

1. Introduction

The article thoroughly examines the "Sacred Defense" period in Iran, initiated by the Iran-Iraq war in September 1980. It highlights the diverse efforts made during this era, which extended beyond warfare to encompass cultural, social, and economic activities. Sacred Defense Cinema emerged as a vital medium reflecting evolving perceptions of the enemy. Employing discourse analysis, the article explores how narratives in selected films like "A Boat to the Beach," "Nineveh," "From Karkheh to Rhein," and "The Glass Agency" were constructed and perpetuated. It delves into the portrayal of enemies, both foreign and internal, and the ideological underpinnings shaping these representations. Ultimately, the article aims to uncover the nuances of enemy characterization, the interplay between ideology and representation, and the evolving discourses within Sacred Defense Cinema.

1.1. Theory of Epistemic Shifts

Michel Foucault dedicated his studies to the historical examination of knowledges and power relations within modern societies, focusing on their evolution and transformation. The term "epistemic shift" in Foucault's philosophy refers to profound and fundamental changes in our understanding and perception of the world around us. An epistemic shift is what one might envision in one's mind as the opposite concept. This means when a tradition or school offers a particular interpretation of a historical event, by proposing an alternative interpretation, a fresh conceptual ground can be prepared [1].

In essence, an epistemic shift represents a sudden and major change in knowledge and power structures. In other words, when a thought system or worldview reaches its saturation point and cannot address new questions and challenges, an epistemic shift occurs, resulting in the emergence of a new intellectual system or perspective replacing the old one [2]. Foucault explores shifts in knowledge and power dynamics throughout history, examining changes in the perception and treatment of mentally ill individuals and the evolution of prison systems. He traces how madness was initially viewed as a distinct experience in the Middle Ages but became associated with isolation and exile during the Renaissance and beyond. In modern times, the mentally ill were often confined to psychiatric hospitals, resembling prisons. Foucault argues that these shifts reflect broader societal power dynamics and mechanisms of control over "abnormal" or "dangerous" individuals. He introduces the concept of "biopolitics" to illustrate policies governing and regulating human lives [3].

Foucault illuminates the interconnectedness of knowledge and power, highlighting how epistemic shifts challenge and reshape both. In "The Order of Things," he shifts his epistemological approach to discourse archaeology, analyzing how discourse transforms across different historical periods, influencing human knowledge. Using examples like Velázquez's "Las Meninas" and Cervantes's "Don Quixote," Foucault divides history into three distinct periods and examines the knowledge systems (epistemes) that emerge from prevailing discourses within each period [4,5].

1.2. Episteme: Conceptual Foundations

Michel Foucault, in his works, delved deep into the historical trajectory of knowledge and the intricate interplay between power and knowledge. In this endeavor, he introduced the concept of "Episteme" (from French: épistémè). For Foucault, an episteme represents a set of unstated assumptions and knowledge connections that, during a specific epoch, can be accepted as "truth." It signifies the contextual framework within which knowledge is both produced and interpreted [6]. There are six fundamental questions that the episteme addresses:

- 1) What is knowledge? Is genuine belief justified?
- 2) Where do the sources of knowledge come from? 1) Experience 2) Reason 3) Emotion.
- 3) Do we have an absolute standard for truth?
- 4) What differentiates being justified from being absolutely right?
- 5) To what extent are the boundaries of human knowledge defined?

1.3. The Relationship Between Episteme and Power

Foucault firmly believed that knowledge (episteme) and power are intricately linked, and, in fact, they reciprocally shape each other [7]. Here's how:

- 1) Knowledge as a Tool for Power: Knowledge can be used to direct and restrict.
- 2) Production of Knowledge: Definitions can be shaped by those in power using various tools.
- 3) Epistemic Structures: Powerful groups can validate a particular knowledge according to their desires.
- 4) Power as a Catalyst for Knowledge: Power necessitates knowledge to perpetuate itself. Utilizing knowledge, power can organize, control, and guide individuals and populations. This concept is expounded upon in Foucault's "Discipline

and Punish", where he scrutinizes the emergence of prisons and surveillance systems.

5) Knowledge as Resistance: Other groups, by crafting new discourses and endeavoring to replace existing ones, will seek to shift power dynamics.

In essence, Foucault's analytical trajectory makes us rethink the symbiotic relationship between knowledge and power, shedding light on both the emancipatory potential and the oppressive mechanisms they together can foster [8].

1.4. Discourse: A Structural Insight

Foucault criticized traditional philosophical and historiographical methods, favoring "discourse" over "ideology" or "theorization." Unlike ideology, which is seen as a collection of beliefs, Foucault's discourse encompasses dialogic modes, concepts, directives, and knowledge production methods.

1) Knowledge Production: Foucault contends that discourses delineate how knowledge is produced, structured, and constrained. This knowledge could encompass topics like gender, race, crime, madness, among others.

2) Limitation and Power: Discourses set parameters on what can be voiced and what should remain unsaid. They not only mold our means of understanding the world but also impose constraints on it. In this context, Foucault delves into the unspoken rules and structures that limit discourses.

3) Interplay with Power: Foucault believes discourses interact with power structures. Some discourses are bolstered by these structures, while others are suppressed. In other words, power leverages discourses to shape individual identities, interests, and behaviors.

4) Historicity: Foucault opines that discourses evolve over time. He investigates the historical trajectory of discourses, examining their genesis, transformation, and decline. Unlike ideology, which might be perceived as a rudimentary belief or notion, discourse, for Foucault, is an intricate structure that determines our worldview, thought process, and behavioral patterns [9].

