on the scientific explanatory model of a causal of intersubjective shared ideas, which are based on the reconstruction of geopolitical reality from the discursive-historical processes in a constitutive understanding perspective (Fard, 2021, p.51)".

Based on the model described in the above, I have taken a position midway between rationalistic-classical geopolitics and critical geopolitics from the perspective of constructivist geopolitics to combine the positivistic and poststructuralist approaches. In the next section, I will review Iran's dealing with the great powers in three historic turning points in which Iran's geography played a key role in underpinning the feeling of strategic loneliness: Russo-Persian wars of the early 19th century, Iran's occupation during WWII, and the Iran-Iraq war of the 1980s. Iranians tried at least three different strategies in relation to great powers at each of these junctures, however, all ended up with further disappointment: making alliance with one big power to counterbalance another, looking for a third power against the other two, and no reliance on the superpowers. In each of these periods Iranian territories were invaded and the state's survival was put at stake.

3. The Russo-Iranian Wars and the Failed Counterbalances

The beginning of the 19th century in Europe is characterized as a turning point in the Napoleonic wars and then the Congress of Vienna. This era also marked the beginning of Iran's modern

foreign policy, which through bad domestic decisions and unfair international conditions, would leave deep scars on the Iranians' political psyche until maybe today. Among the European Powers, Great Britain and the Russian Empire were of most importance for Iran's international politics, as both began to claim interest in Iran: Great Britain to protect and enlarge its footsteps in India, and Russia through its expansion towards South Caucasus and Central Asia, after the Congress of Vienna had shown that all other areas were now fixed in the European settlement. Persia, which used to be a very strong Empire under the Safavid Dynasty and later under Nader Shah, had lost vast parts of its landscape in the second half of the 18th century. When the Qajar Dynasty came to power in 1794 the country had to reorient itself. The early Qajars, therefore, dreamed of re-conquest and the genesis of a new Persian empire. However, Aqa Mohammad Khan's territorial conquests in the Caucasus proved to be hardly retainable by his heirs. Trying to set a foot on the international diplomacy parquet, and anticipating the threat of Russian expansionism in Caucasus, Iran tried to negotiate with Britain an alliance in 1801 and with France in 1807. Both efforts failed due to breaching of covenant by the European powers. This might have been the first incident in which Iran was used merely as an instrument in the Great Game among Great Britain, France, and Russia.

The story of Iran's failed wars and alliances with great powers of the 19th century had another important meaning. These territorial conflicts began the process of defining the frontiers of modern Iran. The narrative of Iranian nationalism unfurled as a tale of territorial desire and disenchantment in the nineteenth century, thus "Nostalgia for ancient glory brought land and geography to the forefront of the patriotic debate (Kashani-Sabet, 2000, p. 4)". As

Journal of **WORLD SOCIOPOLITICAL STUDIES** | Vol. 5 | No. 3 | Summer 2021

Kashani-Sabet aptly points out in her valuable book *Frontier Fictions*, just when the Iranians started to dream about reconstructing a new Persian empire, they misfortunately "had to surrender territories and privileges to these two powers, to submit to an international political and economic system that reinforced their relative weakness, and to endure humiliations that undermined the power and prestige of the state among its own people and with the Europeans (Kashani-Sabet, 2000, p. 9)".

The tragic experience of Russo-Iranian wars in the first three dec ades of the 19th century brought about the biggest shock to the Iranians, making them feel completely desperate and alone in the face of the rivalries and agreements of the great powers of that time. Following correspondence between Napoleon, Emperor of France, and Fath Ali Shah, a treaty between the two countries was finally concluded in 1807 in Finckenstein, Poland, under which France pledged to support Iran against Russian invasion of the Caucasus. Subsequently, a number of French military officers came to Iran to train the Iranian army and equip it with modern weapons. Shortly afterwards, however, Napoleon temporarily renounced hostility to the Tsar and signed a peace treaty with Russia, known as the Tilsit Treaty. After the signing of the peace treaty between Napoleon and the Tsar, Abbas Mirza hoped to be able to conclude a peace treaty with Russia through French mediation and end Russia's threats against Iran's northern frontiers. In a letter to the French Emperor, he referred to Napoleon's compromise with the Tsar and suggested that France mediate peace between Iran and Russia so that Iran could side with France against Britain as a common enemy of the two countries (Najmi, 1363 [1985 A.D.], p. 117; Eskandari, 2008, p. 34). He also suggested in another letter to Gadovich, the commander of the Russian troops, that peace

between Iran and Russia could be mediated by France. The Russians, however, did not accept Iran's conditions for withdrawing from the occupied territories before the talks began. At the same time, French Foreign Minister Champagne believed that mediating between Iran and Russia would be "an extra burden" for France (Kavousi Araghi & Ahmadi, 1376 [1998 A.D.], pp. 42-44). Later, Britain and Russia once again allied in the Third Coalition against Napoleon. Iranians, caught up in the predicament of Russian attacks on the one hand and British plots on the other, for the first time found themselves "abandoned" in the international system (Eskandari, 2008, p. 36).