The essence of discourse suggests that language is structured within certain defined frames, and people, when engaging in various societal arenas, adhere to these frames in their dialogues. Familiar examples include the medical discourse and political discourse. Discourse analysis, hence, is the scrutiny of these frameworks [10].

1.5. The Role of Discourse in Constructing Society

Fairclough highlights discourse's formative power on society, influenced by both individual practices and institutional structures. Discourse encompasses various communicative events and abstract objects, forming complex relationships with entities such as individuals, power dynamics, and institutions. Understanding discourse involves examining its internal and external relations with other objects, as it articulates meanings fundamental to social life [11]. In summary, the roles of discourses in constructing society, which are closely linked to the relationship between epistemology and power, [12]. include:

1) Defining Reality: Discourses shape our definitions of reality. In other words, our beliefs about the world and society are significantly influenced by the discourses and languages we use.

2) Social Structuring: Discourses influence the way people think, communicate, and act in society. These discourses can define roles, power relations, and social structures.

3) Constructing Identities: Discourses can assist individuals in constructing and giving meaning to their identities. For instance, national, gender-based, or cultural discourses can shape our definitions of ourselves and others.

4) Control and Power: Discourses can serve as tools for control and the exercise of power. When a discourse becomes widely accepted, the individuals or groups promoting that discourse can possess a certain degree of power and influence over others.

5) Defining Issues and Solutions: Discourses can define social problems and suggest solutions for them.

6) Encouraging Change: New discourses can shift attitudes and beliefs, motivating individuals to alter their behavior or beliefs.

1.6. Discourse Analysis

From the perspective of Teun A. van Dijk, discourse analysis should encompass certain elements, as referred to on the subsequent page [13]:

1) Discourse analysis examines a media message as an independent, full-fledged discourse.

2) The primary goal of discourse analysis is to elucidate and interpret qualitative data, rather than quantitative data.

3) While interpretation typically relies on observable and computable data such as words, phrases, and sentences, discourse analysis attends to semantic structures. It illuminates assumptions, relations, implications, and strategies.

Discourse analysis is not merely a singular approach; it is a collection of interdisciplinary approaches that can be utilized to study various societal segments [14,15].

1.7. Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis

Norman Fairclough outlines four key aspects of critical discourse analysis. Firstly, it's emphasized that this analysis goes beyond merely studying discourse, forming part of a broader examination of how discourse interacts with other societal elements. Secondly, it involves a systematic examination of texts rather than a general interpretation. Thirdly, it's noted that critical discourse analysis is not purely descriptive; it also involves identifying societal biases within

discourse and suggesting solutions. [16]. Critical discourse analysis is explanatory, meaning it can understand the effects of discourses.

Unlike regular discourse analysis, critical discourse analysis distances itself from quantitative and positivist approaches, falling under qualitative approaches. "From a philosophical standpoint, critical discourse analysis is based on constructivism which reduces reality to human constructs while emphasizing human agency." [17]. Fairclough's approach to discourse analysis differs from traditional methods by focusing on power dynamics, which he divides into two roles: the command-giver and the command-taker. He illustrates how the structure of interactions is influenced by shared background knowledge, which often contains ingrained ideological beliefs that are perceived as common sense over time. [17]. The five fundamental principles of Fairclough's approach according to Jorgensen and Phillips are:

- 1) Parts of the social processes have, to some extent, linguistic-discursive characteristics.
- 2) Discourse is both constructive and constructed.
- 3) Language use must be empirically analyzed within its social context [18].
- 4) Discourse has an ideological function.
- 5) The analysis should be critical.

Critical discourse analysis provides us with theories and methods for the empirical study of relationships between discourse and social and cultural developments across various social domains [10]. Fairclough outlines three key points about critical discourse analysis. Firstly, it's emphasized that it extends beyond mere text analysis to encompass a broader examination of discourse within the social context. Secondly, it involves a systematic analysis of texts rather than a broad interpretation. Lastly, it's noted that critical discourse analysis not only describes but also prescribes solutions for societal biases embedded in discourse [19].

1.8. Norman Fairclough's Three-dimensional Model

The author stresses the importance of understanding certain concepts before delving into Fairclough's three-dimensional model. They highlight three definitions of critical discourse analysis from Jorgensen and Phillips' book, quoting Fairclough. Firstly, discourse is seen as language used for social action, both shaping and shaped by society. Secondly, discourse is contextual, manifesting in specific domains like politics or science. Lastly, discourse is viewed as a plural construct, representing various ways of speaking that frame experiences from diverse perspectives [10].

Discourses play pivotal roles in shaping social identity, relations, and knowledge systems, serving functions in identity formation, relational dynamics, and intellectual frameworks. They are characterized by two critical dimensions: the communicative event, exemplified by texts like articles or films, and the discursive order, encompassing the entirety of discourses. Genres represent specific forms of social action in language, such as advertisements or news, while discursive order pertains to the collective array of discourses, as seen, for instance, in media discourse. In analyzing discursive action, the focus is on how the author of the text relies on existing discourses and genres to produce a text and how receivers of the text utilize available discourses and genres for consumption and interpretation. The text analysis focuses on formal attributes (like words, grammar, syntax, and sentence cohesion) – attributes that shape the linguistic form of discourses and genres. To analyze Fairclough's three-dimensional model, one must first understand that every communicative event comprises three dimensions: a text (which could also be a visual image), a discursive act (both text production and consumption), and a broader social act. Hence, any discourse analysis should focus on (1) the language attributes of the text; (2) processes related to text production and consumption; and (3) the broader social act to which the communicative event is affiliated [20].

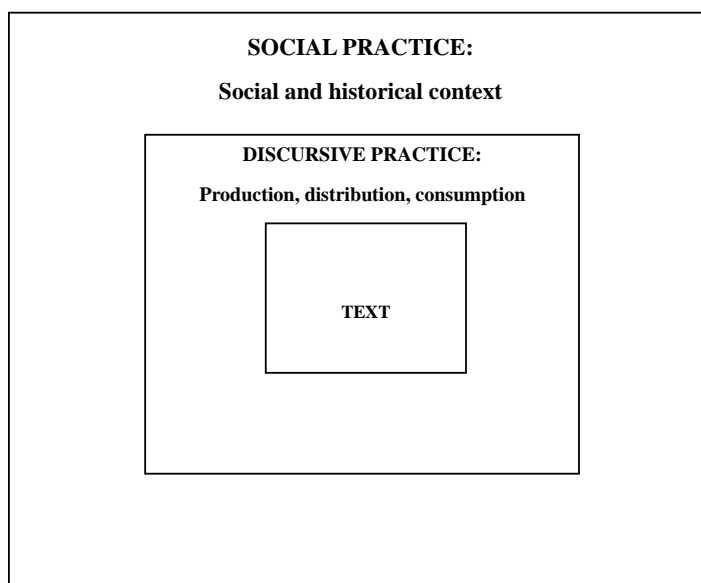


Figure (1) "The Three-Dimensional Model: The Usefulness of Critical Discourse" by Norman Fairclough [21].

This model aims to provide a comprehensive framework, stressing the importance of analyzing social events in conjunction with other elements, advocating for an interdisciplinary approach. It draws from Laclau and Mouffe's segmentation framework but diverges in Fairclough's view, distinguishing between discursive and non-discursive aspects within social actions. While Laclau and Mouffe consider all social actions as discourses, Fairclough perceives them as operating under different logics. For example, in the act of purchasing, verbal communication with a seller and the economic transaction are intertwined yet distinct. Fairclough suggests analyzing the conversation as discourse using linguistic tools and the economic exchange through economic theory, highlighting the separate mechanisms at play [10, 22].

In analyzing a text's linguistic features, the examination of the discursive act becomes imperative, and vice versa, according to Fairclough's model. However, these represent distinct facets requiring differentiation for analytical purposes. When analyzing the discursive act, attention is directed towards how the text's author draws upon existing discourses and genres in its creation, while also considering how recipients utilize these discourses and genres for interpretation. For example, television news, as a genre, may employ various discourses (e.g., social welfare) or genres (such as hard or soft news), shaping viewers' interpretations based on their familiarity with the genre. This familiarity influences how viewers discuss topics raised in the news, potentially integrating or combining different discourses and genres [23].

1.9. Communication Events and Discursive Orders

From Norman Fairclough's perspective, a dialectical relationship exists between communication events and discursive orders. The discursive order comprises all genres and discourses utilized within a specific social domain. Moreover, it operates systematically, being shaped by particular linguistic instances and, in turn, shaping them. Thus, beyond being a system, the discursive order is also an action. It gives rise to discourses and genres, limiting what can be expressed. By employing new discourses and genres, it's possible to modify the discursive order to other discursive systems. For instance, "Different discursive acts forming the discursive order of public health services in Britain are associated with particular discourses and genres. The public welfare discourse was dominant, but since the early 1980s, it has been challenged by other discourses, including the neoliberal consumer discourse previously associated solely with the market order. Nowadays, primarily public relations professionals use a discourse that portrays health services as commodities and patients as consumers rather than citizens." [10, 24].

In general, the discursive order can be attributed to a specific domain, although it might operate beyond institutional boundaries. This definition closely aligns with Bourdieu's concept of the 'field', which is a relatively independent social domain adhering to a specific social logic. Actors within a field strive towards a common goal. They have contentious relationships with one another, and an individual actor's position in the field is determined by their relative distance from this goal. From this perspective, Fairclough suggests considering the discursive order as the discursive dimension of a field. "The discursive orders can be viewed as potential realms for cultural hegemony, where dominant groups attempt to establish and maintain a specific structural alignment both within and among these realms." [10,25].

Fairclough categorizes textual contexts into five sections:

1) Situational context, 2) Intertextual context, 3) Textual context, 4) Speech appearance, 5) Speech meaning, and 6) Theme.

1.10. Difference between Greater and Lesser Jihad

In Islamic teachings, the concept of Jihad is divided into two parts: Greater Jihad and Lesser Jihad. The key differences between them are as follows:

- 1) Lesser Jihad (Smaller Jihad): Refers to the physical or military struggle against the enemies of Islam or those who oppress Muslims. It's grounded in defending Islam, safeguarding Muslims, and preserving the freedom and assets of Muslims. Lesser Jihad is only permissible under specific conditions.
- 2) Greater Jihad (Larger Jihad): Refers to the internal struggle against one's base desires and tendencies. It's about combating cravings, temptations, and negative inner traits to achieve a degree of spiritual purity. The purpose is self-improvement and ethical and spiritual evolution. The concept of Greater Jihad represents a person's continuous effort to better themselves throughout life [26].