In the book *The Iranian Narrative of the Russo-Iranian Wars*, written by the Iranian historian Hossein Abadian, it is stated that Iran's defeat in these wars was a defeat against both Russia and Britain: "In fact, Iran's defeat in this war was due to an international political game…Iran's defeat never took place on the battlefield, but it was the common policies among Russia, Britain and France that imposed defeat on Iran (Abadian, 1380 [2002 A.D.], p. 76)". As exaggerated as it may sound, this phrase reflects how Iranian historians tend to perceive Iran's loneliness in those wars. Abadian (1380 [2002 A.D.], p. 75) believes that European governments used Iran only as a card to balance Russia, and when they reached their goal, they left Iran on its own. Mirza Bozorg Ghaem Magham the Grand Vizier of Fath Ali Shah is quoted in this regard: "Britain, which previously claimed friendship with Iran and is now allied with Russia, is the main cause of Iran's defeat (Abadian, 1380 [2002 A.D.], pp. 101-100)". Most Iranian sources note that Britain played a key role in the beginning of the first round of wars, in the ceasefire, and in the preparation and design of the Golestan agreement, in accordance with Russia's interests. According to Eskandari-Qajar, "Golestan was a prelude to

Journal of **WORLD SOCIOPOLITICAL STUDIES** | Vol. 5 | No. 3 | Summer 2021

Turkomanchay, as Russia already had made the decision that her border with Persia would be the Aras River, while England had made her decision that she would not be held to any obligations with respect to Persia other than the minimum she could get away with (Eskandari, 2008, p. 27)". The British never chose their relations with Iran over an alliance with Russia. Even after Napoleon went into permanent exile, Britain was still unprepared to support Iran against Russia, consequently Iran was left to deal with the Russians alone, except when it came to the British self-serving interest in mediating the conflict.

In his valuable research on the history of Iran-Britain relations, Olson (1984) argues that Iran was more the object of concern than the subject of relationship for Great Britain. In fact, British Prime Minister Lord Salisbury had noted in 1889 that "Were it not for our possessing India, we should trouble ourselves but little over Persia" (Olson, 1984, p. 1). This shows that, in the British perspective, Iran's territory was not worth more than just a buffer zone during the 19th century. Apart from a rather limited trade, British interest or involvement in Persia arose out of an abiding concern for the defense of India's land frontier and the routes leading to it. Olson (1984, p. 1) contends: "Had the British been assured of the security of the strategic routes across the Middle East, and if they could have been reassured about invulnerability of their vast continental possession, it is doubtful that Iran would have figured very prominently in British thinking". Olson believes that apart from minimal commercial contacts, British-Iranian relations never went much further than pleasantries, unless Iranians themselves became a threat, which means that Iran per se was not the subject of British policy in West Asia, but only the distressful side of the Iranian geography was of importance: "Britain was content to secure Iran's neutrality [i.e., buffer zone position] with offers guaranteed by a

treaty whose main purpose was to *keep Iran friendly* [emphasis added] (Olson, 1984, p. 3)". The British were not ready or willing to offer more material support.

Olson (1984, p. 7) points that the British were ready to go to war over Afghanistan but not over Iran, neither in the early 1800s, nor at the turn of the century. If they had demonstrated willingness to risk a war over Persia, he argues, "things might have been simpler, for the Russians would have received their notice, the Persians would have been saved and Britain's security worries appeased".

The main lesson taken from the failed wars and alliances of the early 19th century could be summarized in the following words: "Iranian space could not intrude upon the ever-expanding domains of its imperial rivals. Collision only resulted in Persia's defeat. Neither jihad, nor Safavid revivalism, nor even diplomacy would assure the Iranian victory (Kashani-Sabet, 2000, p. 33)". The new Iranian nation-state was born under such circumstances in a more compact space – a lonely one in a sea of hostile environment. Iran's efforts to counterbalance Britain, France, and Russia against one another might not have been a resounding triumph because of the complexities of the Great Game that went beyond the Iranians' scope of control, but "the Persia that emerges is one of relative political stability, notwithstanding the turmoil on all sides of her borders; one of independence from the colonial practices that characterized the interventions in the lands of her neighbors; and one that, despite significant pressures from outside on her trade, currency and other resources, enjoyed a regime continuity that was unique in the geopolitical region she occupied (Farmanfarmaian, 2000, p. 4)". Eskandari (2008, p. 1), however, believes that this survival was achieved at a cost – that was Iran's loneliness, like the 'loneliness of Odysseus':

Journal of **WORLD SOCIOPOLITICAL STUDIES** | Vol. 5 | No. 3 | Summer 2021

To be sure, Persia was not a helpless victim in this struggle, and much like Odysseus, its rulers used a variety of means at their disposal to play one side against the other in the hopes of achieving their own ends. In doing so, however, Persia like Odysseus, was not free to act as she pleased: her resources were limited, her options few, and there were many pressures on her, from without and within. In the end, for the Qajars, as for the Odysseus, the result was survival, but at a cost.

4. WWII and the Search for "Third Power"

For most of the 19th century and the early 20th century, Iran was stuck between two competing great powers – Russia in the north and Britain in the south – which often agreed to keep Iran in a status not strong enough to be able to act as an independent actor, and not weak enough to collapse. It was also rather impossible to balance one by making alliance with the other, for the two rivals showed an extraordinary capability for coordination and convergence whenever Iran's crucial interests were at the stake. No other major power could effectively become so influential in Iran to counterbalance the above-mentioned two powers. Iran's policy in the early 20th century was thus inclined to search for a "third power" but its attempts never actually bore any fruits. Despite sending some financial or military counselors to Iran for short periods of time, neither France, nor Germany, nor the United States made a reliable strategic partner for Iran against Britain and Russia from the nineteenth century until the Second World War. As Naqibzadeh (1383 [2005 A.D.], pp. 31-32) points out, "the competition between these two countries [Russia and Britain] in the Mediterranean area contributed to the preservation of territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire. But the situation was more

complicated in Iran, which was located between Russia and the warm waters of the south and India. Russo-British rivalry in Iran was always affected by the European affairs, and whenever the two countries faced a common threat [in Europe] they would come to terms over Iran … As a result of their rivalry, Iran's territorial integrity was violated numerous times, much more than that of the Ottoman Empire".