1.11. Sacred Defense

In an article titled "Examination of Military Developments of the Iran-Iraq War in the Final Phase," from the lens of four theories for the motivation to end a war [27]:

- 1) Winner and loser,
- 2) Rational decision-making (cost-benefit),
- 3) Leadership change (hawks and doves),
- 4) Second order.

The author contends that the concept of second-order theory resonates strongly with the conclusion of the Iran-Iraq war. This theory revolves around two dominant discourses: war and peace. Initially, leaders view all state affairs through the lens of warfare, seeking solutions from a militaristic perspective. However, as circumstances evolve, leaders realize the necessity of adopting a new approach to address broader national issues, including the war itself. Initially, war may serve as a means of preserving governance and national unity. However, as time progresses, leaders recognize that prolonging the conflict jeopardizes fundamental values such as territorial integrity and governance survival. The theory suggests two primary conclusions: firstly, that war can be utilized to uphold a nation's honor and dignity, and secondly, that ending the war ensures the nation's honor and stability.

1.12. Regarding the enemy in Iran

In classifying enemies, whether based on the discourse established by the regime or in movies produced by the Sacred Defense, which are two primary sources cited by the article's author, one can categorize the enemy into four groups [28]:

- 1) Direct foreign enemies, exemplified by Iraq during the war.
- 2) Indirect foreign enemies, external forces supporting Iraq, such as Saudi Arabia, the U.S., and the former USSR after Resolution 598 was passed.
- 3) Iranian enemies operating abroad, such as Massoud Rajavi and the Mojahedin-e Khalq group.
- 4) Iranian enemies conducting subversive activities from within Iran, for instance, Bani Sadr, nationalists, and liberals who opposed the government after the capture of Khorramshahr.

Before delving into the movies, it's crucial to note that very few Sacred Defense movies, whether produced during or after the war, critically examined the war or reproached the then-authorities for engaging in it. The reason is the discourse established by the regime concerning the war. Iran is portrayed as always being in a defensive or sacred mission, even after the capture of Khorramshahr and entering Iraqi territory.

1.13. Selected Films and Directors

Considering the varied circumstances in Iran during different periods, the author has selected four films. Each of these films will be analyzed based on the conditions and time when they were made. In this collection of four films, all mentioned types of enemies are examined, and the extent of their susceptibility and their relation to the policies of the Islamic Republic of Iran (both domestically and internationally) will be discussed. The study will also analyze the impact these films had on their audience at the time of their release, as well as their popularity among the people.

In the audience section, another crucial issue addressed in this article is how identifying (or recognizing) the enemy assists in self-recognition and what position it establishes for the audience. The article also questions the audience's reaction to this kind of enemy portrayal [29].

The four films in question are "A Boat to the Beach" and "Nineveh" directed by Rasoul Mollagholipour, and "From Karkheh to Rhine" and "The Glass Agency" directed by Ebrahim Hatamikia. The selection of these two directors is significant as the author considers them among the most successful war filmmakers in Iran. They both have an impressive record in terms of audience popularity. Other notable figures in this domain include Martyr Morteza Avini with the series "Narration of Conquest," Ahmad Reza Darvish with the film "Duel," Samuel Khachikian with "Eagles," Kiumars Pourahmad with "A Bus Named Night," Bahram Beizai with "Bashu, the Little Stranger" (alongside films

like Mohsen Makhmalbaf's "The Wedding of the Blessed," it critiques war), and lastly, Masoud Dehnamaki with the trilogy "The Expelled," which was a significant commercial success. There are also photographers and cinematographers who were war narrators, with Shahid Avini being the most prominent figure. Hatamikia and Mollagholipour themselves worked as photographers in front-line areas before directing [30].

Hatamikia, many of whose films are set in urban environments (for instance, "Identity," where a young man, after an accident, ends up in a war veterans' hospital, and after meeting war heroes, changes his perspective on life and feels a sense of responsibility towards the nation's circumstances), considers himself a social filmmaker more than a sacred defense filmmaker. This perspective became evident in an interview published in the book "New World, New Cinema – Interviews with Iranian Filmmakers" regarding his film "In the Name of the Father." [31].

In most films about the sacred defense, there are direct or indirect references to Iran's enemies. Ebrahim Hatamikia and Rasoul Mollagholipour are no exceptions. However, both have directed films that focus less on the enemy and more on the social impacts of the war on ordinary people, especially the families of warriors. For example, "M Like Mother," which is Mollagholipour's latest work, or the film "From Karkheh to Rhine," which is one of the films discussed in this article. In the following section, a brief professional biography of these two directors will be presented, followed by an introduction to the films under discussion [32].

A Boat to the Beach

Summary:

In late October 1980, amidst Khorramshahr's impending collapse, Morteza leads a group of Revolutionary Guards from Tehran to assist the city's defenders. Hindered by Iraqi control over surrounding roads, they attempt to reach Khorramshahr via helicopter from Bandar Mahshahr, but fail. Instead, they navigate the Persian Gulf by boat, arriving a day after the city's fall. Morteza and two companions clandestinely cross the Karun river, infiltrating enemy lines to gather intelligence on fortifications. Despite encountering suspicion, they succeed but face a fatal confrontation. Morteza valiantly returns his comrades across the Karun using a makeshift raft.

Nineveh

Summary:

A young combatant named Abolfazl is tasked with transporting an injured soldier to the rear front. Along the way, he meets Gholam Hossein, a former loader driver who has become blind due to a blast on the front. Gholam Hossein has lost his wife and child during the revolutionary days. During their journey, they encounter several Iraqi soldiers. Abolfazl suffers severe leg injuries, but Gholam Hossein carries him. They face another group of enemy forces intending to advance but manage to stall them until their own reinforcements arrive.

From Karkheh to Rhein

Summary:

Saeed, a war veteran, travels to Germany for eye treatment. There, he reunites with his sister, Leila, who has been living in the city of Cologne with her German husband for several years. Saeed regains his sight and now faces a new and unfamiliar environment, with Leila serving as a reminder of distant cherished memories. Preparing to return to Iran, a twist in Saeed's medical results disrupts his plans.

The Glass Agency

Summary:

Abbas, a local militia member with a shrapnel scar near his collarbone, travels to Tehran with his wife Narges for a check-up. There, he reunites with his old comrade Kazem, now a taxi driver. Abbas's critical condition prompts a doctor to recommend surgery in London, necessitating funds they lack. Kazem agrees to sell his car to finance the trip, but a dispute arises at the travel agency over delayed payment from the car's buyer. Tensions escalate, leading Kazem to take hostages, demanding immediate transport to London. Amidst the standoff, the veterans reflect on their past and present. As the situation reaches its peak, unexpected events unfold, shaping a dramatic finale as the New Year approaches.

2. Analysis of Sacred Defense Cinema

The Iran-Iraq war is divided into two phases. Initially, Iraq occupied 13,600 square kilometers of Iranian territory, but Iran reclaimed 8,600 square kilometers through successful military operations, including the liberation of Khorramshahr. The film "A Boat to the Beach" focuses on this phase. In the second phase, depicted in "Nineveh," Iran achieved strategic objectives such as severing Iraq's connection with the Persian Gulf through Operation Valfajr 8 in spring 1985. The films will be analyzed chronologically based on war events rather than production dates [33, 34].

2.1. A Boat to the Beach

The 1985 film, "A Boat to the Beach", directed by Rasoul Mollagholipour, serves as an exemplary narrative for a critical discourse analysis. The film portrays the occupation of Khorramshahr, the subsequent endeavors of the militia

to reclaim it, and the adversities they confront.

2.1.1. Characterization of Enemies

Within the narrative, two opposing groups emerge against the militia. The first consists of Iraqis, depicted as the external adversary, while the second features the domestic opposition, represented by Abolhassan Banisadr.

2.1.2. Foreign Enemies (Iraqis)

In wartime films, Iraqi characters are typically depicted as antagonistic and lacking depth. They are shown committing atrocities against Iranian civilians, with scenes of soldiers invading homes, killing residents, and looting. These films emphasize Iranian resilience against the Ba'athist Iraqis, often using terms like "foreigners", "ruthless", and "destroyers" to describe them. Iraqi screen-time is notably less than that of Iranians, and there's a clear distinction in the portrayal of trust among soldiers, favoring Iranians. Iraqi characters are often portrayed as either absolute villains or unintentionally comical, reflecting a limited cultural understanding by filmmakers [35].

2.1.3. Scenes Highlighting Iraqi Brutality

A poignant scene portrays an Iranian soldier in the act of praying; an Iraqi soldier hesitates momentarily before mercilessly gunning him down. Other graphic scenes include an Iranian soldier being set ablaze and a civilian elder chained with a grenade looped around his neck. From an analytical standpoint, the rather one-dimensional representation of the external enemy in the initial Sacred Defense films can be attributed to two factors [36]: First, the inexperience of Iranian directors with war cinema. Many molded their characters inspired by the archetypes prevalent in Hollywood war films. However, both Hatamikia and Mollagholipour, who had frontline experiences, are exceptions to this trend. Second, these films serve a dual purpose: To galvanize the masses for militia enlistment and to act as an invitation for maximum participation on the frontlines.

2.1.4. Heroic Dichotomy

Beyond the clear demarcation of heroes and villains, there's an explicit emphasis on the Iranians' superiority in strategic prowess and deception over the Iraqi military. This thematic element is reminiscent of Hollywood's heroic tropes. Another significant observation is the general absence of the Iraqis as individual narrative threads; they're more of a clichéd collective, with no discernible difference amongst them. Post-war, however, these characterizations evolve. Films like "Night Bus" by Kiumars Pourahmad and "The Third Day" by Mohammad Hossein Latifi offer more nuanced representations, with Iraqi soldiers discussing personal issues and even partaking in love narratives [37].

2.1.5. Internal Enemies

As mentioned earlier, the early scenes of the film depict the obstructions by Abolhassan Banisadr's government during the war. In the first twenty minutes, there is a scene featuring fighters and Basijis who visit the representative of the Supreme Commander in Khuzestan to request a helicopter. The dialogue between them goes as follows:

"Hello, brother. I am in charge of the sixth unit, and I need a helicopter to quickly transport my unit to Abadan."

"A helicopter? We can't, sir, we can't!"

"According to the orders of the Supreme Command, Mr. Banisadr has given priority to the military forces for helicopter transport."

"Aren't we military? Khorramshahr is falling!"