The tragedy of Iran suffering from "the fate of a small, weak state; caught between the interests of powerful rivals," continued throughout the First World War, when Iranian territories were assaulted by different sides of the war regardless of the neutrality of the country in the Great War (Olson, 1984). However, when Reza Shah came to power and established the Pahlavi dynasty, he desired to prove he was an independent actor at the face of the great powers. As the American Minister in Tehran wrote in 1940, he detested the role of a helpless pawn on a slippery chessboard (Stewart, 1370 [1992 A.D.], p. 43). But he soon proved to be acting delusional in a Great Game whose scale was by no means appropriate for Iran, therefore, "acting like a villager in the city (Naghibzadeh, 1383 [2005 A.D.], p. 132)".

At the outset of WWII, Iran officially adopted the policy of neutrality, but later, it seemed that Reza Shah was seeking a "third power" to counterbalance the clash and then convergence of interests between Britain and Soviet Union over Iran. In his book, *Sunrise at Abadan*, Richard Stewart narrates the account of Reza Shah's efforts to reach a secret deal with Britain in the early stages of war to protect Iran against Russia, while Hitler was also negotiating a secret deal with Stalin, according to which Iran was left outside of the Germany's priority zones. He argues that the first priority for Hitler was to contain the British influence in Iran, even

Journal of **WORLD SOCIOPOLITICAL STUDIES** | Vol. 5 | No. 3 | Summer 2021

at the expense of increasing Soviet penetration. Enhancing German influence in Iran was thus a secondary target (Stewart, 1370 [1992 A.D.], p. 21). Since September 1939, Iran was extremely worried about the possibility of Soviet aggression in the north; Reza Shah therefore secretly asked Britain for support. According to Stewart, although the British were well aware of the danger of the Soviet threat against Iran and its strategic oil fields, they were reluctant to accept any commitments versus Iran (Stewart, 1370 [1992 A.D.], pp. 24-27). Later, the British considered an offensive plan against the Soviet Union which necessitated violation of Iran's neutrality and territorial sovereignty. The British intended[1] to bomb the oil fields in Caucasus in order to paralyze the Soviet economy as well as depriving the Germans from any possible access to those fields in the future (Stewart, 1370 [1992 A.D.], p. 30). On the other side, the Soviets were also getting prepared to react to any such British offensive from Iranian soil. The tension was reaching a boiling point in the Summer of 1940. Iranians found their territory at the stake in a rising hostility between the German-Soviet alliance and the Allies. Hitler wanted to divert Stalin's ambitions from Europe towards the Persian Gulf, so the British and Soviet military confrontation over Iran seemed imminent (Stewart, 1370 [1992 A.D.], p. 41). In fact, Germany's goal and policy towards Iran was no different from Britain's imperialist method and policy. Despite its very friendly relations with the Iranian government, Hitler's Germany, in its secret dealings with Soviet leaders, recognized the Iranian land as an area of influence for the Soviet government, in order to gain Soviet support for its expansionist goals in other parts of the world (Elahi, 1365 [1987 A.D.], p. 85). Once again, the Iranian territory only became a buffer zone in the grand strategies of the great powers. Stalin, however, decided to delay a full-scale

1. Before the inclusion of the USSR in the Allies.

attack on Iran because he was worried about British retaliation against the oil fields of Baku, and also because he thought he could wait to see the final fate of Britain in war against Germany. The great shift came with the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941. This incident suddenly brought Britain and the USSR together over Iran. For both countries, the presence of some thousand German officers in Iran – mostly engineers and technicians in construction projects – was of extreme concern. Both the British and the Soviet governments had previously prepared concrete military plans for the invasion of Iran, but after the German attack on the Soviet Union, the small German community in Iran provided the best pretext for both powers to reach a consensus for the joint occupation of the country (Elahi, 1365 [1987 A.D.], p. 98).

Some of the most interesting primary sources that shed light on this era are the memoires of Sir Reader Bullard, the British ambassador in Tehran, before and during the occupation of Iran. Bullard, however, does not explain the real reasons behind the Allies' decision to occupy Iran – other than the presence of the so-called German agents in Iran. Yet his writings reveal significant evidence. He briefly mentions his meeting with Reza Shah, together with the Soviet ambassador, on August 25, 1941, just the day that the Allied troops marched onto Iranian territories: "The Shah said that if the cause of the attack was that Germany had seized the whole of Europe and that Great Britain and the Soviet Union wished to seize Persia, then Persia was too weak to oppose this. If however only object was elimination of all Germans [in Iran], that was already being effected" (Bullard, 1991, p. 69). This point is addressed by Kozhanov in his valuable research on USSR and the Allied occupation of Iran: "There is no answer to why the Kremlin, whose armed forces were sustaining heavy losses in the

Journal of **WORLD SOCIOPOLITICAL STUDIES** | Vol. 5 | No. 3 | Summer 2021

European front, agreed to allocate three armies to take part in the military actions far away from the main theatre of hostilities" (Kozhanov, 2018, p. 297). Researching through the first-hand Soviet documents, Kozhanov concludes that "the occupation of Iran was the result of Soviet and British ambitions that had little to do with the neutralization of the Nazi threat in Iran" (Kozhanov, 2018, p. 298). He implies the two powers had developed a grand strategy in this region, according to which Iran would have been occupied, regardless of the extent of the German-Iranian relations.

Bullard also points to a telegraph from Churchill on September 3, 1941, which reveals that the British had broader goals than just combating the so-called German espionage: "We cannot tell how the war in this region will develop, but the best possible through-route from the Persian Gulf to the Caspian will be developed at the utmost speed and at all costs in order to supply Russia. It is very likely that large British forces will be operating in and from Persia in 1942 and certainly a powerful air force will be installed. We hope it will not be necessary in the present phase at any rate to have an Anglo-Russian occupation of Tehran, but the Persian government will have to give us loyal and faithful help and show all proper alacrity, if they wish to avoid it. At present time we have not turned against the Shah but unless good results are forthcoming, his misgovernment of his people will be brought into account" (Bullard, 1991, pp. 76-7).

Bullard (1991, p. 75) also mentions that the real intention behind the British intervention in Iran was to save Afghanistan as the gateway of India from a possible German threat, so the Iranian soil must have been used for that purpose: "I am sorry that it has come to this pass, but the Iranians were warned. There was plenty to show that the Germans were using Iran as a center for intrigue in Iraq and in Caucasus. As Afghanistan was another center, the

danger was all the greater". Bullard (1991, p. 75) argues that the Germans had gained enough confidence by their penetration through Iran to "stir up trouble on the [British India's] frontier". He then blames Iranians that "they went on making light of our fears and even asking whether they were real". Although he repeatedly claims in his diaries that, if the Iranian government had agreed to expel all the Germans, "the rest could have been arranged", it becomes obvious from Bullard's own writings that the British had certain territorial concerns in the Middle East, for which Iran had to become neutralized as a buffer zone. According to historical documents, General Linlithgow, the Governor of British India, and Leo Amery British Secretary of State for India, were among the major supporters of invasion of Iran, as they believed this was necessary to protect India from the German reach. The British also had serious concerns about Iranian oil fields that must have been defended in case the German forces approached the Middle East (Stewart, 1370 [1992 A.D.], pp. 92-93). Kozhanov (2018, pp. 308-9) points out in his research that the British "had a certain plan of action related to Iran, which should have been executed in the case of the German invasion of the USSR", and that London was seeking to use the overall situation to push the Soviet Union to help Great Britain in achieving its goals in Iran:

> First, this country was the key point of all possible variants of German offensive in India. The occupation of Iran would allow London to create ab additional line of defense there against a possible Wehrmacht offensive. Second, by that time, Iran possessed the largest proven oil reserves accessible to Britain, and London wanted to secure stable supplies…Third, in spite of the successful demonstration of the capabilities of British military forces in Iraq, the Shah continued to behave independently.

Journal of **WORLD SOCIOPOLITICAL STUDIES** | Vol. 5 | No. 3 | Summer 2021

The British, Kozhanov argues, considered that "the Iranian problem" should be contained and controlled at any cost, and they used the moment of German invasion of the USSR to bring the Soviets on their side with regard to their policy towards Iran. It seems that at first, military engagement in Iran was not a priority for the Soviets. However, when they became convinced that Britain would have intervened in Iran anyway to use the Iranian territory as a protection shield against the advance of the Nazi forces towards India in the case of a Soviet defeat by Germany, they decided to engage in the military operation in order to prevent British from gaining full control of Iran. Stalin was very concerned about the British activities in Iran and emphasized that Moscow, at any cost, should not allow London to spread its influence over the northern part of this country (Kozhanov, 2018, p. 310).

Like Napoleon, Hitler was ready to make every concession to the Russians but to give them a free hand over the Straits and the Balkans. It is alleged that Hitler suggested to the Russians to move southward as far as they wished, but never to think about the possibility of having the Straits or a zone of influence in the Balkans (Naghibzadeh, 1383 [2005 A.D.], p. 145). Ruhollah Ramazani (1975, p. 26) also confirms that rumors about a secret deal between Germany and the Soviet Union over Iran "were not without foundation", as Germany had conceded that "the area south of Baku in the general direction of the Persian Gulf is recognized as the center of the aspirations of the Soviet Union" in return for a German free hand in the Dardanelles.

The Germans wanted to exploit Iran's internal tensions to their own purposes, but this policy was not designed to help the Iranians. German commercial interests in Iran were never considerable. Iranians thought they could use the German factor to

counterbalance the other two competing great powers – Britain and Russia. Reza Shah might have thought that Germany was destined to win, but there is no evidence – except for exchanging some cordial messages – to show that Hitler had actually counted on Reza Shah as a strategic ally. The Germans showed some enthusiasm, but they did not see much advantage in siding with Iran, besides the fact that they were geographically far. Iran's autonomous policy of seeking a third power in between of Russia and Britain came to a failure, not only because of the Anglo-Russian alignment in 1941, but also because of the German-Russian agreement in 1940. In the humiliating context of these incidents leading to the abdication and exile of the Shah, Iranians became even more preoccupied with their sense "loneliness" in the international politics arena.

5. Neither East nor West and the Iran-Iraq War

The horror of the eight-year war with Iraq is a vivid memory for the current Iranian generations and a lived experience of 'loneliness' in the face of enemies. Iran had to fight alone with a regime in Baghdad which was covertly or overtly supported by both superpowers and their allies. Iran's main weapon was human sacrifices whereas the other side was equipped with the most advanced military equipment and technologies. But what was the role of Iran's geopolitics in this violent theatre?

During the Cold War, the interests of the United States in the Persian Gulf region were very simple and consistent: first, to ensure access for industrialized world to the vast oil resources of the region; and secondly, to prevent the Soviet Union from acquiring political or military control over those resources. Gary

Journal of **WORLD SOCIOPOLITICAL STUDIES** | Vol. 5 | No. 3 | Summer 2021

Sick believes that any other objectives expressed by US leaders from time to time other than the two grand themes of oil and Soviet containment were only secondary to the US strategy (Sick, 1989, p. 121). The US preoccupation with preventing the expansion of Soviet influence in the region could be seen as an extension of 'the Great Game' as practiced by the British throughout the nineteenth century (Sick, 1989, p. 122). This analysis provided by Sick reveals a simple, but pivotal, reality with regard to how the US looked at Iran: first, the trouble-making capacity of Iran (e.g. disrupting the secure oil flow from the Persian Gulf) must be taken seriously and contained; and second, Iranian territory can best function as an obstacle – read a buffer zone – in the face of any probable Soviet effort to penetrate southward[1]. This led the United States to follow a dual-target containment policy against Iran in the war: Iran should be kept inferior in strength to its hostile neighbor(s) and at the same time, must sustain the war in order to prevent the Soviet expansion in the region. Indeed, the United States supported the gradual erosion of the Iranian power through continued conflict and resistance (Motaghi, 1388 [2010 A.D.], p. 364).