During a particular period, Banisadr showed reluctance towards supporting potential victories by the Revolutionary Guard, favoring instead to allocate resources to the regular army. This stance contributed significantly to his later labeling as a traitor after his removal from office. Banisadr's statements in an interview with 'Etelat' newspaper in 1980 suggested that he believed the Iraqi government was executing a plan orchestrated by enemies of the Iranian revolution to undermine the Islamic Republic. Two narratives emerged within Iran regarding Banisadr's actions. One narrative, prevalent during the war, accused him of seeking to overthrow the Islamic Republic and of wanting Iran to lose the war. Specific actions, such as ordering the evacuation of Howayzeh before a critical operation against Iraqi forces, fueled this perception. Banisadr's cooperation with opposition groups, frequent disputes with Prime Minister Raja'i, and other governmental bodies further complicated his image within the Islamic Republic [38].

Imam Khomeini criticized Banisadr for ignoring warnings about deceitful and dangerous individuals around him after his removal from the presidency. The second perspective views Banisadr's actions as stemming from flawed management of the war rather than intentional betrayal. Over time, perceptions of Banisadr's intentions have evolved, becoming more nuanced. The film's portrayal of the conflict between the Revolutionary Guard and the regular army under Banisadr's command is minimal, with a focus on the siege of Khorramshahr. It depicts Iraqi troops as caricatures of brutality contrasted with heroic Iranian forces, though lacking depth in characterization.

2.2. Nineveh

Mollagholipour's debut film stands as a significant and contemplative piece, despite the natural shortcomings and inexperience typically associated with first-time filmmaking. The Sacred Defense cinema pioneer introduces the audience to two main characters who are both relatable and believable. However, the enemy remains unidentified

[39]. "Nineveh" (1983) is a creation of Rasoul Mollagholipour.

2.2.1. Categorization of Enemies

The film depicts Iran's war phase against Iraq, aiming to reclaim lost territories and conquer parts of Iraq. Unlike previous films, it portrays indirect foreign adversaries alongside direct enemies. Symbolism, such as names associated with Karbala tragedy, suggests parallels between Iranian forces and Imam Hussein's army, and Iraq's Ba'ath regime with Yazid's army. The narrative highlights Iran's Revolutionary Guard as righteous and Iraq as wrongful, typical of Sacred Defense films. The analysis will explore factors aiding in recognizing the enemy.

2.2.2. The road of Jerusalem passes through Karbala: (Relationship between the Freedom Movement and the Sacred Defense)

In another dialogue from the movie, a discussion ensues about utilizing a bridge for troops to move to the front lines: "The T Bridge is destroyed, if you permit, we can use the Beit al-Muqaddas or Karbala bridge." From an analytical viewpoint, this can be linked to Imam Khomeini's famous statement: "The road of Jerusalem passes through Karbala." There are two

2.2.3. Interpretations of this statement

Gol Ali Babaei, a Sacred Defense writer and researcher, offers two interpretations in an interview with the Iran Labor News Agency. In the first, he suggests that after successful operations like Beit al-Muqaddas and Fath al-Mubin, external forces aimed to halt Iran's advances by instigating conflict in southern Lebanon, exploiting Iranian sensitivities towards Palestine and Lebanon. This strategy allowed Iraq an opportunity, aided by US advisors in Baghdad. Despite heavy losses, Iran's forces persevered until Imam Khomeini's directive redirected focus. The second interpretation dissociates Imam Khomeini's directive from broader foreign adversaries, solely linking it to tensions with Israel, as some argue that the timing of Iranian operations predates Western and Saudi hostility.

2.2.4. Duality of Opinion in Continuing the War

In an interview with the Kayhan newspaper in October 1980, Dr. Ebrahim Yazdi suggested that the war with Iraq would lead to Saddam's downfall despite its toll on Iran. Similarly, Engineer Mehdi Bazargan, in his book "Islam: The School of Struggle and Production," highlighted the historical inevitability of conflict and war. However, after the liberation of Khorramshahr, interviews with members of the Freedom Movement, notably Engineer Bazargan, reflected a different viewpoint contradicting the stance of Imam Khomeini and the ruling regime. This conflicting perspective weakened Iran's position against the Ba'ath regime and prolonged the war, as explained by Amir Daryaband Ali Shamkhani in a TV interview.

2.2.5. Introduction of Iraq as "The Other"

In the continuation of a film, Abolfazl encounters several individuals. From their chant of "Allahu Akbar", he recognizes that they are Iranians fighting alongside him. Both warring sides are Muslim, and "Allahu Akbar" is common to both. However, the film portrays only Iranians as the genuine Muslims. This differentiation serves to detach the audience from viewing Iraqis as fellow Muslims or even human beings. The motivation behind such depiction of the enemy is rooted in the spirit of encouraging Iranians to fight in the war.

2.2.6. Incentive to Portray the Enemy

Such a portrayal of Iraqis could be equated with instilling a spirit in Iranians, inviting them to the warfront, as observed in another film, "A Leap Towards the Shore". Yet, here, another narrative is employed. Rasoul Mollagholipour, in these two films, seems to justify the war and aligns with the dominant power's narrative in society. Other examples of such films exist, but from the author's perspective, due to Mollagholipour's focus on two factual events during the war, these two films are significant for investigation.

2.3. From Karkheh to Rhein

Hatamikia, with his first feature film titled "Identity", heralded the emergence of a distinctly innovative cinematic phenomenon. He can be considered the most prominent figure of the Sacred Defense cinema. His works offer multiple dimensions for examination. However, several content and structural features can be specifically attributed to Hatamikia, such as the tangibility of the story's hero, the topicality of events and screenplay themes, the effort to shift from war themes to deeper human meanings, the director's intention to depict post-war societal archetypes, a deep dive into the intellectual nuances of each character, and the subtle cueing of the audience to take a stance [40].