Contrary to other regional conflicts, and despite the heavy strains on the superpowers' relationship over a variety of issues, Leonid Brezhnev and Jimmy Carter soon after the beginning of the war exchanged letters, in which they allegedly reassured each other of their intention to stay out of the conflict (Hubel, 1989, p. 147), meaning that they would not directly intervene in the war. This

1. This was clearly reflected in the Carter Doctrine, where it was announced: "The region which is now threatened by Soviet troops in Afghanistan is of great strategic importance … An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America" (Samuels, 1980). Read more about the Carter Doctrine in Samuels (1980).

once again demonstrated the possibility of compromise between two competing world powers over Iran, similar to the Russo-British entente in 1907 and 1941, when Iran was effectively divided between the two great powers (Sick, 1989, p. 122); this time, however, the compromise was over a non-intervention strategy as both superpowers were indifferent to the continuation of the war.

At the beginning of the war, the United States apparently asserted its neutrality, but it tended to tilt towards Iraq in order to contain Iran (Motaghi, 1388 [2010 A.D.], p. 364). During much of the war, the United States and many other powers took a hand-off posture, on the grounds that they could have little effect on the outcome of the conflict, especially since it was having relatively little impact on oil supplies. However, the US was effectively attempting to shape a world boycott on all exports of weapons to Iran.

In September 1981, after Iran gained the upper hand in the war, the Soviet Union began and promised to send new weaponry such as T-72 tanks, MIG-29 and MIG-25 combat aircraft and others to the Iraqi regime. Moscow continued to sustain Iraq's superiority in arms and weapons technology, obviously compensating Baghdad for Iran's advantage in manpower and willingness to bear human sacrifices. It has been estimated that more than half of the Iraqi armament during the war were provided by the Soviet Union. (Hubel, 1989, p. 144) At the same time, the Soviet Union clearly prevented its allies and partners from delivering sophisticated weaponry, which could compensate for the Iraqi technological advantage. Iran was already under arms embargo by the United States since the Revolution, but then the Soviet Union also joined Iran's boycott from 1983. By doing so, the Soviet Union strengthened US efforts to halt all arms transfers to Iran. Whether

Journal of **WORLD SOCIOPOLITICAL STUDIES** | Vol. 5 | No. 3 | Summer 2021

for its own reasons or as a by-product of intensifying dialogue with the United States, the Soviet Union also contributed to Iran's ultimate exhaustion.

The superpowers did actually succeed in manipulating the flow of arms to Iran to a considerable degree: neither they themselves nor their friends and allies provided Iran with weapons that could match Iraq's superiority in quantity and quality of military hardware. Iran still received some weapons from the countries in the Eastern bloc; however, those were minor in quality and did not change the balance of power with Iraq. At the same time, the arms flow to Iraq continued unlimitedly. Apart from the sophisticated French combat aircraft, it was mostly the Soviet weapons which sustained the Iraqi resistance when Iran seemed to be at the brink of a breakthrough in 1986-7 (Hubel, 1989, p. 146).

The results of the strategic consensus against Iran were evident in increasing all-round diplomatic restrictions and economic-military pressures against Iran (Motaghi, 1388 [2010 A.D.], p. 320). In 1986 the "tanker war" had expanded, with more shipping attacks and casualties than the cumulative total of the preceding years. Iraq's air attacks had put all Iranian oil terminals in the Persian Gulf at risk. The more sustained Iraq's attacks on shipping serving Iran became, the more acute the pressure on Iran to submit passively or to exert pressure militarily on the Gulf states. The dilemma posed did not admit of a solution; unable to find Iraqi targets in the waterway, Iran targeted the Western interests in the Persian Gulf and found itself playing into Iraq's hands by antagonizing its immediate neighbors and also the superpowers (Chubin, 1989, p. 11).

After the Tanker War began, both Superpowers adopted an overt pro-Iraqi position. The Soviet Union had given green light to Iraq

to fire SCUD-B missiles at Tehran and other major Iranian cities (Hubel, 1989, p. 144), leaving several hundreds of civilian casualties and spreading public panic. Iraq was also using extensive quantity of chemical weapons against the Iranian military and civilians. On the other side, the United States was providing Iraq with detailed intelligence data to aid Iraq in bombing strategic targets in Iran. Then came the tragic destruction of the Iran Air passenger aircraft by a US naval vessel's missile in July of that year. As Gary Sick (1989, p. 135) contends, "this terrible accident, coming at the end of a seemingly endless series of defeats, underscored the despair of Iran's position. Despite the enormity of the mistake, Iran was unable to muster sufficient support at the UN to condemn the US action. Its isolation and weakness were never more apparent". The situation was not made any easier by the fact that Iran's sense of grievance about the origins and hence blame for the start of the war was not shared by the permanent members of the Security Council – the great powers – as well as the majority of the international community. The tragic series of incidents in the last year of the war "gave Iran's leaders precisely the moral cover of martyrdom and suffering in the face of an unjust superior force", and reproduced their sense of loneliness (Chubin, 1989, pp. 14-15).

The war created an opportunity for the superpowers to engage more easily in a dialogue about the conflict, which was essentially not an ideological issue between them. Hubel argues that since 1985, Gorbachev and the new team of leadership in Moscow sought to engage the USSR more in international affairs, and to reduce tensions with the United States. He realized that the Iran-Iraq war was the best ground over which he could build up a dialogue with Washington (Hubel, 1989, p.148). This unusual convergence was effectively made possible by Iran's reliance on

Journal of **WORLD SOCIOPOLITICAL STUDIES** | Vol. 5 | No. 3 | Summer 2021

the Neither East nor West policy (Motaghi, 1388 [2010 A.D.], pp. 167-168). This policy – which had posed a threat against the stability of the bipolar system – obliged the two superpowers to have, for the first time, a dialogue over a regional war, which did not seem contrary to their principal interests. The Western powers had no regret to have left Iran alone in the war; instead, they established strategic relationships with the Gulf states, whose partnerships were more economically beneficial to the West (Sick, 1989, p. 137; Razoux, 2015, p. 479).