The aftermath of the Iran-Iraq war highlighted the need for a shift in foreign policy priorities towards economic development. Rebuilding war-torn regions required cooperative strategies with other nations and increased oil revenues. Iran aimed to enhance relations with oil-producing countries and secure foreign resources to fulfill its developmental needs. This shift in foreign policy objectives, balancing Islamic fundamentalism with developmental goals, marked the beginning of a detente era in Iran's foreign policy.



The film was produced during Ayatollah Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani's presidency, amidst significant events in Iran from the 6th of Mordad, 1368, to 1371 when the film was released. This period saw the end of the Iran-Iraq war, Imam Khomeini's passing, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei's introduction as the new leader, and the commencement of Rafsanjani's presidency. Known as the Reconstruction Era, Rafsanjani's term aimed to maintain revolutionary ideals while presenting a new approach to citizens, emphasizing life over death and productivity. The film reflects on these changes, portraying a war veteran who embodies revolutionary principles while representing Iran abroad [41].

The film "From Karkheh to Rhine," released in 1392, serves as a response to "Not Without My Daughter," directed by Brian Gilbert a year earlier. Gilbert's film portrays exaggerated challenges faced by a mother in Iran due to her Iranian husband's conservative family. Hatamikia's film focuses on an Iranian war veteran named "Saeed," who discovers he has cancer after recovering from war-induced blindness. It explores post-war Iranian attitudes, depicting an internal ideological struggle. Abu Dharr symbolizes those who distance themselves from the revolution due to their experiences in the country. "The Glass Agency" highlights the mistreatment of war veterans by governmental authorities, a central concern for Hatamikia. Another relationship highlighted in the movie is Leila's relationship with Iranians. During the first encounter between Leila and Saeed, the dialogue goes:

Leila: "Nine years and you forgot me."

Saeed: "You wished for it. If we forgot our Leila, she forgot all of us."

Leila: "What happened to your eyes?"

Saeed: "They encountered an angel's wing."

Leila: "You won't find such angels here. This is the land of logic, the realm of thought; such angels have no right here."

Saeed: "Then my mother was right when she said Leila is alone."

While the film "Without My Daughter" showcases Iranophobia, portraying a fearful portrayal of entering Iran and the savagery of Iranians, "From Karkheh to Rhine" aims to present a more positive perspective of Iran, both for Iranians abroad and for the global audience. The latter film is not an obstacle to interactions with foreigners but seeks to evoke patriotic sentiments. It acts as a middle ground, reflecting the era's Iranian policies aiming to initiate new international relationships while preserving the nationalism from the revolution and wartime.

Leila (to Saeed): "I don't want to see just Saeed... I want to see my mother... I want to see my homeland."

Later, Leila contacts her mother but does not speak. At the end of the movie, she, along with her family, returns to her homeland. Various characters, such as domestic officials neglecting veterans, Iranians who have left the country like Leila, Asghar who once aligned with the Islamic Republic's values, and Saeed (the story's protagonist whom the audience should perceive as the positive character), shape the movie. Andreas and Yannas, Leila's husband and son, are also pivotal. Their initial interactions with Saeed are not favorable. Still, over time, their relationship evolves, culminating in an invitation to Yannas's birthday party, where Saeed is told to consider it his home. Two other significant interactions between foreigners and Iranians in the film are:

1) Helen, a German mime artist, is perplexed by her interaction with a visually impaired man (Saeed). She thought she could comprehend him, but she feels he understands her better.

2) Reporters searching for news about the Iran-Iraq war interact with the soldiers. The confrontation exposes the West's role in supplying chemical weapons and raises moral questions about human rights versus oil rights.

In summary, the film delves deep into the complex interactions between individuals and their perceptions, challenging stereotypes and preconceptions.

From 1980 onward, Iraq extensively used toxic gases in its war against Iran, backed by substantial evidence of significant chemical weapons stockpiles. The Security Council's statements in March and April 1984, and March 1986, acknowledged Iraq's use of chemical weapons, though Iran criticized the delayed recognition. Professor Gerhard Freilinger's visit to Iran in 1984, prompted by observing Iranian patients in Vienna, helped substantiate Iraq's chemical warfare. This period marks one of the darkest chapters in recent human history, showcasing the deployment of biological and chemical weapons, which surpassed geographical constraints, signaling a grim superiority in armaments [42]. The scene featuring the interview between the German reporter and the Iranian soldiers alludes to both sets of Iran's foreign adversaries, be it direct or indirect. While the damages eventually contributed to court verdicts in favor of Iran, they could not compensate for the harms inflicted upon the Iranians.

The film "From Karkheh to Rhine" portrays the struggles of Iranian veterans, seeking to vindicate Iranians and correct misconceptions held by foreigners about them. It addresses both internal and external oppositions to the Islamic Republic's sacred system during the war. Produced during an era focused on nation-building, the film reflects Iran's shift from martyrdom to valuing life and its efforts to improve foreign relations. In contrast to "Not Without My Daughter," this film aims to present Iranians positively to foreigners while upholding traditional values.

2.4. The Glass Agency

Hatamikia's identity as a filmmaker transcends war to embody the ethos of the Revolution and the Sacred Defense era. His pivotal work, "The Glass Agency," marks a departure from earlier themes, coinciding with a shift in Iran's political landscape towards rhetoric over development. While genres like anthropological cinema or Hollywood war films provided artistic avenues, Hatamikia's conscientious approach resisted simplistic narratives. Instead, he grappled with the erosion of wartime values, notably critiqued in "From Karkheh to Rhine" and culminating in "The Glass Agency" in 1997, amidst changing post-war perspectives [43].



"The Glass Agency" emerges against the backdrop of Rafsanjani's presidency, characterized by economic reconstruction and an emphasis on international relations to break political isolation. However, critiques of social injustices and policy ineffectiveness emerged during his second term, paving the way for political transformation. Released in 1997, coinciding with the transition to Khatami's reformist government, the film reflects shifting political dynamics. Khatami's approach prioritized reducing tensions with foreign nations, evident in his pursuit of "interaction and tension alleviation." Analyzing the film's discourse, the protagonist's interactions with different societal groups reveal underlying tensions and aspirations amidst changing political landscapes. Haj Kazem's son initially disapproves of his father's help towards Abbas, but his perspective changes as he gets to know his father better. This shift in perspective mirrors the changing dynamics of intergenerational understanding post-war. The distance between the war survivors like Haj Kazem and the common people has increased, implying that the memories and values of the war are fading away. The people's response to Haj Kazem reveals a gap in comprehension, underscoring the complexities of reconciling the past with contemporary socio-political challenges.

1) "What you defined was not clear to me. However, if I understand your intention, I can write any amount you desire."

2) "If you want this check, I can provide it. In a month, I can take care of you and your family."

3) "Have you ever thought about whose money financed the war against that giant enemy? It was my money and people like me. You occasionally visited our stalls, and suddenly we'd provide an airplane for you."

4) "If I were in your place, I would take all the money from these wealthy people."

5) "How much should we pay to be freed for the holiday night? The money is in my wife's purse."

6) "I will issue your ticket; there's no problem with your departure."

Other dialogues related to Abbas and Haj Kazem include:

"Did you take my salary for those eight years of killing and war?"

"You have political intentions and used us as pawns in your political game."

"Who doesn't know that you have profited enough from this war?"

Among the hostages, an elderly man maintains a sense of calm, expressing resignation to his fate. Another hostage predicts the imminent fading of war survivors and their mindset from public and governmental memory. Among Haj Kazem's friends, Abbas eventually aligns with him, while Behman, a moderate figure, initiates dialogue with Kazem, humorously noting his wartime appearance. Behman brings provisions to his friends, highlighting the changes wrought by the war's mentality. Asghar also supports his friends without hesitation, demonstrating loyalty amidst adversity.

Salhshoor, a security officer, meets with Haj Kazem three times. The first is to understand the demands of Haj Kazem and Abbas. In this round, Salhshoor sees Haj Kazem as someone who sought financial help after the war and wants to negotiate with him. Haj Kazem justifies his actions saying, "It's because of the times and your busy schedules." A bit later, Salhshoor says, "The crimes of our own are greater than those of strangers. For this country, which has a thousand internal and external enemies, we are constantly sacrificing. How many young people have lost their lives for the peace of this country?"

The foundation officer does not process Abbas and Haj Kazem's request on time, citing administrative procedures and the holiday. He insists they wait until after the holiday, undeterred by Haj Kazem's pleas.

In the initial phase, Salhshoor discusses the country's internal security, aiming to change Haj Kazem's viewpoint. But in the second round, his talk focuses on external relations, presenting a dichotomy that mirrors the discourses prevalent in two different government eras. By the third phase, when Haj Kazem and Abbas try to reach a vehicle bound for the airport, Salhshoor attempts to deceive them. However, Ahmad, with a letter he possesses, prevents him, advising them to take a helicopter.

Ebrahim Hatamikia recalls the hurdles he encountered in gaining approval for his screenplay, "The Glass Agency." Initially discouraged due to perceived threats, he received authorization for production during a transitional period in governance, thanks to Habibollah Kaseh-Saz's trust in his loyalty. Despite objections, Kaseh-Saz defended Hatamikia's integrity against external protests. Modifications to the screenplay, influenced by the Supreme Leader, shifted the ending to a more optimistic tone, resonating with supporters of the system and Velayat. In the film, Ahmad emerges as a character who dutifully performs his role but also empathizes with others. Despite disagreements, he respects Haj Kazem and assists him, serving as a crucial link between Haj Kazem and the outside world. [40].

3. Conclusion

What the author deduces from this article is that the notion of the "enemy" in the cinema of the "Sacred Defense" (a term used to describe the Iran-Iraq War) has evolved over the years. Depending on the specific needs and context of each period, certain groups have been added or subtracted from this categorization. This phenomenon is not exclusive to the films of the two directors studied; it is observed in the works of other directors and also prominently in the national media. As of 2016 (1395 in the Iranian calendar), Rasoul Mollagholipour has passed away, and there is less mention of Ebrahim Hatami Kia in the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB). In programs like "Haft" (meaning "Seven"), during the introduction of the Sacred Defense cinema, he is merely introduced as an intellectual filmmaker of this genre, not someone who depicted objective reality! His works are less frequently examined. Sacred Defense cinema, following comedic films, is among the most popular film genres in Iran and serves as one of the primary means to convey and promote the dominant discourse of power. This cinema always considered itself a

reflection of the realities of war. However, its definitions have shifted over time, introducing new groups as the "enemy" in each period or omitting others.

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