Chubin (1989, p. 15) describes Iran's loneliness in the war in the following words: "Judged from the standpoint of traditional diplomacy, Iran's war efforts had been a valiant but pointless exercise. Having elevated self-reliance to an absolute goal, Iran had found through its own immoderation that it was no longer just a goal but a reality, and a constraint with which its war effort had to struggle". Parsadoust (1385 [2007 A.D.], p. 790) points to a critical fact that the convergence of interests among great powers has always worked against the sovereignty of the Iranian state since the 19th century to the Iran-Iraq war: "In the past, the rivalries between Russia and Britain, and in the years after World War II, between the United States and the Soviet Union, while inflicting great damage on Iran, could sometimes be exploited by Iranian government officials [to preserve the country's sovereignty]. But their compromise with each other, both in the past and in the present, has generally served their interests and for the implementation of their common points of view". Resolution 598 was the final fruit of this convergence and Iran realized, after receiving several defeats on the ground, that time had come to accept the ceasefire. In this regard, Hubel contends that the superpowers both shaped the conditions under which this war took place and imposed the conditions that led to the end of the war

(Hubel, 1989, pp. 148-9). This is astonishingly similar to what was quoted from Abadian earlier in this article about the conditions ruling the first Russo-Iranian war: the fate of the war was decided in the Great Game outside of the actual battlefield. Unfortunately for Iran, the strategy of reliance on neither of the great powers also failed to protect Iran against the invasion of its territory. Although Iran did not give away an inch of its territory, the damage of the war to the stamina and resources of the country was considerable.

6. Analysis and Conclusion

In the above-mentioned case studies, I sought a relationship between Iran's geopolitical experience in the 19th and 20th centuries and the sense of 'loneliness' as an intersubjectivity. As explained in the beginning, I did not intend to elaborate the discourse of loneliness itself, as it is reflected in the rhetoric of Iranian policy makers and/or political elite. My intention was to use the constructivist theory of geopolitics to show how the feeling of loneliness indeed roots in Iran's confrontation with the Great Game of the 19th and 20th centuries. According to Rebin Fard's (2021, p. 48) constructivist approach, which was used in this paper, the spatial objective reality is "a constant constitutive element of the permanent production and reconstruction of the social. The sense of loneliness in the Iranian context is a social construction that is constantly being provoked by the geographical impositions on the ground and reaffirmed by subsequent subjective production of the space at the discursive level. The following chart summarizes the linkage between the spatial reality and the social reality of Iran's geopolitical experience in accordance with the externalization and objectification processes of strategic culture:

Table 1. The Link between Spatial and Social Realities in the Making of Strategic Culture

EXTERNALIZATION			**OBJECTIFICATION**
Historical Periods	***Geographical reality***	***Subjective production of space***	***Social construction of Reality***
Russo-Persian wars	Iranian territory is invaded. Iran loses a large portion of territory to Russia, in spite of frequent request of assistance from both Britain and France.	Russia has obvious territorial mal-intentions against Iranian lands. European powers are untrustworthy and unreliable.	**Iran cannot rely on any external power to protect its territory and sovereignty; therefore, it needs to be self-reliant for its own defense.**
The Second World War	Iranian territory is entirely occupied by the Allied troops for almost five years. The Shah was forced to abdicate and sent to exile.	Britain and Russia are *the* enemies of Iran's national integrity; Third powers (USA/Germany) are either passive or practically incapable of stopping the aggressors.[1]	
Iran-Iraq War	Iranian territory is invaded. All types of conventional and non-conventional weapons are used against Iranians.	The United States, The Soviet Union, China, European powers, regional countries, and UN Security Council are *all* united to make Iran capitulate.	

Source: Author's Conclusion

1. Eventually, it is alleged that the Americans played a crucial role in making the Russian troops leave Iranian territories in 1946 (which became one of the early signs of the Cold War). However, in the Iranian resources this is often perceived with suspicion and thus easily overlooked. Iranians usually attribute the evacuation of Azerbaijan Province from the Soviet troops to their own negotiating skills. Therefore, whatever the reality on the ground, the perception of loneliness has remained intact.

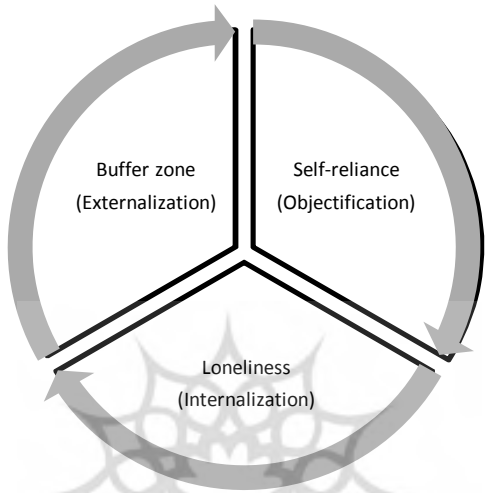
The cases studied in this paper represent the externalization stage in the culture making process defined by Berger and Luckmann. Subsequently, it is the objectification and internalization that shape the intersubjectivity of loneliness as a social reality. The repeated failure of reliance on or lack of alliance with great powers over time has convinced Iranians in their intersubjective layer of mind that they must be 'self-reliant' in defending their own territory. Geographical conditions often constitute a *sine qua non* for social processes. These subjective productions then become consolidated as a reality *sui genesis* through objectification.

While I have pointed to three case studies in which the structure of international politics has imposed itself on the Iranian agency, the constitutive part of my argument concerns when these experiences as an externalization have been translated into social reality through the objectification process. Understanding geographical conditions thus enables us to explain various social phenomena to a great extent. However, geographical conditions must not be seen as an irreversible fate. They constitute a set of opportunities and constraints, meaning a structure independent of agency (Scholvin, 2016, p. 6), but this is the agency that internalize them and turn them into absolute social realities.

If we consider 'self-reliance' as a sociocultural manifestation shaped through the objectification process, and the sense of 'loneliness' as an intersubjectivity produced through the internalization process, I argue that this makes a direct link to the 'buffer zone' position in the external reality that has been imposed by the great power politics. In other words, 'self-reliance' is not a solution but a reaffirmation of what seems to be Iran's destiny.

Journal of **WORLD SOCIOPOLITICAL STUDIES** | Vol. 5 | No. 3 | Summer 2021

Figure 1. The Cognitive Cycle of Strategic Loneliness: Buffer-Zone (Geopolitical Experience), Self-Reliance (Strategic Culture), and Loneliness (Intersubjectivity).

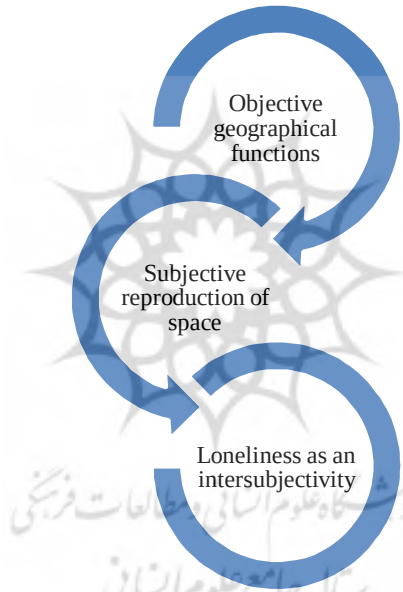


Source: Author's Conclusion

Fard's theoretical approach provides a synthesis between classical/deterministic geopolitics as based only on external reality on the one side, and the critical geopolitics that take every phenomenon as a subjective imagination on the other. Fard's approach explains the dialectic between the objective and the subjective. On this basis, my conclusion is that, although the feeling of loneliness in Iran is a social construct, we should trace back its origins into the external reality. This does not imply determinism. Iranians as agency have strived hard to overcome the impositions of the structure, but often finished with disappointment. I intended to show that this failure does not derive from destiny, but it is because Iranians have been unable to change a crucial factor in the modern function of Iran's geography imposed

by the great powers - that is, the buffer zone position. They have constantly played into the trap of the buffer zone, and thus the outcomes have continuously reconfirmed the sense of loneliness at the subjective layer.

Figure 2. The Chronological Steps from Geographical Functions to the Sense of Loneliness.



Source: Author's Conclusion

Going back to the question raised at the beginning of this paper, I believe that Iran's geography does not cause a sense of loneliness; this feeling is a social reality that roots in repeated contemporary historical experiences. In the time of the transformation of the international system, a historic window of opportunity has opened

Journal of **WORLD SOCIOPOLITICAL STUDIES** | Vol. 5 | No. 3 | Summer 2021

for Iran to change what seems to be a condemned destiny. If Iran manages to withdraw its geography from the buffer zone position, and make itself a connection point of strategic international routes, building a balanced relationship with all the great powers, and enter into some broader regional or trans-regional settings, its sense of loneliness will disappear. Iranians must overcome the trap of historical determinism to overcome their sense of loneliness.

References

Abadian, H. (1380 [2002 A.D.]). Ravāyat-e irāni-ye jang-hā-ye irān va rūs [Iranian Version of the Iran-Russia Wars]. Tehran: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Documents and Diplomacy History Center

Adib-Moghaddam, A. (2010). *Iran in World Politics; The Question of the Islamic Republic*. Columbia University Press.

Berger, P. L. & Luckmann, T. (1966). *The Social Construction of Reality; A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. New York: Doubleday & Company. Penguin.

Bullard, R. (1991). *Letters from Tehran: A British Ambassador in World War II Persia*. London: I.B. Tauris.

Chubin, S. (1989). Iran and the War: From Stalemate to Ceasefire. In H. W. Maull & O. Pick (Eds.), *The Gulf War, Regional and International Dimensions* (pp. 5-16). London: St Martin's Press.

Ehteshami, A. (2014). The Foreign Policy of Iran. In R. Hinnebusch & A. Ehteshami (Eds.), *The Foreign Policies of Middle Eastern States* (pp. 261-288). Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder co.

Elahi, H. (1365 [1987 A.D.]). Ahammiyat-e esterātežiki-ye irān dar jang-e jahāni-ye dovvom [Iran's Strategic Importance in World War II]. Tehran: Enteshar Publication Co.

Eskandari-Qajar, M. (2008). Between Scylla and Charybdis: Policy-making Under the Conditions of Constraint in Early Qajar Persia. In R. Farmanfarmaian (Ed.), *War and Peace in Qajar Persia, Implications Past and Present* (pp. 21-46). UK: Routledge.

Eslami Nadoushan, M. A. (1376 [1998 A.D.]). Irān va tanhāyi-'aš [Iran and Its Loneliness]. Tehran: Enteshar Publication Co.

Fard, R. (2021, March). Towards a New Concept of Constructivist Geopolitics: Bridging Classical and Critical Geopolitics. *Central European Journal of International and Security Studies*, *15*(1), 26-57. https://doi.org/10.51870/CEJISS.A150102

Farmanfarmaian, R. (2008). Introduction. In R. Farmanfarmaian (Ed.), *War and Peace in Qajar Persia, Implications Past and Present* (pp. 1-12). UK: Routledge.

Flecha, R., Gómez, J., & Puigvert, L. (2001). CHAPTER 7: The Analysis of Socially Constructed Reality. *Counterpoints*, *250*, 51–56. Flecha, R., Gómez, J., & Puigvert, L. (2001). CHAPTER 7: The Analysis of Socially Constructed Reality. *Counterpoints*, *250*, 51–56. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/42977871

Flint, C. (2006). *Introduction to Geopolitics*. U.K.: Routledge.

Gray, C. S. (1999). Strategic Culture as Context: The First Generation of Theory Strikes Back. *Review of International Studies*, *25*(1), 49-69. https://www.jstor.org/stable/20097575

Gray, C. S. (1988). *The Geopolitics of Super Power*. U.S.: University Press of Kentucky.

Hubel, H. (1989). The Soviet Union and the Iran-Iraq War. In H. W. Maull & O. Pick (Eds.), *The Gulf War, Regional and International Dimensions* (pp. 139-151). London: St Martin's Press.

Johnston, A. I. (1995). Thinking about Strategic Culture. *International Security*, *19*(4), 32-64. https://doi.org/10.2307/2539119

Juneau, T., Razavi, S. (2013). *Iranian Foreign Policy since 2001; Alone in the World*. U.K.:Routledge.

Kashani-Sabet, F. (2000). *Frontier Fictions, Shaping the Iranian Nation 1804-1946*. London: I. B. Tauris & Co.

Kavousi Araghi, M. H., & Ahmadi, H. (1376 [1998 A.D.]). Asnādi az ravābet-e irān va farānse (dar dore-ye fath–āli- šāh-e qājār) [Documents from Iran-France Relations (during Fath Ali Shah Qajar Era)]. Tehran: Office of Political and International Studies.

Khomeini, R. (1397 [2018 A.D.]). Barakāt-e defā'e moqaddas dar kalām-e emām xomeyni [Blessings of the Sacred Defense in the Words of Imam Khomeini]. Retrieved from http://www.imam-khomeini.ir/fa/n2309/)

Kozhanov, N. A. (2018). The USSR and Allied Occupation of Iran in August 1941: The Untold Story of a Difficult Decision. In R. Mathee & E. Andreeva (Eds.), *Russians in Iran, Diplomacy and Power in the Qajar Era and Beyond* (pp. 297-312). London: I. B. Tauris & Co.

Motaghi, A. (1388 [2010 A.D.]). Nezām-e Do-qotbi va jang-e irān va arāq [The Bipolar System and the Iran-Iraq War]. Tehran: Center for the Holy Defense Documentation & Research.

Naghibzadeh, A. (1383 [2005 A.D.]). Jame'e-šenāsi-ye bi-tarafi va ravānšenāsi-ye enzevā-garāyi dar tārix-e diplomāsi-ye irān [Sociology of Neutrality and Psychology of Isolationism in the History of Iranian Diplomacy]. Tehran: Publications of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the I. R. Iran.

Najmi, N. (1363 [1985 A.D.]). Irān dar miyān-e tūfān ya šarh-e zendegāni-ye ābbās mirzā [Iran in the Midst of the Storm or the Biography of Abbas Mirza]. Tehran: Kanoon Marefat Publication.

Olson, Wm. J. (1984). *Anglo-Iranian Relations during World War I*. New York: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd.

Parsadoust, M. (1385 [2007 A.D.]). Mā va ārāq az gozašte-ye dur tā emruz [We and Iraq from the Distant Past to the Present]. Tehran: Enteshar Publication Co.

Ramazani, R. K. (1975). *Iran's Foreign Policy, 1941–1973: A Study of Foreign Policy in Modernizing Nations*. U.S.: University of Virginia Press.

Ramazani, R. K. (1399 [2021 A.D]). Tārix-e siyāsat-e xāreji-ye irān az safaviye tā pāyān-e pahlavi-ye avvāl [History of Iranian Foreign Policy from the Safavid to the End of the First Pahlavi Period] (R. Eslami & Z. Pezeshkian Trans.) Tehran: Nei Publication.

Razoux, P. (2015). *The Iran-Iraq War* (N. Elliot, Trans.). U.K.: The Belknap of Harvard University Press.

Sajjadpoor, M. K. (1383 [2005 A.D.]). Čārčub-e mafhumi va pažuheši barāye motāle'e-ye siyāsat-e xāreji-ye irān [Conceptual and Research Frameworks for Studying Iranian Foreign Policy]. Tehran: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the I. R. Iran.

Samuels, R. J. (1980, Jan. 21). Carter Doctrine. In *Brinnica*. Retrieved from https://www.britannica.com/topic/Carter-Doctrine

Sick, G. (1989). The United States and the Persian Gulf. In H. W. Maull & O. Pick (Eds.), *The Gulf War, Regional and International Dimensions* (pp. 121-138). London: St Martin's Press,

Scholvin, S. (2016). *Geopolitics; An Overview of Concepts and Empirical Examples from International Relations* (Working Paper No. 91). Helsinki: Finnish Institute of International Affairs. Retrieved from https://css.ethz.ch/en/services/digital-library/publications/publication.html/196701

Journal of **WORLD SOCIOPOLITICAL STUDIES** | Vol. 5 | No. 3 | Summer 2021

Stewart, R. A. (1370 [1992 A.D.]). *Dar āxarin ruzhā-ye rezā-šāh, tahājom-e rus va engelis be irān dar šahrivar-e 1320* [In the Last Days of Reza Shah, the Russian and British Invasion of Iran in September 1942] (A. R. Hushang Mahdavi & K. Bayat Trans.). Tehran: Moen Book Publishing House.

Tabatabai, A. (2019, Feb. 8). *Iran in the Middle East: The Notion of "Strategic Loneliness"*. Italian Institute for International Political Studies (ISPI). Retrieved from https://www.ispionline.it/sites/default/files/pubblicazioni/commentary_tabatabai_08.02.2018.pdf